



## Muslim Migrants and Hybrid Placemaking of Mosques in Culiat, Quezon City

ACTRUIZ

**ABSTRACT.** This article uses the framework of hybrid placemaking to analyze narratives behind the five mosques in the Al Salam Mosque Compound in Culiat, Quezon City. Salam as a space of representation, becomes a respite from inequalities experienced from without. But behind the veneer of homogeneity, Salam houses tensions between and among heterogeneous groups from within. Networks to the greater Muslim community, religious and cultural interpretations of faith, boundary maintenance, and homeward orientation differ from one group to another, manifesting in different spatial practices. Visual, aural, and tactile boundaries—the appearance and visibility of the mosques, the language used during holy sermons, and the selection of the congregation affect the relationships between mosque makers and patrons, as well as the image of the entire community to the non-Muslim community outside. Migrants are united in the Islamic values of cleanliness, peace, and unity, but differ in their implementation. As a representation of space, Salam is the melting pot where migrants use shared values as a take-off point to build around different expressions of these values. Actors interpret their mosque making as a way to overcome their uneven conditions, and reinforce their religious and political status inside and outside the community.

**KEYWORDS.** hybrid placemaking · mosque. Al Salam Mosque Compound · migration · Culiat

### INTRODUCTION

States make wars and wars—massively—make migrants. (Scott 2009, 146)

James Scott's assertion sets the tone for majority of studies regarding the formation of Muslim migrant communities in various predominantly Catholic cities in the Philippines. Literature abounds on how traditional Muslims from Southern Philippines, otherwise known as "Moros," face displacement, dislocation, discrimination, misrecognition, minoritization,

and various other disadvantages as migrants.<sup>1</sup> Generous emphasis is given on their status as survivors of war, exiles, refugees, and members of diaspora borne out of civil conflicts in Southern Philippines.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Spanish colonizers in the sixteenth century labeled Muslim resistance groups in Southern Philippines as “Moro,” and systematically slaughtered them. This tradition continued throughout the American occupation in the eighteenth century (Frake 1998, Rodil 1994). The term “Moro” has been reclaimed post-Second World War by various Muslim independence groups to denote thirteen ethnolinguistic groups, inclusive of the Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Iranun, and Yakan, to which many of the respondents of this study identify as. All groups have their own specific language, religious traditions, and customary laws. The first three of these specified groups identify with their own pre-colonial sultanate systems (Majul 1999, Rodil 1994). The Maranao, Maguindanao, and Iranun are based in mainland Mindanao, or Southern Philippines. The Maranao (also known as M’ranao, Maranaw, Meranao) claim ancestral domain over areas surrounding Lake Lanao in the province of Lanao del Sur, with majority of their population concentrated in Marawi City (NCCA 2015). The Maguindanao (aka Magindanao, Magindanao), as with the Maranao, trace their ancestry to Shariff Kabungsuwan, a fourteenth century Muslim forefather who established Islamic communities in areas now known as the Maguindanao province (Rodil 1994). The Maguindanao and Iranun (also known as Ilanun, Ilanon, Iranon) both claim areas of the Maguindanao province as ancestral domain, though the former are historically known to have accepted Islam earlier than the latter. Warren ([1985] 2002) explores at length the history of the Iranun’s heritage on maritime raiding. The Yakan claim ancestral domain over areas in the province of Zamboanga del Sur and the island of Basilan, both tributaries to the Sultanate of Sulu during the fourteenth century. Anthropologists have theorized that the Yakan, renowned for their weaving and embroidery, descended from the Dayaks of North Borneo (Sherfan 1976). The Tausug (aka Taw Sug, Suluk, Sulu, Joloano) are based mainly in the island province of Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, and identify highly with the Sulu Sultanate. The sultanate began with Sultan Sharif ul-Hashim in 1450 (Majul 1999). By the eighteenth century, the sultanate power covered the entire Sulu Archipelago (now provinces of Jolo, Basilan, and Tawi-Tawi), southern Palawan, and Sabah in North Borneo (Majul 1965). Sultan Jamal-ul-Kiram II, who died in 1936, was the last undisputed Sultan (Majul 1974). Various claims to the sultanate continue until present. Truly, Filipino Muslim identity is complex. I chose to use the term “Moro,” however, consistent with other recent similar studies—namely Regadio (2015), Sapitula (2014), Taqueban (2012), and Watanabe (2008a; 2008b).
  2. For instructive overviews: Majul (1999) uses thirteenth century genealogies, among other archival material, to situate the Muslim resistance to Philippine colonialization as part of the development of Islam in insular Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, Hernandez (2014) theorizes on the protracted peace process (or failures thereof) in Southern Philippines, and discusses misrecognition as a crucial aspect of this conflict.

But migration is not all suffering. Moro migrants, as with many other migrant populations around the world, not only “re-build what was once lost” but actually build anew.<sup>3</sup> Because of, or in spite of their changed material conditions, they construct: buildings, communities, and ultimately identities—changing the power structures of their environment with every new construction. Migrants engage in placemaking, which is a “bottom-up, asset-based, person-centered process that emphasizes collaboration and community participation in order to improve the livability of towns and cities” (Gadwa and Markusen 2010 in Toolis 2017).

As a framework, placemaking focuses on the “co-constitution of person and place” (Toolis 2017, 3). Stories, behaviors, constructions (physical), and constructs (non-physical) about a place are examined as ways actors assert their “right to the city” (Harvey 2008, 23).<sup>4</sup> Yes, states make wars and wars make migrants. But through agency and creative license, migrants make places—hence, migrants make states too.

This study presents narratives behind religious placemaking, specifically mosque making, within the Al Salam Mosque Compound in Barangay<sup>5</sup> Culiat, Quezon City (figure 1). The compound is almost a small Muslim state enveloped by larger non-Muslim institutions

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3. There is ample literature on the impact of placemaking among migrant communities internationally, among which consulted for this study are Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2009), Lawrence-Zuñiga and Pellow (2008), Main and Sandoval (2015), and Nguyen (2010).
  4. “The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city” (Harvey 2008, 23).
  5. Republic Act 7160 or the “Local Government Code of 1991” sees *barangay* “as the basic political unit, the . . . primary planning and implementing unit of government policies, plans, programs, projects, and activities in the community, and as a forum wherein the collective views of the people may be expressed, crystallized and considered, and where disputes may be amicably settled.” As a spatial and physical entity, a barangay must have “at least two thousand (2,000) inhabitants as certified by the National Statistics Office except in cities and municipalities within Metro Manila and other metropolitan political subdivisions or in highly urbanized cities where such territory shall have a certified population of at least five thousand (5,000) inhabitants.”

along Tandang Sora Avenue.<sup>6</sup> Moro community leaders fought long and hard for this five-hectare territory and their way of life that combines the many worlds of their varied heritage into unique configurations. Traditional elders from various ethnolinguistic groups have consolidated their own governance structures, liaising with the local barangay government.<sup>7</sup> Economic opportunities in the city give rise to changing dynamics between men and women, the young and the old, and ultimately between outsiders and insiders.<sup>8</sup> Daily, the *adhan* (call to prayer) of the five mosques within—the Al Salam, Al Ahbrar, Al Ikhlas, Rahma, and Mohammadiyah—can be heard in and out of the compound.

I grew up to the sound of these *adhan*, my own home of twenty years a mere kilometer away from the compound. Outsiders to the compound interpret the many mosques as signs of disunity, correlating the diversity within to the assumed poverty of the residents, and ongoing “Moro wars” in Southern Philippines. But insiders interpret

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6. The Al Salam Mosque Compound’s formal name is unknown to many in Quezon City. Those in the neighborhood know the area as “Muslim compound,” or simply “compound.” Those from the farther areas of Quezon City know it as “Culiat,” confusing that Culiat is in fact the entirety of the barangay that the compound is situated in, and not just the enclave itself. The entire Iglesia Ni Cristo (INC) religious complex occupies most of Barangay Culiat, but people refer to INC properties as part of “Central”—derived from the religious denomination’s imposing Central Temple, which overlooks Commonwealth Avenue. To many passersby, “Culiat” refers to the Muslim compound, and “Central” are the INC parts of town. Names alone delineate the two entities, as if they were separate worlds, when in fact the two communities’ borders overlap.
  7. Regadio’s (2015) unpublished study gives in-depth detail about the systems of governance in place at the Culiat compound, though framed through the lens of “Morospora,” or Moro diaspora. His framework intends to show how his respondents, drawing from their sense of diaspora, re-place identities once displaced. The density of his data shows, however, the negotiations and ultimately, innovations, that Moro leaders have designed and implemented to create—as opposed to simply “re-create”—their place within the power relations of the local barangay government. This paper draws heavily from the leads generated by his data, but takes a different view on a community’s being bound to a sense of dislocation from their new home. As reviewers of this article have pointed out, there is yet any confirmation if his respondents have accepted the concept of “Morospora” themselves.
  8. Taqueban (2012) discusses how living in Manila provided women of the compound more economic opportunities than they had back in their Mindanao homelands, shifting traditional gender dynamics. My personal correspondences with women leaders of the compound confirm this, the discussion of which deserves a separate paper.

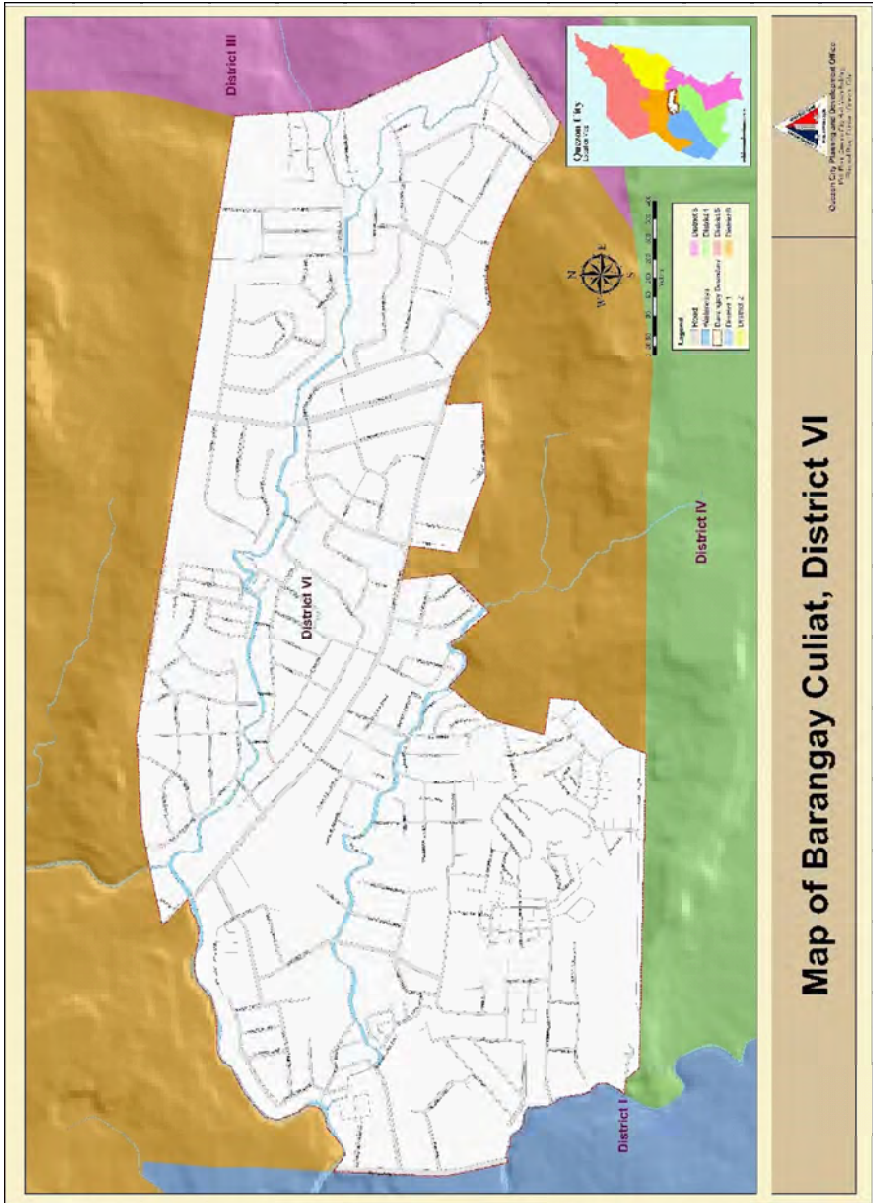


Figure 1. Map of Barangay Culiat from the Quezon City Planning and Development Office.

glaring inconsistency: Why are many mosques seen as signs of hostility, when there are just as many different churches, temples, and chapels in the neighborhood?

Thu Suong Thi Nguyen's (2010, 164) argument, that "(re) territorialization [are] outcomes of ongoing political struggle" rings true in the case of Al Salam. Migrants are pressured by expectations applied to them, due to "circumstances of painful postcolonial hybridity" (Radhakrishnan 1993 in Nguyen 2010, 160). Inequality ensues when the majority are not held to the same.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Nguyen's hybrid placemaking framework draws from Henri Lefebvre's (1991) theory of spatial production comprised of (1) space of representation, (2) spatial practices, and (3) representation of space. The first looks at what constraints actors try to overcome through placemaking. The second describes how a place is built, and looks at how actors behave in it to reflect their values and world views. Finally, the third discusses the ideals that actors aim for in their placemaking. Hybrid placemaking takes these three into consideration to infer how migrant actors interpret their uneven conditions, and transform these difficulties into political action.

This study was inspired by Taqueban (2012), Regadio (2015), and Watanabe (2008a; 2008b), who have all taken ethnographic approaches, as I have, in studying various aspects of the Al Salam Mosque Compound. The story of mosque making in this study continues and updates Watanabe's (2008a; 2008b) investigation on the relationship between mosques and Moro migrant settlements in Metro Manila, specifically in Culiati. My chosen framework not only considers the tensions between insiders and outsiders to the compound, as shown in Taqueban (2012) and Regadio (2015), but also further examines the tensions insiders have with one another. I wish to contribute an analysis that highlights how these tensions intersect and result in the specific physical environment of the compound. Likewise, the physical experiences of the compound co-constitute its social experiences.

Data was gathered primarily via on-site, one-on-one unstructured interviews with main respondents: *imam* (Muslim leader), mosque owners, and administrators. Incidental interviews were also conducted among residents living near the mosque, and mosque caretakers.

it differently. Interviews with residents of the compound point out a formal correspondence with the Culiat Barangay Hall, through the staff of *sangguniang barangay* member<sup>9</sup> Ameerah Ibrahim, facilitated my entry into the community. Residents curious about my recurring visits eventually became respondents. To those who were neither administrators nor owners of the mosques in question, I gathered data on their personal experiences in the compound. Interactions with them led to interviews with the main respondents.

Questions to main respondents focused on their life stories, tracing their journey from Mindanao to the compound, the narratives behind how and why their respective mosques were built, and their interpretations of the narratives of the other mosques around them. This approach was inspired largely by Patricia Horvatic's (1992) dissertation on Muslim discourses in Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. Horvatic's interviews were structured around how respondents reconciled their relationships with relatives and neighbors who had differing views on Islam. Guided also by Watanabe's (2008b) inquiry on the function of mosques, I asked them what mosques are for, and what mosques meant to the community. The final questions revolved around whether they felt having many mosques in one compound was desirable or not. Interviews were conducted mostly in Tagalog, the lingua franca of Metro Manila, though there were instances when witnesses to the interviews offered inputs in their mother tongue, which the main respondent would translate into Tagalog. Majority of the interviews were audio recorded, though I relied heavily on handwritten field notes.

I conducted eight main interviews within three weeks, with sessions averaging two hours per respondent. Interviews were conducted mostly in the respondents' residences, in view of family members, visitors, and sometimes, other respondents. At the end of each interview, respondents allowed me to see portions of the mosque, but only the first chambers, and only when activity was dismal. I was able to interview the representatives of all the mosques, save for one. Representatives of the Al Ahbrar Mosque declined formal interviews

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9. Barangay council member is an elective post; as prescribed by Republic Act 7160, "the *sangguniang barangay*, the legislative body of the barangay, shall be composed of the *punong barangay* as presiding officer, and the seven (7) regular *sangguniang barangay* members elected at large and *sangguniang kabataan* chairman, as members."

for undisclosed reasons, though several of them generously guided me to other respondents.

Security concerns halted my fieldwork. The conclusion of the national elections in June 2016 and subsequent implementation of the current administration's "war on drugs" have worsened the raids and shoot-outs within the compound, compromising further entry. My respondents have advised me not to return to the compound, and I have not ever since. Given the sensitivity of some of the information disclosed in their interviews, I also deemed it necessary to protect the identities of the respondents. Thus, names of respondents are anonymized, many details that may make them readily identifiable are excluded from discussion, and some information is not attributed to specific individuals.

I take caution, as Efenita Taqueban (2012) does, in the implication of my own politics in ethnographic writing. I heard and wrote the stories as a resident of Barangay Culiati since 1996 to present, a woman born to a middle-class Catholic background. My data is limited to the information presented to me in Tagalog, and mediated by my outsider status. I consider this study an attempt at documenting the agency of my often negatively-stereotyped neighbors. For whatever lapses this study presents, I take full responsibility for my "systematic construction of others and [myself] through others" (Clifford 1986, 121 quoted in Taqueban 2012, 3). That the way one describes the other, the meanings of their ideas, are through stories, and that these stories are "morally charged" (Clifford 1986, 100 quoted in Taqueban 2012, 2).

## MAKING SPACE: FROM MINDANAO TO MANILA

### Pressures from Without

"Original objective ng Libya ay maging Islamic center, *dasalan lang dapat. Kaya nagkaroon ng mga ganitong gulo kasi hinaluan na ng residente, ng business, ng mga transient,*" (Libya's original objective was to make this an Islamic center, for religious purposes only. But it's become more complicated because residents, businesses, and transients came into the mix) Hadji A, the compound's de facto chairperson, tells me.<sup>10</sup> But even he cannot deny that historical events in Mindanao and Manila

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10. Hadji A, interview by the author, May 21, 2016, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.



pushed many Muslims out of their original homes, and into the crucial safe haven that was the compound.

The compound started out as a religious endowment from the Libyan government to the Islamic Directorate of the Philippines (IDP) in 1971. What was ideally a quiet place for worship, far from the bustling metropolis, became a bustling cosmopolitan space for migrants in two decades. Several major events spurred waves of mass migrations to Culiat. First, the declaration of martial law in 1972 led to intensified civil war against Moro secessionist groups, resulting in civilian massacres and massive displacement in Mindanao.<sup>11</sup> Another was in 1986, when homes in the Islamic Center in Quiapo, Manila were demolished (Watanabe 2008a).

Third was the “Battle for Al Salam” in the 1990s. A land dispute ensued in 1989 when, unbeknownst to the residents of the compound, new officers of the IDP sold the Culiat estate to members of the dominant Christian denomination, the Iglesia Ni Cristo (INC, Church of Christ).<sup>12</sup> In 1990, a demolition attempt led to an armed encounter between INC agents and Muslim residents. This garnered mainstream media attention, as casualties included several Saudi Arabian and Pakistani students, sympathizers of the residents. Atty. Blo Umpar Adiong, an elder member of the IDP, filed a lawsuit against the INC for ownership of the compound that same year. Protests in support of the Muslims’ legal battle included shows of arms, youth-led mass mobilizations, and media campaigns. To deter resettlements and demolitions, Moro leaders encouraged more Muslims to reside in the compound. The legal battle was won when the Supreme Court finally conferred ownership to the residents in 1997 (Watanabe 2008b). Shortly after, the Estrada administration would declare an “all-out war” against separatist movements in Mindanao, causing yet another wave of migrants in 2000 (Taqueban 2012).

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11. Hernandez (2014, 52) notes: “The event that triggered the group-building process was the so-called Jabidah massacre on the night of March 18, 1968. The Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos ordered soldiers to infiltrate Sabah in his quest to occupy the Malaysian territory claimed by the Philippines. When 28 Muslim soldiers refused, they were massacred. This event is regarded as the causal event behind the modern Moro insurgencies in the Southern Philippines.”

12. Reed (2001) provides an overview on the rise to prominence of the INC in the Philippines, with chapters specifically focused on the establishment of the group’s “New City of Faith” in the Tandang Sora area. The contrasts between the developments of the INC and Muslim communities in Culiat make for interesting further study.



Figure 2. Satellite view of Al Salam Mosque Compound from Google Map.

The “Battle for Al Salam” was framed as a victory not only for the Culiat settlers, but for Islam as well. Just as Moros had defended their homeland against the Spanish and American colonizers, so have the residents of the compound “reclaimed” their land from nonbelievers (Watanabe 2008a). Residents of the compound continue to invoke participation in the demolitions, armed clashes, and mobilizations during the land dispute to legitimize their leadership in the community. Riding on the energy of the victory over the land dispute, Moro leaders established the Quezon City Muslim Consultative Council (QCMCC), officially adopted by the city government in 2004. But nowadays, only few of the residents remember this landmark struggle. Majority of the current residents are transients, applicant overseas workers to the Middle East, waiting to be deployed (Taqueban 2012).

Still, the compound remains a bastion for the 531 permanent households within (Regadio 2015).<sup>13</sup> Muslim residents seek sanctuary from the growing encroachment of the non-Muslim majority from the outside. An aerial view of Salam further emphasizes its enclosure (figure 2). To the north, the Quezon City Police District Precinct No. 3 and the Culiat Barangay Hall flank its entrance. To the west, it is bounded by the New Era Elementary School, to the south New Era University campus, and to the east by the Liberato-Kanekoa Memorial Temple-Pentecostal Church, and the religious Institute for Consecrated Life in Asia.

Taqueban (2012, 13) says it best when she describes the “two-fold stigma for Salam residents—that of being poor, and the implications of being Muslim.” Stereotyping makes it hard for the migrants to study in public schools and get decent jobs. There is an overwhelming sense of imbalance as Muslims are increasingly pressured to assimilate. Moro professionals bear the burden of being “double-bladed”—versed in Islamic and Philippine constitutional law (which has also been dubbed “Christian law” by some residents), and familiar with Muslim, Christian, and Catholic customs. They feel frustrated, however, that many Filipinos, especially local government officials, are ignorant of Islam and its traditions.

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13. As per Regadio’s (2015) data the ethnolinguistic breakdown of the households is such: Of the 531 households, the Tausug (186 households), Maranao (147 households), and Maguindanao (107 households) comprise the majority. The rest are divided among Iranun (68 households), Yakan (18 households), and Sama (5 households).

The compound is also notorious for its reputed connections to illegal drug trade, terrorism, and violence. Every time “Islamist terrorists” made the news, the local law enforcement would conduct raids, engage in shoot-outs, and unlawful arrests in Salam—shows of power now worsened by the Duterte administration’s “war on drugs.”<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, the hybrid governance system,<sup>15</sup> religious freedom, and the mix of Manila and Mindanao traditions that the compound offers are unique features that keep others attached to the place. The compound is an amalgamation of all the pull factors seen in other urban Muslim communities—state intervention, economic networks, diaspora, and tribal cooperation.

Despite the “people power” style demonstrations evoked during the land dispute (Watanabe 2008b), leaders express the need for strongman leadership. Hierarchy is correlated with discipline, whereas democracy is not. As Hadji A puts it: “*Hindi p’wedeng pantay-pantay na tuloy parang democracy, walang disiplina*” (We can’t be equal as if we’re in a democracy, without discipline).<sup>16</sup> And yet, the several respondents have likened the sultanate, the datanship system, to federalism and have used the same to justify the growing number of mosques.<sup>17</sup> Federalism, meanwhile, comes from the Latin word *foedus*, meaning covenant. This implies the commitment of equals, quite a democratic concept.

The united Muslim front is a fragile veneer that residents of the compound find hard to maintain because it is expressed in practices that are interpreted differently by the non-Muslim majority. For

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14. Acts of violent othering persist in the compound. National news related to secessionists, terrorist groups, kidnap for ransom, and other hostilities in Southern Philippines is bound to trigger arrests and raids in Salam. While illegal drugs have long been a problem in the compound, the “war on drugs” have legitimized more regular shows of power. Over 145 suspects were arrested in the compound in the first quarter alone of Duterte’s administration. See Yee (2016).

15. Regadio’s study (2015) is an in-depth ethnographic documentation of the compound’s governance systems, which incorporates clan and ethnolinguistic ties to simulate datu and sultan hierarchies. Most interesting of all are the layers with which justice is interpreted through local customs, the Sharia court and the local barangay.

16. Hadji A, interview by the author, May 21, 2016, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

17. Datu is the leader of an indigenous group occupying a distinct locality. An apt comparison can be drawn between the many mosques of Culiati, and the divergent educational systems among indigenous groups in Cambodia in Lall and South (2014). In their study, respondents interpret resistance to the national school system as “federalism from below.”

example, residents take pride in their unique tribal council governance system. Outsiders perceive the division of leadership as lack of peace. As a result, Muslim leaders pressure their constituents to seek redress from the barangay as a last resort, lest they be seen as incapable of handling their own concerns (Regadio 2015). Meanwhile, local law enforcement has handled publicized conflicts between members of other religious denominations rather differently.<sup>18</sup>

### Fractures from Within

As with any diverse community, there are fractures within. Differences drawn along ethnolinguistic lines often prevail over class differences. After the land dispute, intertribal organizations, once main players during the protests, receded from the frontline (Watanabe 2008b). Residents stereotype one another as well, though it is common for residents to intermarry across ethnic groups. The Maranao, Tausug, and Maguindanao compete demonstratively for leadership, as these three are affiliated historically with their own respective sultanates in Mindanao. Leadership is a royal privilege, not an open position says Sheikh B, a co-founder of the Rahma Mosque. “*Pag ‘di ka royal blood, ‘di ka p’wede . . . kahit sa aming mga Maranao, kahit millionaire ka, kung ‘di ka belong sa royal, hindi ka magiging presidente, kasi hindi mo nabibili ‘yan eh.*” (If you do not have a royal blood, you can’t . . . even with us Maranao, even if you’re a millionaire, if you’re not royal, you can’t be president, because you can’t buy it.)<sup>19</sup>

Other differences are drawn based on the participation in the land dispute. Elderly Tausug, seen as those “who held the fort” during the demolitions, became the majority within the Salam Mosque Madrassah Advisory Council (SMMAC). Tausug are also accused of monopolizing representation to the barangay, as it is the SMMAC chairperson who is appointed to the barangay council.

18. During the height of a corruption scandal against leaders of the INC, the local police force ruled out cases of abduction (Francisco 2015) despite the complainant’s seeming calls for help through a sign indicating “Help. We are held hostage” seen from an INC building in Tandang Sora, and through online social media (Saludes 2015). Investigations were dropped shortly as the INC mobilized thousands of followers to protest the alleged “government intrusion to religious freedom” in August 2015. The protest lasted two days, blocking major highways of Metro Manila (Francisco and Mogato 2015).

19. Sheikh B, interview by the author, May 15, 2016, informant’s residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

Residents also differ in their homeward orientation. Many migrants are inclined to return home. They actively keep ties with relatives at home, manage businesses over long distances, if not travel occasionally to Mindanao. Particularly migrants from Jolo or Basilan tend to have less reason to return. Like Hassan, other elder members of the SMMAC share similar reasons for fleeing their hometown: martial law-era massacres,<sup>20</sup> terrorist attacks from kidnap for ransom group Abu Sayyaf,<sup>21</sup> and violent clan wars between ethnic groups.<sup>22</sup> Those with positive associations with Mindanao want to “bring Mindanao to Manila” and tend to insist on maintaining ethnolinguistic divides. To those who have been burned by memories of the past, it is more to the ideal *dar al Islam* (world of Islam), than to Mindanao, that they want Manila to return to.

The Al Salam Mosque Compound, as a space of representation, features a community challenged from within and without. Beneath the veneer of the label “Moro” lies an explosive heterogeneity of people who simultaneously accommodate and refuse the essentialism dealt from the Manila majority, and from one another.<sup>23</sup> The responses to

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20. Davao-based indigenous people’s advocate Rodil (1994) notes, “Within two months after the declaration of martial rule, in November 1972, the Moro National Liberation Front-Bangsa Moro Army (MNLFBMA) launched a series of coordinated attacks . . . From the last months of 1972 to December 1976, large scale fighting raged in Moroland. No one knew the score of the dead, the wounded and the displaced. No one, not even the military kept any record, or if they did, this was never made known. A publication made an estimate of deaths, injured, and displaced in the Cotabato provinces from 1969 to the first quarter of 1976 and it came out with the following combined total: Deaths—35,000 to 60,000; Injured—31,000 to 54,000; and Displaced—260,000 to 350,000” (56).

21. Abu Sayyaf, literally meaning “sword of the father” in Arabic, is the name of a terrorist group based in Basilan, famed for beheading foreign captives and kidnap-for-ransom. The group first made international headlines in 1995 for their attack on the Christian western Mindanao town of Ipil. Frake (1998) situates the Abu Sayyaf as part of over 400 years of Muslim insurgency in the Philippines, and discusses how “deadly indifference” and “prevailing violence” against Muslims in Mindanao result in the proliferation of violent groups.

22. Torres’s (2014) anthology on the different states and traditions of clan war is instructive here.

23. This echoes Frake’s (1998, 45) discussion on the formation of the “Moro” identity when he says, “The people who became Muslims did not share anything in common, other than their new religion, that distinguished them as a group from other inhabitants of the Philippines. Moros did not become Muslims. Muslims became Moros, Philippine Muslims.”

these tensions involve delicate processes of identity construction, which involves as much forgetting as it does remembering.<sup>24</sup>

Migrants curate which memories, images, values, and behaviors belong to their new self-image and new homes. The physical space symbolizes victory and enclosure, accommodation and isolation. Political action within is a hybrid of the traditions from Mindanao, and the opportunities granted by Metro Manila. And the community, though united in Islam, is split between fulfilling the expectations of ethnic groups, fellow Muslims, and the non-Muslim majority. It is the complexity of these conditions that shape the residents' spatial practices. Mosque making in particular demonstrates the many ways Moros interpret and engage these conditions.

## MAKING MOSQUES: THE MANY WAYS

### Mosques, Officially

In Manila, mosques mark where the Muslims are. The compound, in its complexity, began as a primary community, but later evolved as a site for secondary and job-centered communities as well.<sup>25</sup> Determining what makes a mosque officially a mosque becomes complex as well. This section discusses the spatial practices of mosque making in the compound.

Mosques, also known by its Arabic name *masjid*, is the only space for the *jama'ah* (congregation) to conduct the *Jumu'ah* (Friday prayer), wherein the imam delivers the weekly *khutbah* (holy sermon). Daily prayers called *sambahayang* (or in Arabic, *salat*) are also performed here. The domed roof and *munara* (minarets) with a crescent symbol distinguish many mosques, but respondents say this is optional. The number of regular *jama'ah*, facilities within the place, and formal recognition from legal and religious institutions are factors as well. In

24. Grosz-Ngate's (2002) study on the Bamanaw of Mali hints at the importance of selective forgetting in the construction of Muslim identity.

25. In Watanabe (2008a), "primary communities" are those where national or international institutions initiated the establishment of a mosque, hence drawing Muslims towards its proximity—mosques first, Muslims later. "Secondary communities," on the other hand are the converse. A significant number of Muslims settled in an area, drawn together by ethnolinguistic ties or commercial interests, and legitimate their settlement through the establishment of mosques. "Job-centered communities" involve the creation of mosques by a concentration of Muslims in certain industries. This prompts the establishment of a mosque in the work site, but not necessarily residences.

addition to the recognition from the barangay and registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) (Watanabe 2008a), respondents add that mosques must be registered with the following to claim official status: the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), the QCMCC, and the Imam Council of the Philippines. These distinguish a mosque from a simple *ranggal* (prayer room).

Watanabe (2008a) also lists the availability of space to perform the salat (which involves multiple prostrations) and a *mihrab* (arched niche) facing the *qibla* (direction of the Kaaba) are enough. Respondents from the compound contend other crucial facilities that mosques must have: areas for ablution (for the living and the dead), spatial divisions for male and female jama'ah, a *minbar* (raised platform for the imam), and a sound amplifier for the adhan.

In the compound, Muslims are encouraged to upgrade traditional ranggal to mosque status based on the number of jama'ah present regularly during the Jumu'ah. Respondents are split as to how many jama'ah it takes. Those who pray at the Al Salam Mosque contend that five are enough. Those from Rahma Masjed say eleven. Watanabe (2008a) offers that forty must be present. These differences may be traced to different strands in Islam. Whatever the doctrinal differences, it is the number and quality of regular jama'ah that either encourages Muslims to modify their ranggal physically or seek the appropriate institutional recognition as a mosque. Conversely, a dismal number of jama'ah discourages them from praying at an already established mosque.

Crucial to all mosques are the imam, administrators, and maintenance personnel. While founders and owners of the mosque can be the administrators themselves, it is not often the case. Administrators appoint which imam conduct the daily prayer and which ones deliver the khutbah during Jumu'ah. Administrators manage the prayer schedules, guide the jama'ah's conduct inside the mosque and oversee the physical maintenance of the mosque. Collection and management of donations are the administrator's prickliest duties. He updates the jama'ah about the donations collected and where it will be spent. For most mosques in the compound, services to the mosque are voluntary and pro-bono.<sup>26</sup> The imam conducts the daily prayers,

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26. It would be interesting to study the relationships between national institutions and mosques across the Metro. A former administrator of the Al Salam Mosque complains that the administrators Golden Mosque in Quiapo are compensated through the NCMF, but those in Al Salam Mosque are not. The NCMF, however, provides *iftar*, the evening meal during Ramadan, to the jama'ah in Culiati.



delivers the khutbah during the Jumu'ah and administers the ceremony for the departed. While there is no official ceremony for one to be an imam, it is often the mosque administration or a council of elders who choose which among the religious become one.

## Five Mosques in One Compound

### *Al Salam Mosque*

The Al Salam Mosque stands in the center of the compound, the oldest among the five mosques in Culiat (figure 3). After the purchase of the estate in 1971, it was only in 1979 that the actual mosque was built through what was then the Commission of Muslim Affairs. Prior to the mosques, residents at the compound would pray at home.

The mosque sits on Libyan Street, almost a hundred meters from the compound gates on Tandang Sora Avenue. In front of it is the compound's headquarters and a series of stalls and stores. There is a basketball court to the right, behind which is the *madrakah*, where children are sent to learn about Islam. The mosque's brown gates are not more than six feet tall. And at the entrance of mosque, right behind the gates, one can often see C, the caretaker, and some goats peacefully resting. Behind the gate, the floor is lined with red tiles and mixed gravel. A cemented overhang with a squat three-arched dome frames the main entrance. Three wide semi-circular windows with green glass line every wall. Within, the floorspace is tiled in white and yellow pillars, both columnar and rectangular are distributed throughout. A painted wooden *minbar* at the farthest end of the room lies next to a simple unadorned *mihrab* at the center.

Having gone through major renovations in the 1980s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Al Salam remains unfinished. Currently, only the first floor is fully painted, cemented, and tiled. From the ground floor, the second floor is obscured by wide horizontal slats. Looking from the outside, concrete hollow blocks are exposed and walls remain undone on the second level, the prayer area for women. Above the second floor, exposed metal rods extend skyward, awaiting the construction of a third floor. Ustadz D, who was formerly involved in Al Salam's administration, estimates a seating capacity of 1,000, if the construction were completed; for now, it seats 300.<sup>27</sup>

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27. Ustadz D, interview by the author, May 12, 2016, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.



Figure 3. Al Salam Mosque. Above, a view of Libyan Street across Al Salam Mosque; below left, the second floor; below right, the first floor. Photos by author, 2016.

### *Al Ahbrar Mosque*

More prominent from the outside is the green and white Al Ahbrar Mosque on Sulu Street (figure 4). Visible from one of the compound's smaller entrances, the Al Ahbrar boasts of a green metal dome and crescent. The two-panel metal door is white, with a green metal relief in the shape of a green dome and crescent, reflecting the actual dome above it. An acrylic sign with the mosque's name hangs from the tower, obscured by skinny palm trees and telephone wires. The otherwise square building displays a thick cemented bulge extending to the street with an air conditioning unit protruding from the side.

Respondents' memories on when the mosque was established vary. The mosque was constructed one night in 1992, says Hadji E, a former member of the SMMAC.<sup>28</sup> According to Hadji F, a long-time member of SMMAC, the construction was in 1983.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, all respondents agree, the Al Ahbrar was second to be built after the Al Salam. According to Hadji E, former SMMAC member Hadji Talib Usman initially asked the council for permission to build *madaris* (plural of *madrasah*, a Muslim school). But one morning, residents of Sulu Street awoke to a cemented stack of hollow blocks, the foundations of the mosque. Usman insisted he had informed SMMAC of his intention to build a mosque. The SMMAC remembered otherwise. The council was taken by surprise when they found out that Usman had registered it with SEC, the QCMCC, and in the barangay, says one of my interviewees.

Usman might have wanted to control the compound using the mosque, says another interviewee. Using the mosque, they could ask money from groups from the Middle East, ask donations from the community. Hadji F adds, "*Ang iba magpatayo ng mosque para lang meron silang masandigan . . . Para meron silang title, para in case humingi sila ng tulong, meron silang ipakita.*" (Others build mosques so that they have something to rely on . . . So that they have a title, in case they ask for assistance, they have something to show for it.)<sup>30</sup>

Unfortunately, intrigues connecting the Al Ahbrar to gunrunning operations have sent Usman into exile. Former and current administrators of the Al Ahbrar have refused interviews for this study.

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28. Hadji E, interview by the author, May 7, 2016, informant's residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

29. Hadji F, interview by the author, May 8, 2016, informant's residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

30. Hadji F, interview.



Figure 4. Front view and side view of the Al Ahbrar Mosque. Photos by author, 2016.

### *Al Ikhlas Mosque*

The Al Ikhlas Mosque, established in 2001, is invisible from the street (figure 5). During my fieldwork, my guide, a resident of the compound for ten years, had difficulty finding it. Even residents on Cotabato Street, the mosque's official address, were not aware of its location. After much asking around, we were pointed to an alley between two houses. The walls were spray painted in blue with the word MOSQUE, drawings of an arrow, and a dome with a crescent. The alleyway was so hidden, the temperature inside the almost two-foot narrow corridor was almost cold, even in mid-afternoon. Upon finding the hand written sign of Al Ikhlas on a metal sliding door, my guide and I shared our first time seeing what others call "Iranun Masjid."

The Al Masjidol Ikhlas Wadaarol Ihsaan, Inc. at 119B Cotabato Street is literally footsteps in front of founder G's house and his *sari-sari* store (a family run, neighborhood variety store). It is a structure



Figure 5. Al Ihklas Mosque. Above left, sign on the steel door; above center, the minrab and mats, interior; above right, shoe rack and blackboard at the entrance. Below, the corridor leading to the mosque. Photos by author, 2016.

with a steel sliding door built in the gaps of the houses beside it, occupying the space of what ought to be a firewall. Sliding it open, G exposes a studio-type room with a fifty-person capacity. There is a shoe rack built on the wall to the right, beside the entrance. Across are prayer rugs, and on the wall are varied displays of the Kaaba and a blackboard. On the leftmost wall is the *minbar*. There are others spaces on the wall to the left, leading into the chamber from which the *muezzin* calls out the *baang* (similar to *adhan*, call for prayer). The mosque has two floors, but its founder plans to build a third one in the future. The first would be for the *madrasah*, the second would be the prayer space for the men, the third for the women. Eventually, G also wants to build a *munara*.

G is an Iranun who has been living in Culiati with his family since 1998. With some of his savings, he bought the Al Ikhlas's lot, which was a dumpsite, from a certain Colonel Makabarud. He cleared one side, made a *silong* (shed), and used this as a *ranggal*. When G found out about the Rahma Masjed—still under construction in 2003—he started hosting Friday prayers at his *ranggal* too. The *jama'ah* encouraged him to officially register the mosque. In fact, a Tausug from the SMMAC donated three bags of cement to G and encouraged him to turn the *ranggal* into a proper prayer room. G makes an excuse of this supposed donation: “*Bakit pa ako magpapaalam sa SMMAC, eh mismong religious leader nila ang tumulong sa akin at nag-encourage na palakihin ko ito?*” (Why should I ask permission from the SMMAC, it was their own religious leader who helped and encouraged me to enlarge this [mosque]?)<sup>31</sup>

G says the mosque was built for the *jama'ah* nearby who made excuses that they could not pray in a mosque that was too far from their homes. Also, the Al Salam is too crowded, and it has taken too long to complete. “*Maluwag ang Islam*” (Islam is not strict), he explains. Those who are weak, sick, or pregnant are exempted from Ramadan, “*pero utang nila 'yun*” (but that becomes their debt).<sup>32</sup> Because Islam is “*maluwag*” (not strict), it can therefore accommodate adjustments. It permits that the Ikhlas and the other mosques provide what the Al Salam Mosque cannot. G agrees, the Qur'an states it is ideal that only one mosque should deliver the *khutbah* per *kawman* (community). If the Al Salam Mosque is completed so that all the *jama'ah* fit during the *Jumu'ah*, then the *khutbah* in Ikhlas should stop.

31. G, interview by the author, May 17, 2016, informant's residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

32. G, interview.

While G agrees that the Al Salam ought to be the central mosque, he disagrees that there is anything wrong with an individual building his own mosque. Mosque-building is part of Muslim's religious obligation. Others may have the money, but only the chosen few respond to the call to build mosques.

### *Rahma Masjed*

Three storeys high, with a prominent metal sign almost ten feet long and a golden dome that stands out in the compound's skyline, the Rahma Masjed is the more prominent mosque in Cotabato Street (figure 6). Sheikh B, one of the mosque's co-founders, tells of a certain Ali Tahib who owned the lot on which the Rahma Masjed now stands. As part of Tahib's dying wishes, he sold the lot to the Residence and Homeowners Maranao Association (RAHMA) in 1999, and a madrasah was built on the site in his honor. The following year, the Rahma Masjed was completed and SEC registered. Sheikh B says construction continues to the present, as the jama'ah plans to add other features such as dorms for the Qur'anic learning center, to house selected trainees for the Hifz-o-Qirat, the competition for Qur'an recitation. The ground floor serves as a reception area for various social gatherings or meetings. The men's section occupies the second floor, and women are on the third. Though the estimated capacity is 200, this seems largely conservative, seeing how the ground floor is also used to accommodate jama'ah during congregations.

*Rahma* in Arabic means mercy. To the jama'ah of the Rahma Masjed, the mosque is also a symbol of teamwork and cooperation. During its early years, each jama'ah was assigned to raise PHP 8,000.00 for construction supplies. Once the foundations were erected, members of the RAHMA personally solicited from rich colleagues who were sure to give big, for word to spread that they gave little would be embarrassing. What sets Rahma apart from the other mosques is that it only takes donations in kind, says Sheikh B. In fact, they have received donations from Saudi Arabians who claim to have learned of the mosque from paratroopers who saw the golden dome from a helicopter. Sheikh B claims the RAHMA has not solicited from Islamic organizations, consulates, or embassies.

The jama'ah not only raised funds for the mosque, but labored on it too. Titles were irrelevant, everyone shoveled cement, carried supplies, and sweated under the sun for free. "*Walang atto-attorney, lahat kami volunteer*" (being an attorney didn't matter, we all volunteered)



Figure 6. The Rahma Masjed. Above left, the mosque's facade, viewed from street; above right, interior, the first floor of Rahma Masjed; below left, Cotabato Street viewed from the mosque's gate; and below right, the gate to the Rahma Qur'anic Learning Center. Photos by author, 2016.



recalls Sheikh B.<sup>33</sup> The men would do manual labor, while the wives contributed food for them. They all ought to have lost weight, if only the wives would stop feeding them so well, he jokes.

While the Rahma has a reputation for being a Maranao Mosque, the jama'ah are mixed. Ustadz D, after resigning from Al Salam, became one of the imam for the Rahma. As there are many mosques in Mindanao, Sheikh B sees no problem with having many mosques in Manila. The more mosques, the more people are called to goodness, the better. Besides, the Al Salam Mosque could no longer accommodate the growing jama'ah.

Leadership comes naturally to Maranaos, especially to those like him who come from a royal bloodline. “*Sa Muslim, mahalaga talaga ang leadership . . . dadalhin mo sa Manila kung ano ka sa Mindanao,*” (to Muslims, leadership is very important . . . you bring to Manila what you were in Mindanao) says Sheikh B.<sup>34</sup> As a Muslim leader, it is his responsibility to be a good example. He actively seeks to work with non-Muslims, hoping to improve their perception of Islam and Muslims. He is proud to say that during meetings of the Culiati High School Parent-Teacher Association, when he mediated heated arguments, some parents have told him “*parang hindi ka Muslim*” (you seem not a Muslim).<sup>35</sup> As a community leader, he proudly recalls how this family home became the headquarters for protesters during the land dispute. As a Maranao leader, he finds no fault in providing his constituents a proper place for worship.

### *Mohammadiyah-yah Mosque*

The name Mohammadiyah-yah is not that known in the neighborhood, but people know where to point you to if you ask for “Bakery Mosque” (figure 7). The Mohammadiyah-yah is on the third level of a building on Muhjaheedin corner Libyan Street. It has no signs, no domes. The building is prominent, but the mosque is not. Hadja H, a Maguindanao from General Santos City in South Cotabato, built the third level of her house in 1996 as a ranggal. In 2003, it was registered at the SEC as the Mohammadiyah-yah. Respondents recall that Hadja H had a recruitment agency on the second floor. The bakery was once in the first floor, a wide studio-like space with only three walls; where the fourth

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33. Sheikh B, interview by the author, May 15, 2016, informant's residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

34. Sheikh B, interview.

35. Sheikh B, interview.



Figure 7. The Mohammadiyyah Mosque on Libyan corner Mujahideen Street. Above, the mosque is on the third floor of the building on the left, the entrance is behind the colored umbrella. Below, interior of the mosque. Photos by author, 2016.

ought to be is a wide gap that opens up to the street. Hadja H now lives on the first floor and has rooms for rent on the second. From the street, one sees the spacious first floor adorned in cloth scrolls with Arabic calligraphy and depictions of the Kaaba. Two wooden benches line up against the corner of the room. To the opposite corner is a closed off area, concealing what seems to be a kitchen and a bedroom. Whether sitting in the bedroom, or on any of the two benches, one can view the street outside, and keep an eye on the entrance to the mosque, an unadorned doorway on the farthest wall of the ground floor.

A narrow staircase behind the doorway winds along the side of the building where one can either turn a corner to an ablution area on the side, or walk up to the entrance of the mosque on the third floor. The mosque is an airy studio with yellow square cement pillars; the metal roof and its beams exposed. Multiple clocks displaying time from various Islamic countries frame the *mihrab* set at the deepest end of the room with red carpet. Meanwhile, a metal wire hung with blankets divides the space for male and female jama'ah on the opposite side of the room. The capacity is approximately 400 persons.

Hadja H is a widow and a mother. As a wealthy member of royalty, she acknowledges, "*hindi ako naghirap tulad ng iba*" (I didn't have it hard like others).<sup>36</sup> Tiban says she need not stay in Culiat, if not for the mosque. Their family has built mosques in the province, but only in Culiat can she keep a mosque in Manila. "*Yan ang isulat mo diyan. Kaya pinatayo 'yan ni [Hadja H] 'yung mosque, dahil namatay ang tatay niya, nanay niya, asawa niya, at anak niya. Para sa kabilang buhay, meron makakarating sa kanila na pamilya niyang namatay.*" (This is what you should write down there. [Hadja H] built the mosque because her father, mother, husband, and child died. So that in the next life, her deceased family will receive something.)<sup>37</sup>

She came to Manila in 1983, but a fire urged her to relocate to her father's property in Culiat. Former president Fidel Ramos, a distant cousin, she says, urged her to lead the community in Culiat. But she refused, uninterested in political entanglements. "*Panahon ni President Ramos, sabi niya, [Hadja H], itaas mo 'yung mga mosque diyan sa Culiat.' Sabi ko, 'May namatay nang mga Pakistani at Arabo, ayoko.'* May bahay naman ako sa Islamic Center. *Pinilit niya ako. Sabi niya, 'Sige na, alang-*

36. Hadja H, interview by the author, May 15, 2016, informant's residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

37. Hadja H, interview.

*alang naman sa akin.*' *Kaya nu'ng 1993 nagpatayo na kami dito. Bahay muna. Nu'ng namatay na [ang tatay ko] unti-unti ko nang naisip; 1999, 2001 pinatayo ko na 'yung mosque.*" (It was during President Ramos's term. He told me, '[Hadja H], build mosques in Culiati,' I told him, 'I don't want to; Pakistani and Arabs were killed there.' I already had a home in the Islamic Center. He urged me, 'Go on, do it for me.' In 1993, we started first with the house. When [my father] died, I thought about building it. In 1999, 2001 I had the mosque built.)<sup>38</sup>

Entrance is exclusive. Hadja H interviews the jama'ah before they are allowed to pray. She built her own mosque "*para tahimik, para hindi makidasal sa mga madudumi*" (to have peace, to avoid praying with the unclean).<sup>39</sup> By *madumi* (unclean), she means the sinful, particularly those involved in drugs. Asked if she would consider praying at the Al Salam, when it's finally completed, she tells me "*Meron na ako ng sarili ko, bakit pa?*" (I already have my own, so what for?)<sup>40</sup>

### Seen, Heard, and Felt

Making many mosques within earshot of each other's adhan is discouraged in the Qur'an. The Al Salam Mosque alone was meant to project a uniform and united *ummah* (religious community) to outsiders. But it could not accommodate the varied needs of the diverse jama'ah within. Separate mosques were built based on perceived inadequacies of other mosques' physical structure, their administration's management of funds, and the language of the khutbah.

Mosque makers in Salam make the best out of their congested compound. Residential areas and public gathering sites, ideally, should be far from a mosque. In Islam, mosques are dedicated to prayer, so much so that unlike Catholic or Christian churches, marriages, baptisms, and religious feasts or celebrations are held outside of the mosque. But space is scarce, and public facilities such as basketball courts and compound headquarters overlap with the borders of Al Salam Mosque on Libyan Street. Though rare, the congestion can escalate to violence. Some respondents recall screaming matches between ball players and jama'ah parking in the basketball court.<sup>41</sup>

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38. Hadja H, interview.

39. Hadja H, interview.

40. Hadja H, interview.

41. Ustadz D, interview by the author, May 12, 2016, Sulu St., Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

Less desirable than living near mosques is living in mosques. During the land dispute, residents camped out in the Al Salam. Once the demonstrations subsided, administrators allowed caretakers' families to continue occupying the mosque and the madaris building. Ustadz D recalls this *haram* (forbidden) act: "*Pinagbigyan na lang family nila mag-squat doon. Kasalanan pa naman na magsama ang mag-asawa sa isang mosque.*" (They allowed the family to squat there. It is a sin for husband and wife to live together in a mosque).<sup>42</sup>

He considers "cleaning out the mosque" (the relocation of mosque and madaris settlers) an unprecedented achievement. Though settlers were armed and unfazed by incoming construction supplies for the renovation of the mosque, Ustadz D says he secured a house for them on Basilan Street and convinced them to move there instead.

Other mosque founders are quick to defend the separation of their mosques from their actual residences, no matter how small the distance. Hadja H says of the Mohammadiyah, for example: "*Solong-solo 'yung sa taas na mosque lang . . . 'Di naman nakahiwalay, pero nasa itaas. Bawal na 'yung bahay ni Allah dito sa baba, kailangan na sa itaas. Qur'an 'yan eh. Pag may gagawa ng mosque na lalabag sa batas ng Qur'an, 'di p'wede. Eh kaso nasa taas 'yun. Kahit naman 'yung Masjid Al-haram sa Saudi, sa Mecca, 'yung mga mall na 'yun may mga mosque din, may upuan na sambahayang. Basta nasa taas, bawal ang nasa baba. Nasa taas lahat.*" (Above, the mosque stands solo . . . It's not separate, but it's on a higher level. It would be wrong to have the house of Allah here downstairs, it should be up there. That's in the Qur'an. It's wrong to not follow the laws of the Qur'an when you make a mosque. But it [the mosque] is upstairs. Even the Masjid Al-haram in Saudi, in Mecca, malls there have mosques too, there are places to sit for the daily prayers. For as long as it's upstairs, downstairs it's forbidden. It's all up there.)<sup>43</sup>

Other than the mosques' proximity to public spaces, design is also crucial for mosque makers. The split of the RAHMA from SMMAC, for example, was supposedly triggered when one party wanted the Al Salam Mosque's post to be shaped into a rectangle, as opposed to the engineer's blueprints, which indicated a columnar post. Parties argued over cost and durability.

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42. Ustadz D, interview.

43. Hadja H, interview by the author, May 15, 2016, informant's residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

The mosque's physical inadequacies are also no longer conducive to prayer. Imam J of Al Salam Mosque himself admits, "*Hindi na magkasya mga tao. Maputik kung umuulan, hindi kumpleto 'yung silong.*" (People don't fit inside anymore. Mud gets in when it rains, the ceiling isn't completed yet).<sup>44</sup> G mentions that residents on Cotabato Street are unable to hear the baang from Al Salam.<sup>45</sup> Sheikh B says institutions such as the NCMF, the QCMCC, and the Imam Council of the Philippines are adequate signs of Moro unity, the *ummah* need not suffer a cramped mosque if only to look "united" to outsiders.<sup>46</sup>

As Al Salam remains unfinished, it becomes the visual element which supplements aural elements of gossip and intrigue, reminding jama'ah of the SMMAC's shortcomings. The exposed concrete hollow blocks and skeletal structure of the Al Salam offer no reassurance against the talk of malversation of donations, and the competing adhan emitted from other nearby mosques. This visual and aural environment have triggered the dispersal of the jama'ah, violent confrontations, and even the resignation of former administrators. One interviewee, having witnessed the changes within the administrative roster since the 1990s regrets: "*Bihira tayong makahanap ng tao na devoted to Allah . . . 'yung iba humanap ng paraan kumita . . . Maraming foreigner ang dating dito sumasamba, bago pa sila nag-away-away lahat . . . More or less twenty years na ako dito, hindi pa rin daw nakokompleto ang mosque . . . 'Yung iba, sa Maranao, sa Maguindanao natapos agad.*" (We rarely find a person devoted to Allah . . . others find ways to earn a profit . . . Many foreigners worshipped here once, before they started fighting amongst themselves . . . More or less I've been here twenty years, and the mosque remains unfinished. Others, the Maranao and Maguindanao [mosques] were completed quickly.)<sup>47</sup>

One interviewee noted that donations during the time of a previous mosque administrator would have sufficed for the complete renovation of the Al Salam. The victory over the land dispute energized Muslims from all over to contribute. To assure transparency, donations in cash collected during congregations were written on a public

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44. Imam J, interview by the author, May 19, 2016, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

45. G, interview by the author, May 17, 2016, informant's residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

46. Sheikh B, interview by the author, May 15, 2016, informant's residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

47. C, interview by the author, May 19, 2016, Al Salam Mosque, Quezon City.

blackboard. Large amounts of cash were refused, and donors were requested to deliver in kind instead. Supplies and equipment were delivered to the compound, for all the jama'ah to see. The same is practiced in the Al Ikhlas and the Rahma Masjed. The mosques' respective founders and administrators accept donations in kind only, and labor on the mosque was done for free. While respondents believe that this distinguishes them from one another, national institutions seem unaware. During the 2005 national elections, a candidate gave donations to all the mosques in Culiat. One mosque founder complained that someone misrepresented his mosque in his absence and absconded with the funds.

On various occasions, jama'ah would issue public physical threats, angered by the presence of suspect administrators. Though confrontations were handled via each ethnic group's traditional grievance councils, the Al Salam Mosque's negative reputation led others to break away. Patrons, turned off by the intrigues, withdrew their regular donations. The Saudi Arabian embassy withdrew its annual Ramadan donations supposedly due to allegations of corruption. A contribution of supposedly a million pesos had been left unaccounted for. Recalling the incident, one mosque founder remarked, "*Kung ako bigyan ng one million, tignan natin kung 'di kumintab ito [mosque].*" (If I were given a million, you'll see how I make this mosque shine.)

Visual prominence is a source of status as well. The Al Salam, while in disrepair, has definitely more recall with insiders and outsiders than the concealed Al Ikhlas and Mohammadiyah mosques. A lack of visible nameplates, *munara*, and domes prevent unfamiliar jama'ah from wandering into these smaller mosques. The founders of the mosque are rendered anonymous as well, easily bypassed by influential outsiders. Domes on the Al Ahbrar, Al Salam, and Rahma Masjed have served as beacons of Islam to Muslims outside of Culiat. As with other studies (Regadio 2015; Taqueban 2012; Watanabe 2008b), Muslim respondents agree that the presence of domes encouraged them to enter the compound, despite not having affiliations within.

Other than the physical structure, the visual prominence of labor done on the mosque is indicative of the founders' integrity as well. Constructions done overnight, discreetly, or gradually are seen as a reflection of the founder's lack of integrity. Stealth and deception are implicated when the jama'ah are "surprised" that a mosque has suddenly been built or registered officially. The speed with which a mosque was built is also suspect. Taking too long to complete a

mosque indicates suspicious financial management. A quick construction of a mosque indicates the wealth of the founder—which is suspect to positive and negative connotations as well. Meanwhile, the visual confirmation of construction supplies, neighbors doing manual labor, or public billboards written on to reflect collections are interpreted as signs of transparency, honesty, and integrity.

A crucial aural element to religious placemaking is the language of the khutbah during the Jumu'ah. The imam in the Al Salam Mosque are expected to be multilingual, able to deliver the khutbah in English, Tagalog, and Arabic. But unlike in other multilingual places of worship, mosques in the compound do not have set schedules for sermons to be delivered entirely in one language. The imam, based on his perception of the crowd's composition, switches spontaneously from one language to another as he delivers his khutbah. The SMMAC consider it enough that English and Tagalog to be the lingua franca, understood by the majority. Arabic is the necessary holy language. Some respondents from SMMAC insist that the khutbah need not be spoken in one's mother tongue, it is the responsibility of Muslims anyways to learn Arabic.

I, a Pakistani resident of the compound since 1994, has worshipped in the various mosques within Culiat. He points out that not all imams translate their khutbah. Since the jama'ah cannot interrupt the imam during the khutbah to ask for a translation, they sit through it without understanding anything. Instead of asking the imam to change languages next time, they would rather look for another mosque where their language is spoken.<sup>48</sup> Ustadz D, a multilingual imam himself, understands the affinity jama'ah have for their own language. "*Ang mga tribo-tribo*" (The people of the different ethnic groups), do not "feel" the khutbah as much if it is in Tagalog, English, or Arabic, he tells me, placing a palm on his chest.<sup>49</sup> The responsibility of learning more languages lies with the imam, not the jama'ah.

The imam in Mohammadiyah, Al Ikhlas, and Rahma mosques deliver their khutbah in English, Tagalog, and Arabic as well, but supplemented with Maranao, Maguindanao, and Iranun, often reflecting the mother tongue of the founders. Sheikh B insists this diversity is

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48. I, interview by the author, May 19, 2016, informant's residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

49. Ustadz D, interview by the author, May 12, 2016, Sulu St., Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.



necessary, since not all jama'ah face the same concerns. Imams need not be uniform, the content of their khutbah ought to reflect the sentiments and nuanced needs of their respective congregations. The lack of mother tongue khutbah indicate contested strategies in representing unity within the community. The mostly Tausug SMMAC aim for a flattening of tribal differences.

The largely Tausug SMMAC have not insisted on the Tausug language in Al Salam, due probably to the shared negative memories of Jolo and Basilan. What they have done however is to hold on to the identity formed during the strategically essentialist campaign for the land dispute, hence the active campaign to concentrate jama'ah to Al Salam.

One mosque founder denies tribal affiliation as his main impetus for building the mosque. "*Dahil ba Iranun ako? May dugo akong Maranao, Maguindanao.*" (Is it because I am Iranun? I have Maranao and Maguindanao blood too.)<sup>50</sup> Like him, many of the jama'ah are multiethnic and multilingual. He feels all this talk of tribalism is merely diverting attention away from the corruption allegations.

While nonphysical, the boundaries drawn around the mosques based on the inclusivity and exclusivity of the jama'ah are also tactile experiences meant to reflect the religiosity and cleanliness of the mosque leaders. Some SMMAC members have accused other mosques of denying entry to certain jama'ah, but it is only Hadja H who confirms that she does. The Rahma, Al Ahbrar, and Al Ikhlas, like the Al Salam, accommodate jama'ah from all backgrounds. Despite Al Ikhlas being near his doorstep, G does not actively filter the jama'ah. One might argue however that the Ikhlas' seeming invisibility from the street is filter enough.

Hadja H is unique when she says that praying alongside the sinful diminishes her *pahala* (reward for the faithful). The sins of one person in the jama'ah infect the others, the "clean" ones are "sullied" by the sinful. The respondents time and again recall the Islamic concept of cleanliness. To be clean one must wash the body before prayer, and clear the mind of negative thoughts. For those who filter the jama'ah, cleanliness also involves avoiding bad company.

"*Oo, nakakahawa ang kasalanan ng isang jama'ah sa kapwa jama'ah.*" (Yes, the sin of one jama'ah may infect the other jama'ah.) An imam

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50. Interview by the author, May 17, 2016, informant's residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

of Al Salam Mosque agrees, but it is not the Islam's way to stop a person from entering a mosque.<sup>51</sup> "A true mosque is open," says I.<sup>52</sup> The collective sins of the jama'ah do not overpower the spiritually cleansing capacities of a mosque. For some respondents, a mosque heals an ailing soul. Hadji A puts it eloquently: "*Parang hospital para sa kaluluwa, lahat ng sakit ng utak at puso pinapagaling ng khutbah kasi walang ibang ginagawa sa mosque kundi anyayahan ka sa kabutihan.*" (Like a hospital for the soul, all the illnesses of the mind and heart are healed by the khutbah because the mosque does nothing but invite us all to goodness.)<sup>53</sup>

Respondents interpret hearing the adhan as a reminder to be a good person. It invites one to think of Allah instead of being distracted by the *saitan* (evil spirit). That is why it is important for the *bilal* (muezzin) to sing the adhan well, it should awaken you and move you. Prayers are physical exercise and spiritual exercise as well, the moving around helps send bad thoughts away. The *saitan* are also turned off by the *baang* because they know there are religious persons around. So while many overlapping *baang* seem noisy to non-Muslims, Muslims interpret these as constant reminders of Allah's presence.

Mosques do create and verify leaders of a Muslim community (Watanabe 2008a). The physical integrity, financial transparency, and openness of a mosque reflect its founders' religiosity and generosity. Though mosque-building and management seem a competitive strategy to vie for positions of influence in the community, "keeping the peace" cements a person's leadership status.

Peace is reflected in the discipline of the jama'ah. Hadja H, by selecting her jama'ah ensures that the Mohammadiyah is dissociated from criminals. Sheikh B contends that Maranao pride and the elders' strictness keep the Rahma Masjed's jama'ah away from trouble. Ustadz D, during his involvement with Al Salam's administration, formed the Bantay Bayan, volunteer gatekeepers to the compound. Drug busting became part of his religious calling, as he faced the ire of conspiring neighbors, impostors, and even corrupt law enforcers, the voice of Allah guiding him in determining suspects. And while all these

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51. Interview by the author, May 19, 2016, Al Salam Mosque Compound Headquarters, Quezon City.

52. I, interview by the author, May 19, 2016, informant's residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

53. Hadji A, interview by the author, May 24, 2016, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

examples of discipline seem highly punitive, Hadji A, in his nonviolence, retains the respect of many mosque founders.

While other members of the SMMAC berated G for building the Al Ikhlas, Hadji A was noted for quelling the fight and declaring that any offering to Allah should not be torn down. “*Pinagbigyan na lang*” (Let them have what they want) or “*Pinabayaan na lang*” (Let it be) is the chairman’s response to every new mosque. “*Pinahintulutan na lang kasi para naman sa Panginoon.*” (We let it be since it is for our Lord.)<sup>54</sup>

While mosque founders argue that they multiply the pahala of the community by building more mosques, the SMMAC argues for concentrating pahala towards the central mosque. Individuals gain pahala for merely having the intention to pray. They get additional pahala for walking to the mosque, calling others to pray, and for the actual prayer ritual itself. The pahala that an individual gets is multiplied by the number of steps they take going to the mosque, and by the number of jama’ah praying alongside him. Even the mosque accumulates its own pahala, based on the number and quality of its jama’ah. Thus, according to one interviewee, the jama’ah ought to bear the distance of the mosque from their homes and not expect prayers to be convenient. Every step towards the mosque has a pahala point—hence those living farther from the mosque have more pahala advantages than those living near it. The same interviewee insists that having many mosques dilutes the pahala that the community gains.

The aforementioned interviewee concedes that, “*Obligasyon talaga ng isang Muslim na magpatayo ng mosque, kasama na dito ‘yung dahil may pahala siyang matatanggap, at dahil service niya ito kay Allah.*” (It really is the obligation of a Muslim to build mosques because of the pahala he receives, and also because it is his service to Allah.)<sup>55</sup> But the special circumstance of being a minority in Manila complicates the freedom to make many mosques. “*Dahilan sa sinasabi nila na sila ang tunay na Muslim, sila ang may karapatan . . . Hindi nila iniisip na nagkakawatak-watak. Pag nagkawatak-watak, wala tayong puwersa.*” (It’s because they insist that they are the true Muslims, they have the right . . . They’re not thinking that it divides us. When we are divided, we have no power.)<sup>56</sup>

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54. Hadji A, interview by the author, May 21, 2016, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

55. Interview by the author, May 8, 2016, informant’s residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

56. Interview, May 8, 2016.

## Congested, Contested Reflections

Others see many mosques as relatively harmless, but Hadji E, like most members of the SMMAC, are the most negatively affected by it. “*Ugali sa Mindanao, nadadala dito,*” (they have brought here how they do things in Mindanao) he laments.<sup>57</sup> From Talipao, Jolo, Hadji E went to Manila to study. But family conflicts in his hometown made him stop his schooling. Although he intended to look after his family there, lack of jobs forced him to return to Manila. Culiati has been his home since the 1970s.

For many Tausug elders of the SMMAC, Mindanao is associated with armed conflicts, missed opportunities, all-out reversals of fortunes; a place they are glad to have escaped. Most of their family are in Culiati. They have little to no opportunity, nor do they have the desire to return to their places of birth. Culiati is the new Mindanao, and the compound is the new hometown. The SMMAC becomes their new “ethnic” group in contrast to the other bigger “ethnic” groups like the INC, the local government, other Muslim communities in the city, and the Manila Christian majority. It makes sense that fealty to Mindanao-based ethnic group is seen as a dilution of the community’s solidarity. One interviewee recognizes that the performance of a united *ummah* may be contrived, but it is crucial.

“*Hindi mabuting bagay ‘yan. Itong lima na masjid dito sa amin, gusto namin mangyari sa Friday prayer, sa iisang mosque lang sila magsisimba. Sa [daily prayer] p’wede sa kanya-kanyang masjid, pero sa Biyernes kailangan ang sermon iisa lang. Jumu’ah nagkanya-kanya na rin.*” (This isn’t good. Though there are five mosques here, for the Friday prayers, we want everyone to pray in just one mosque. For the daily prayers, you can go to your own mosque, but on Fridays, there ought to be just one sermon. It’s the Jumu’ah and yet people want to pursue their own ways.)<sup>58</sup>

“*Ugali sa Mindanao*” (that’s how it is in Mindanao) is an acceptable excuse for other mosque founders. In the case of Sheikh B and Ustadz D, their status as a minority in Manila does not hold them back from pursuing leadership roles. Their careers say to Muslims and non-Muslims alike: leaders in Mindanao lead in Manila too. As there are many mosques in Mindanao, so should there be in Manila. Bringing

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57. Hadji E, interview by the author, May 7, 2016, informant’s residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

58. Hadji E, interview.

Mindanao to Manila is exactly the point, and the city will be better for it.

The discussion on whether many mosques is good or bad does not change a single most important problem, says one interviewee, as the Al Salam main mosque remains unfinished: “*Kung sana binigay na lang nila sa Al Salam ‘yung pera na pinanggawa nila ng mosque, eh di sana tapos na ‘yun ngayon.*” (If they only gave to the Al Salam the money they used to build their own mosque, then it would have been completed by now.)<sup>59</sup>

One interviewee, a Tausug who fled the martial law-era massacres in Jolo, has been a resident of the compound since the 1980s. Now, threats from the Abu Sayyaf prevent him from visiting his hometown. Those terrorists cannot even read and write, how could they understand the Qur’an, he asks me. They should not even call themselves Muslims. To him, a solid Al Salam is critical to keeping the peace. But he recognizes that the SMMAC has its faults too, “[*May*] mga kasamahan din naming mayabang, kaya nawawalan sila ng interes, kaya mas mabuti na humiwalay na sila.” (There are those among us who are arrogant, that’s why others have lost interest, it is better that they separated from us.)<sup>60</sup>

Unfinished or not, the SMMAC still insists Al Salam has the most legitimacy among all the mosques in the compound. It is the oldest, built with the purest intentions, and was initiated by a religious group from the Middle East.

### Mirror Mosques

Hadji A argues, “*Hindi mahalaga ‘yung hitsura ng mosque, basta nagkakaisa ang jama’ah nila.*” (What the mosque looks like doesn’t matter, as long as the jama’ah are united.)<sup>61</sup> But data collected say otherwise. What the jama’ah see and hear do affect how they feel and think about their faith and their community. More importantly the visual, aural, and the tactile (boundaries, congestion, spaciousness, exposure to elements, cleanliness, and others), all sensory experiences of the place spur mosque makers into action.

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59. Interview by the author, May 8, 2016, informant’s residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

60. Interview by the author, May 8, 2016, informant’s residence, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

61. Hadji A, interview by the author, May 24, 2016, Al Salam Mosque Compound, Quezon City.

Religious motivations, such as responding to a special devotion, fulfilling a brethren's dying wishes, or providing for loved ones in the afterlife, drive mosque making. Nonreligious motivations such as dissociating from stigma or vying for social mobility, are interpreted within the religious motifs of cleanliness and Islamic reclamation.

Muslims do move, not only from one home to another, but from one mosque to another, to live in accordance with their perceived status. The status pertains not only to class, but to perceived religiosity, integrity to the community, hierarchy among ethnic groups, continuity of roles in Mindanao, and the maximization of flexibility afforded in Manila. Al Salam's hybridity and the contested place of Moros in the national capital region drive mosque making. These various drives converge and conflict as respondents balance their self-representation to the non-Muslim majority and to one another.

Mosques are seen as a reflection of the jama'ah. Mosque making becomes a deliberate effort for the founders' and the jama'ah's self-representation. Respondents contest which audience to prioritize in their self-representation, however. They acknowledge that, as in the battle for Al Salam, the performance of unity through uniformity, through strategic essentialism, is effective in dealing with the non-Muslim majority.<sup>62</sup> But in balancing their identity as Moro migrant with other ethnolinguistic and religious identities, others refuse homogenization from within. Gains from embodying cultural differences and nuanced loyalties are seen to outweigh the losses incurred.

## MIXED ACTIONS AND MUSLIM IDEALS

Of the five roles that mosques play in a Muslim community, Watanabe (2008b) elides that which many non-Moros take for granted: Mosques are a peaceful place to pray.<sup>63</sup> This seemingly simple objective is the

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62. Watanabe (2008b, 288) explains that "strategic essentialism, a term initially coined by Spivak (1990) to refer to a means by which minority or indigenous groups fought for their survival by defining their identity and culture in essentialist terms." Though Watanabe has hinted at the limits of strategic essentialism, Emily Lee (2011) provides the theoretical questioning of the epistemology of authenticity. Abraham Sakili's (2003) exploration of *tawhid*, the Islamic value for unity in diversity, may serve as a counterpoint for Islamic scholars.

63. The five functions as listed are: 1) represent affinity with Middle Eastern nations, 2) provide political leverage, 3) verifies leaders, 4) exchange of information and building relationships, and 5) act of "reclaiming" what was once Muslim territory (Watanabe 2008b, 31–33).

most crucial and immediate response among the mosque founders of the compound, when asked what mosques mean to them. With the convoluted history of oppression, marginalization, dissent, diaspora, and conditioning attached to a Moro identity in the Philippines, peace seems a privilege more than a right.

Peace is the representation of space that mosque makers aspire for. But the actions towards the goal are contested. In religious placemaking, the community takes into consideration what actions mean to fellow Moros and to the non-Moro majority. Strategic essentialism in previous political mobilization has ingrained a simplistic logic among the non-Moro majority: diversity is divisive, and uniformity is unity; unity is peace. This explains why Moros, though aware of those who are willing to compromise among them, choose to frame the land dispute as a religious conflict (Watanabe 2008b), and consider local government the last resort for settling grievances (Regadio 2015).

Meanwhile, Moros find that while repressing their heterogeneity is effective to certain ends, it can be oppressive, especially when it comes to religion. Expressing one's truth is peace—if not total peace, then peace of mind at least. *Khutbah* in the mother tongue is more felt. Traditional visual motifs and designs seen in mosques are more visceral. Misunderstanding from the outside seems a small price to pay for the peace that the freedom to be different brings. The lack of religious regulatory bodies in Manila also aids this diversity. The NCMF, QCMCC, and Imam Council of the Philippines tend more to be advisory and representative bodies, but do not sanction the disruption of religious orthodoxies. It is exactly this lack of religious sanctions in the compound that its residents celebrate (Taqueban 2012).

The price of misunderstanding comes from without and from within. Mosque makers differ on how to maintain “cleanliness,” a prime Islamic virtue. Some turn to exclusion of *jama'ah*, while others turn to inclusion. Cleanliness tainted by drugs, crime, and terrorism are dealt with in various ways. Other religious leaders engage in disciplining their constituents, while others screen them. Whereas one mosque founder deliberately avoided “dirty” politics to keep the religious purity intact, others dived into civic engagements—either as community organizers, drug busters, *sangguniang barangay* members, and so on.

Peace also manifests in deliberate nonviolence. While the Moros of the Al Salam Mosque Compound have been documented to invoke the “warfreak Moro” stereotype for political mobilization, data collected

on the ground shows that they would rather not fight over disagreements, and are keen to quell violent outbursts of any kind. Neighbors know better than to fan the flames of further conflict. The balance within is already so fragile; conflict management strategies from every cultural source possible is utilized to “keep the peace.” Conflicts and violence abound when the hegemony of one group is enforced—those who cannot return to their hometowns because of terrorist or armed struggles know this. Sanctions are restrictive and lead to further repression. Repression is not peace. “*Pinabayaan na lang*” (Let it be) keeps an uneasy peace between a “riotously heterogenous” minority (Scott 2009, 26). The groups within the compound are not only heterogenous, but there is also a “bandwidth of identities” that each individual shifts to depending on the need (Scott 2009, 281).

While onlookers from outside the compound might say, “*Ang gulo-gulo sa loob*” (it’s so troublesome inside), those who moved to the compound from war-torn Mindanao know where the real *magulo* (trouble) is. Al Salam Mosque Compound, with its noise and congestion, is their newfound peace. Hence, data herein offers no support for consistent use of regulative sanctions against decentralization of the jama’ah, or organizations that successfully implement these. The sanctions, however, to noncompliance of building new mosques are religious: one forgoes the chance to multiply one’s pahala, fulfill all the duties of a Muslim, and leave a legacy. To some mosque makers, praying beside sinful jama’ah can be considered sanction enough.

Peace also manifests in dissociation. Patrons and jama’ah leave mosques “tainted” by intrigue. Deviant Muslims (terrorists, criminals, and others) are labeled “ignorant” of the true meaning of Islam. There is also peace to be had in silence. By refusing to be part of this study, administrators from the Al Ahbrar maintain the mosque’s mystery, and are peacefully spared from an inquisitive outsider such as myself. Interestingly, the SMMAC’s attempt to flatten ethnolinguistic difference is motivated by a pursuit of peace—the elision of ethnic delineations are an attempt to forget, to silence personal memories of war. Memories of war are refreshed enough anyway during every drug bust, raid, terrorist attack, and news of conflict from Mindanao. What SMMAC contends with is that its flattening of tribal differences alienates those who positively associate with Mindanao.

Just as Salam residents linked the land dispute to a narrative of “reclaiming what was once ours,” the community’s mosque makers do too. Respondents express a desire to “return” the Philippines to Islam,



to bring Mindanao to Manila via many mosques. But this involves the delicate balancing act of wooing the non-Moro majority to sympathize with their cause, while simultaneously protecting the diversity of their truths. The Al Salam Mosque is a beacon for displaced Moros nationwide, a symbol of victory over the land dispute. But life after victory is an ongoing struggle as well. Human folly, competition for resources, and the inevitable tensions of being migrant and its inherent minority status led to friction and tainted reputations. Other mosque makers choose to build new mosques as a way to create a new image.

## CONCLUSION

Salam, as a space of representation, provides hybrid circumstances for mosque makers to maximize. Unique opportunities arise such that mosque making is not tied to wealth, civic engagement, or lineage alone.

Spatial practices of mosque makers in Culiat involve shaping the sensory experiences of the jama'ah, through either visual, aural, or tactile elements. With such, mosque makers resist homogenization from within. Visual elements such as the prominence of the mosques, their design, location, and state of completion reflect on the character of mosque founders. Aural elements include gossip and intrigue surrounding the mosque, the language of the khutbah, and the extent to which the adhan of a mosque is heard. Tactile elements include physical and nonphysical boundaries to mosque entrances, the congestion of the jama'ah, and the exposure of the jama'ah to natural elements and the proximity of the mosque to other public gathering spaces. Using these elements, mosque makers amplify or silence ethnic delineations, connections to Mindanao, and links to the Middle East. Mosques can either protect mosque makers from undesirable cohorts, or invite "sinners" to be cleansed. They are a means to isolate from the receiving community, but are more commonly used for political leveraging. Most importantly, mosques are a means to assert individuality. The diversity of mosques allow multiethnic and multilingual Moros the choice to determine which religious space best reflects their unique identity.

Not all mosques are the same, just as not all Muslims are the same. Diversity and competition stimulate Muslims and mosques to up their ante in reflecting their representation of space, or the core values of Islam as best as they can. Mosques symbolize peace, cleanliness, and

healing. More mosques, more adhan, more pahala—a multiplication of goodness all throughout.

This would not be seen as negative, if only the non-Muslim majority were disabused of the aphorism that uniformity is unity. Because of a systematic perpetuation of misrecognition, in which differences are seen as a deviation from a hegemonic ideal (Hernandez 2014), many mosques are seen as the dilution of strength of Islam as a religion, of Moros as a people, rather than the exponential expansion of it. Ironically, strategic essentialism during the land dispute contributed to this malaise. So much so that Muslims tend to interpret “*parang hindi ka Muslim*” (you seem not a Muslim) as a compliment, rather as an affront.

What escapes many non-Muslim inhabitants of Culiat though is a simple truth: More mosques mean more Muslims. And as any Manileño knows, where there is people, there is power. Instead of dismissing the profusion of mosques as a sign of dwindling power, the surrounding receiving community ought to pay more attention to this expanding minority, and learn more about them. The burden of being “double bladed” ought to be shared.

While the receiving community of Culiat and the rest of the non-Moro majority of the Philippines continue to perpetuate misrecognition, friction over which side of the balance to favor continues among members of the Moro community. Provoking this friction is more likely to stimulate the establishment of more mosques and more Muslim communities in the city, rather than their capitulation. ❀

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