

The Maranao Muslims in Lumbayao, Lanao^{*}

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The barrio of Lumbayao in Watu (district), Lanao, is located on the west fringes of beautiful Lake Lanao, about 20 kilometers southwest of Dansalan City. The community's inhabitants are called Maranaos, one of the five main groups of people embracing the Mohammedan religion. (The other groups of Muslim Filipinos are Samals, Tausogs, and Badjaos, all found in the Sulu Archipelago and Basilan Island, and the Magindanaos in Cotabato).

Unlike the Badjaos and Samals who are sea-daring and live mostly in vintas and houses constructed on watery seashores, the Maranaos in this barrio live on land and are mostly tillers of the soil.

The inhabitants are proud to be called Maranaos and are very religious as shown by the number of churches or mosques in the barrio. The people, compared with the other groups of Filipinos, especially the Christians, show no noticeable differences in physical characteristics but certainly differ widely in culture and social organization. Isolation in all its forms—geographical, biological, cultural and social—is very apparent and is responsible for the existence of the wide differences between the Maranao Moslems and the Christian Filipinos.

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Observations of the author on the socio-economic and cultural life of the Maranaos in Lumbayao, Watu, Lanao in 1952. He was a Project Director of the Rural Community Survey Project (PHILCUSA-MSA) and co-author of the Rivera-McMillan Report entitled *Rural Philippines*.

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The Rivera-McMillan report on Rural Philippines in 1952 made the following observations on the differences of a few social and cultural characteristics as compared with the Filipinos in general, namely:

1. Male authority is more dominant in family and society, generally.
2. A few wealthy men have several wives, but monogamous marriages prevail among them as among all Filipino elements.
3. Earlier marriage is encouraged.
4. The custom of dowry is observed in nearly all marriages, with the bride's parents generally receiving the property collected.
5. Divorce can be obtained more easily.
6. Segregation of the sexes is enforced more rigidly, especially after puberty.
7. The Maranao household is large, not because wives have more children each, but because several families often live in the same dwelling. (Several households of the shieks, hadjis and datus contained 20 or 30 persons).
8. The clan organization is stronger with elaborate ritual and hierarchy of functionaries.
9. The datus are more powerful politically than appointed or elected officials of the Philippine Government.
10. Religion probably plays a larger role in the daily behavior of Moslems than of Christians.

11. Formal education is valued less among the Maranaos than among Christian Filipinos, especially with reference to women."

Social Structure

The barrio of Lumbayao by actual enumeration (1952) has a total population of 2,113. There are 311 households and the average number of persons per household is 6.9. This is practically greater by two persons per household than is the usual domestic unit in the Philippines. The Maranao Muslims in this community are very clannish, the families are closely knit and have strong desires to always live together preferably under one common roof.

There are three main distinct social classes namely:

1. Upper class called "Malai-i-bangsa" —These are the sultans, wealthy datu and their relatives. They belong to the royal blood so to speak of.
2. Lower class called "Mabubai-bangsa" or "Matagtao" —The small farmers and the artisans belong to this group.
3. Slave class called "Bisaya"—These are the servants and laborers.

In Lumbayao, most of the families were said to belong to the Malai-i-bangsa. The Bisayan class, however, is getting fewer and fewer every year.

Class position is inherited. The grandchildren of the sultan or men of royal blood will be malai-i-bangsa. If a slave woman marries into a higher rank, she moves out of the Bisaya class and takes the rank of her husband. However, the children between a Bisaya woman and a Malai-i-bangsa man would never inherit the title of a Sultan. Similarly, if the upper class married a lower class, the latter becomes an upper class.

In Lumbayao, there are actually two ruling sultans and four datu. The title of sultan is inherited by one of his sons when he fades out. A son who has the confidence and love of the family and the people under the sultanate is usually the one chosen and not necessarily the oldest son.

Relationship of Political & Religious Institutions

Political power and religion are closely bound to each other among the Maranaos, and for that matter, to all other groups of Moslem Filipinos. The sultans, the Imams (high priests), the datu and the rest of the traditional socio-political organization seem to be the most important governmental institutions rather than the one established by the Philippine Government. If the mayor is not in the confidence or liking of the sultan, he practically is powerless in the community and cannot institute any development projects.

The relationship of the Imam to the Sultan can be illustrated in this manner: The Imam is the high priest. The Katif, the second, reads the Koran. The Modim, the third, is the one who follows the Sultan when the latter enters the church. He lets the people know that the Sultan is coming to the mosque so the worshippers will take notice and stand. The Ameil, the fourth, is the treasurer who divides the money accordingly.

In actual practice, the term "datu" applies to a ruling head of a clan consisting of several or many families. The datu is looked upon with respect by his people or "saccup" who pay tribute to him in cash or kind for services rendered. Loyalty of the people to the ruling class has been exemplary. The datu are very important persons in the community as any important matter for decision will have to be decided by them in a con-

ference called by the sultan. The sultan listens to them but if they disagree among themselves the sultan makes the final decision, in which case the datu will have to agree.

In purely Moslem communities, the traditional datu system of government still prevails and the local chieftains are always called upon by their constituents for advice and instructions and for decisions on local disputes, family and personal troubles and other complicated matters involving the community. These are extra-legal functions of the datu and sultans which the people accept graciously. However, powers and prerogatives of the chieftains are gradually becoming less impressive with the exercise of suffrage wherein the people are made to vote for their local leaders. With the interest of the people now in local issues and in the selection of local leaders and their national representatives, it is believed the days of the datu system are short and may soon come to an end. This is one aspect of social change that may lead to other changes towards social and cultural progress and economic development.

Religion

The Maranaos are all Moslems and their bible is the "Koran". Their religion is far more important in their daily living than elsewhere in the Philippines. With a visit to the holy city of Mecca, a man, a woman or even a child acquires the title of "Hadji". Marriages are legalized by the Imam who also officiates in funeral services and birth ceremonies. Incidentally, the circumcision practices are not performed by the Imam but by the "Pandita", a very devout person who knows how to pray.

The church is very well supported by the community. The Imam receives fees for funerals and gets one tenth of all harvests. If an individual does not go to

church and pray regularly, he is called a Kaffir, a name given to the Christians and to those who are against the Islam Faith. The Moslem Sabbath is Friday, and a cleansing bath is required before entering the mosque for worship.

Marriage

Marriage customs and practices are very well defined. For the boys, marriage is an expensive affair and is therefore a heavy burden. This is true for all classes of people although among the poor the "price" of the bride is proportionately low. Among the upper classes, the bride's price which may be called a "dowry" runs to thousands of pesos plus some carabaos. In many instances, in order to finance a marriage, some mortgages are necessary and the boy may have to resort to asking some financial help from relatives. The dowry must be met, as no legal marriage would be effected without it. In later years, it is the responsibility of the young couple to pay the sum if the money is borrowed from elsewhere.

In marriage, the young Maranao boy and girl are dominated by parental wishes and a very restricted courtship takes place. The boy and girl are not allowed to speak with each other except in groups and when they do, they are closely watched. According to a prominent Hadji in Lumbayao, the educated Moslems are getting impatient with these restrictions but only minor changes or disobedience to the ancient practice have so far taken place.

After the marriage, the young couple lives in the house of the girl's parents at the beginning. If they are going to live in the family of the boy, another payment is required to compensate for the loss of protection and acquaintance of her parents. The women do not have the freedom enjoyed by the Christian women as they could not leave their homes without their husbands' permission.

Divorce

Among the Moslems, marriage is quite difficult to push through because of the heavy and burdensome bride's price but once married, separation by divorce is quite easy. For the husband, it is just a matter of pronouncing "I divorce you" three times to get it legalized. For the woman it's harder. The reasons for common divorces may be minor or serious, ranging from petty quarrels to infidelity although many divorces take place on grounds of non-fertility. When divorce takes place, a property settlement is made between the spouses. If there are no children the property is divided equally into two shares; one for the husband and the other for the wife. If there are children, the property is divided into three shares so that the children will get one share.

Under the religion of Islam, a man may have four wives if he is in a position to support and properly maintain them and the children coming out of the marriages. This Moslem law legalizes the practice of polygamy among the Moslem Filipinos. Not all men marry several wives but quite a number have more than one wife. The second and subsequent marriages always entail the consent and approval of the first wife. Whether or not the wives live together under one roof depends upon the relationship between the women. In a few cases they cannot live together in peace, so separate houses or quarters may be necessary. If a man has several wives, the first wife is the head wife and has the first right to inherit the husband's property in case of death. In cases of quarrels between the women in the same household, it is the husband that settles everything. The husband, as usual, handles the money and does the buying. The family authority is very patriarchal.

Agriculture

The flat and narrow strip of land where the hills rise quickly on its western bor-

der and with Lake Lanao limiting it on the eastern side contains approximately 235 hectares of agricultural land fully devoted to the production of corn, rice, cassava, bananas, vegetables and some coffee. Agriculture is primitive and production is low. About 90% of the 311 households are engaged in agriculture 20% of which are tenant farmers. While the average farm is 4 hectares the actual cultivation is only 2.7. Five land holders own 50.2% of the total area, the largest being 118 hectares.

Housing and Sanitation

Sanitary conditions are very poor. This poses a constant threat to the general health of the people. The use of the rivers and lake for elimination and waste disposal is not only unsightly but also a public health menace. The water for drinking, cooking, and washing is taken from the same source. A few educated Maranaos have some storage tanks for catching rain water for drinking. The rural community survey in 1952 revealed only two deep well pumps and one Antipolo toilet in a barrio of 311 households having 2,113 people.

The barrio has many large and long houses with several families crowding in each house. Sanitary facilities and proper ventilation are very much wanting. The windows are small and oftentimes only narrow slits in the walls are open to admit air and sunlight. When highly communicable diseases like common diarrheas and respiratory infections attack one, they spread unabatedly because of overcrowding and lack of health facilities including elementary knowledge of disease prevention.

It is traditionally customary for several related families to live together which therefore calls for long houses. A Maranao ventured to say that they must live in this crowded fashion for reasons of

economy as it is quite expensive for each family to build its own dwelling. Besides, the whole clan likes to live together and that a large house is not only imposing but also commands prestige. The families with large long houses are people with substantial means according to their social standard. Very often the head belongs to a ruling class classified as: datu, sultan, high priest (imam) and hadji.

Among lower social groups, the houses are small and poorly constructed with light materials of wood, bamboo and nipa. It is usually a single or two-room house with very scanty furniture. The windows are also very small, just sufficient for one to peep out. These small unsightly houses are mostly found on the farms and are owned by the small farmers and tenants.

There is neither a public health physician nor a nurse in the area and the nearest health officers available are in Dansalan City. Medical care in sickness or in childbirth, therefore, comes from the local "quack doctor" called locally as "Pamomolong". They are mostly men and about 10 in number. The midwives (4 in number) are called "Panggowai". Care of the sick, child raising and other related matters pertaining to health follow the old traditional methods and seem not to have been influenced by the new trends and progressive ideas.

A few examples of health practices may be illustrative of the kind of health services existing in the community. In child birth, local midwives are called and they are both men (pang-gowai) and women (pang-gowai abubai). The woman midwife, however, is more popular. These midwives have not had any training and schooling in any midwifery institution nor knowledge in asepsis. The services of the midwife usually cover a period of one week and the condition of payment varies according to the class situation of the mother. It is only in hard and abnormal

labor that the case is brought to Dansalan where a hospital and physicians are available or else a doctor from that city may be called to attend an emergency.

Breast feeding begins immediately and the infant is nursed without a fixed schedule. Solid food is given to the infant at the age of about two months, with the mother chewing the food first before placing it in the infant's mouth. Breast feeding continues for one year or more, and even when the mother is pregnant with the second child. When weaning has been effected, it is customary that the mother and child are separated for a few days, perhaps for adjustment of both.

The boys and girls undergo circumcision rites according to the Moslem practices—the boys between the ages of 12 and 14 and girls from the age of four to the time before menstruation begins.

Education

The people in general are fairly literate as a large number of the population can read and write in Arabic. There is only one 1st grade school of 35 pupils under one teacher. The children of the higher elementary grades go to school in nearby Malaig. Only 12.4% of the school children 6 to 9 years old are attending school as compared with about 50% in other Christian communities, of which 15.2% are males and 9.3% females. Only 29.9% of the population 10 years old and over are not able to read and write and 34.4% of the population 20 years old and over have not completed any grade in the primary system of education under the Bureau of Public Schools.

Many Maranao men speak fairly good English but one hardly finds a woman that speaks another language besides her native tongue. The girls are usually taken out from the public school and kept at home especially when they are approach-

ing the age of puberty. It is also customary that the girls of the upper class are as much as possible secluded from the general public while the poorer women go outside and do all household errands including buying and selling in the market. The restrictions on the education and movement of the Maranao Moslem women limit the intellectual, cultural and social growth of practically one-half of the community's population. The situation indicates that marked conservatism of the Maranao culture still exists among the people.

Taxes

Tax collection is not only slow but poor. In 1951, 75% of land taxes and 85% of other taxes have remained uncollected. This may account largely for the slow growth and progress of the community and the poor public services obtainable in the area.

Unemployment

On employment, the labor force of 14 years old and over show 33.5% and 64.2% among the males and females, respectively, as unemployed and underemployed. The community has not produced any such professionals as doctor, lawyer, nurse, or engineer.

The Arts

In a nearby town, the foundry workers and blacksmiths turn out beautiful brass and steel products such as kris, bolos, daggers of different types and sizes, gongs, flower vases, spittons, replicas of Moslem mosques, and many other artistic products. They are sold in Dansalan mainly as curios for the tourists. They command good prices.

In the world of arts and music, the Maranaos hold on to their own, unaffected by Western cultures. The songs are purely oriental and have the characteristics of a Malay cultural background. The long

and repetitious recitals of unwritten epics usually portray the achievements, grandeur and greatness of the Maranao heroes centuries past. The dances and musical instruments are purely oriental and closely similar to those observed and found in Indonesia with some tint of Arabic influence. The musical instruments are few, namely the kolintals, flute, brass gong and a few others. A play of the fan in romantic scenes especially in love making is an important feature in some entertainments.

Isolation, A Roadblock to Progress

The inhabitants in Lumbayao are generally fairly wealthy compared to other Moslem communities in Lanao. The educated leaders are now fast awakening and are recognizing the importance of education in the development of their youth and in their efforts towards social and economic progress. They are now beginning to realize the importance of technological knowledge as it affects their daily lives especially in the fields of agriculture, public health, education, and industry. They are also realizing that their state of isolation and traditional practice of keeping themselves aloof from the outside world is a drawback to progress. A story as told by an influential Hadji is quite illustrative. During the early decades of the American administration in Lanao, the sultans, datus, imams, and other influential Moslems were requested to submit to the government the names of promising young boys and girls of their districts to be sent to Manila and elsewhere to study at the expense of the government. Due perhaps to ignorance and indifference of the ruling classes the children of the slave class were the ones sent instead while the children of the sultans and datus were purposely kept at home by their parents. A few years later when this group of pensionados returned, they became teachers, officers of the constabu-

lary, treasurers, health inspectors, clerks, and executives in the government of Dan-salan and many other positions of trust. In the meantime, the children of the ruling class became illiterate adults filled with envy and contempt because their former slaves were now their rulers and masters. It took a generation for the sultans and datus to realize their mistake and folly. Now, they are running and rushing to have their own progenies educated in order to retrieve the power and prestige that have been lost. The object lesson learned from this default is behind the increasing desire of the Moslem children to go to school and get the necessary education.

It seems that the Moslem Filipinos in general have isolated themselves from the outside world, particularly from their Christian Filipino brothers long enough. If we recall our early history, this isolation may even be counted by centuries. This state of isolation, together with marked differences in religious beliefs and practices has produced a wide gap in the social and economic structure between the Moslems and the Christians. This formidable barrier of cultural, social and economic differences always remains a hazard to the stability and security of the Philippines as a nation. The existing irritants may take many more generations to cure and reconcile.

Other Problems

The present political and religious system among the Moslem groups is conducive to strong leadership where in many instances the chieftains usually rule arbitrarily and with iron fists. However, the leadership in the majority of cases, especially in the areas further south and isolated hinterlands, is not enlightened, scrupulous, dynamic, and progressive. The religious leaders are also passive and do practically no social welfare activities to improve the social and economic life of their constituents.

Why are the Moslem Filipinos antagonistic to our public school system and why, because of this antagonism, have they refused in the past to send their children to school? Although the situation has improved much in the recent past, the feeling of indifference still exists and will persist in many more years to come. What are the main irritants that have caused this indifference? The textbooks used are all Christian books and extol loudly the Christian way of life and nothing is said about Mohammed, the Prophet, and the teachings of the Koran. They fear their children may be converted to Christianity. In the teaching of Philippine History, the history books prescribed by our public school system call them Moros rather than Moslem Filipinos. They take offense when called "Moros" as the term connotes piracy both in land and sea, brigandage, criminality, robbery, and other offensive characteristics in man which they do not accept. Their long history of bravery, independence, nationalism and struggle against foreign rulers has never been praised but rather scorned. Their claim in this respect is understandable and should be respected. It goes without further deliberation that the educational system should be revised and patterned after their way of life in order to make the educational crusade a success.

Conclusion

The Moslem Filipinos, like any other people in progressive communities have also a strong desire towards the attainment of a wholesome and peaceful life, progress and economic advancement. The main drawbacks, however, are the lack of understanding and slowness if not altogether non-susceptability in accepting new ideas and trends, new inventions and other technological changes, new concept of democratic way of life, and other cultural changes. Many Moslem Filipinos have little tolerance for these changes and breaking the ice seems difficult. It is, however,

very promising that the young people who are now in school and those who have already returned to their respective communities after schooling elsewhere are showing restlessness and impatience with the outmoded practices in agriculture, health and education, and even in courtship and marriage. They are also restless because of the delayed progress of their respective communities. To these educated and dedicated youths, the people are pinning their hopes for a more accelerated progress and improved standard of living.

The major problems in agriculture, health, education, housing, social organization, attitudes, and others have been identified in the above discussions. They are not new problems. They are all of com-

mon knowledge. They have remained without remedy or with half-baked solutions for many generations, perhaps centuries. They are salient points wherein a program of development can be planned and started. Suggested solutions are not presented here for reasons of brevity. However, our government and people should take the problems of a large minority group such as the Moslem Filipinos seriously and should institute measures for their early solution. The Philippine Republic can not become a strong and stable nation with a large number of its inhabitants staying in isolation, in ignorance, in ill-health, in poverty, and of doubtful loyalty to the constituted authorities.

NOTE: The statistical data in the text are all taken from the Rivera-McMillan Report entitled *Rural Philippines*.

Experimentation and the Scientist*

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Science has been described as a method consisting of asking clear and answerable questions to direct our observations in an unbiased way so that we can actually answer the questions we raise. It is expected that assumptions held before we made our observations will now be changed to conform to the new knowledge we have gained from our observations. Strictly speaking, these observations are called experiments.¹

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¹ James B. Conant, *Science and Common Sense* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1951), p. 50.

The rational experiment arrived on the scene during the Renaissance period, although in earlier history there had been experiments of several types. For example, in India, physiology and its applications to Yoga technique had been the subject of study and in Greece mathematical experiments had been applied to the techniques of war.²

Experiments as a principle of research, as knowledge for its own sake, developed as it is known today within the climate of the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries during the Renaissance.

² Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," reprinted in *The Sociology of Science*, edited by Bernard Barber and Walter Hirsch (New York: Free Press, 1962), 569-589.