The Badjaw of Sulu

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This is the report of an exploratory study on the Badjaw of the Sulu Archipelago, which was jointly sponsored by the Ateneo Institute of Philippine Culture and the Notre Dame College of Jolo as a fellowship grant under their Coordinated Investigation of Sulu Culture project.

The Badjaw belong to a tribe of nomadic boatdwellers wandering around the islands between southern Zamboanga and North Borneo. They are generally looked upon as occupying the lowest socio-economic strata among the five more or less distinct ethnological groups in the Sulu area, that is, Taosug, Samal, Badjaw, Chinese, and the mass of Christian migrants from Luzon and the Visayan islands who may be classified as Northerners. The purpose of the study, therefore, was to gather accurate ethnographical information on the Badjaw which would form the basis for future studies and to outline definite areas for research.

The study comprised three more or less distinct phases extending throughout the school-year and summer term of 1961-62. The first phase of the study was a critical reading of the library material available in Manila. The second phase was a brief field trip to the Sulu Archipelago in October. This field trip resulted in the compilation of descriptive ethnographical information, and in the selection of the area around Sanga-Sanga and Bongao island in the Tawi-Tawi group as the definite field site for the projected summer field work. The final phase of the study was the six-week summer research conducted among the Badjaw of Tungkalang inlet which is located on the island of Sanga-Sanga. The recorded data gathered during this field work include a survey of household composition, structured and unstructured interviews, photographs and other ethnographical materials.

In presenting this report, we will first of all make a survey of the information found in the available literature on the Badjaw. Then we will present the data gathered from the field research. Finally, we will conclude by pointing out some definite assumptions and hypotheses on family and economic structure which can be made the basis for fruitful research.

The sources on the so-called Badjaw, sea gypsies, of the Sulu Archipelago are few and fragmentary.[1] The bulk of the bibliography is made-up of popular magazine articles based on brief contacts with the nomads or on secondary sources. A number of books make sketchy references to sea gypsies and allude to historical sources.

[1] The bibliography included in this paper lists only the more important and accurate sources that were available to the author. As this paper goes to press, there is a six month study being made on the Badjaw at Tawi-Tawi by Mr. Harry Nimmo, grantee of the East-West Center of the University of Hawaii. Likewise a paper on the religious beliefs and rites of exorcism among the Badjaw of Sitankai is being prepared by Mr. Richard Nicholson based on his six week field work with the Coordinated Investigation of Sulu Culture Summer Project in 1963.

The earliest historical reference is found in the four-page "Genealogy of Sulu" which was discovered and translated from the original Malayan by Najeeb Saleeby, and appears as one of the appendices of his book, *History of Sulu*. The *Badjaw* are mentioned as belonging to the fourth and last wave of Malayan migrations to the Sulu islands which Saleeby believes to have happened around the 14th century.[2] Other historical documents are compiled in Blair and Robertson, *The Philippines*, 1483-1898. Of interest is the passing remark made by the chronicler of Ferdinand Magellan's ill-fated voyage to the Philippines, Antonio Pigafetta (ca. 1525), about some people whom they sighted off southern Zamboanga who "make their dwellings on boats and do not live otherwise."[3] A long paragraph in Charles Wilke's "Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition" describes "a very different race of natives who frequent the Sooloo Archipelago" traveling in "fleets of between one and two hundred sails having their wives and children with them."[4] Brief references are also made of the boatdwelling nomads in the letters and official reports of Jesuit missionaries working around southern Zamboanga toward the end of the 19th century.[5]

Of the contemporary literature, the only primary sources on the boatdwellers of Sulu which approach scientific dimensions are provided us in an unpublished paper written by a native of Siasi, Sulu—Edward Salkiya Kasman, "The Strange Customs of the Sulu Badjaws."[6] This paper is substantially incorporated in the author's master's thesis, "A Study of Birth and Death Rituals Among the Taosugs of Siasi."[7] Both the unpublished paper and the master's thesis are valuable for their full treatment of the sea nomad's religious beliefs and rites of exorcism. A comprehensive study based on the available sources is also found in a chapter of Edward Sopher's doctoral thesis, "The Sea Nomads: A Study of the Maritime Boat People of Southeast Asia, Based on Literature." The work is primarily intended to be a geographical rather than a cultural study of the sea nomads. Its value lies in the fact that it has brought together all of the fragmentary sources on the nomads of Sulu and analyzed these in the wider perspective of maritime nomadism in Southeast Asia.[8]

Legends and Theories

Almost all of the literature that treats at some length of the Sulu nomads invariably relate one legend or another about the origin of these strange people. The minor details of these legends vary greatly, but there is a common substratum that can be abstracted as a kind of historical kernel: a) The boatdwellers are not natives of the Sulu Archipelago, i.e., they are not original inhabitants of these islands; b) They migrated from the islands south of Sulu, the islet off

[2] Najeeb Saleeby, *The History of Sulu* (Manila: Bureau of Science, Division of Ethnology Publication, Vol. IV, Part 2, 1908).

[3] Emma H. Blair and James A. Robertson, *The Philippine Islands*: 1493-1898, Vol. 33, (Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906), p. 239.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 185ff.

[5] *Cartas Aedificantes de los Missioneros de la Compania de Jesus en Filipinas*: 1898-1902, passim. The anthropological content of this 10 volume series is analyzed in Frank Lynch, S.J., "The Jesuit Letters of Mindanao as a Source of Anthropological Data," *Philippine Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 247-272.

[6] Edward Kasman, "Strange Customs of the Sulu Badjaw," Unpublished Manuscript, 1960.

[7] Edward Kasman, "A Study of Birth and Death Rituals Among the Taosugs of Siasi," *Unitas*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Sept., 1962), pp. 291-341.

[8] George Sopher, "The Sea Nomads: A Study of the Maritime Boat People of Southeast Asia." Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Department of Geography, University of Southern California at Berkeley, 1954.

Johore in the Southeastern coast of Malaya being most commonly referred to; c) the motive of the sea nomads' migration to Sulu was to seek asylum under pressure of social conflict with the settled shore people of their land of origin. The more interesting details that embellish these common elements involve a beautiful princess of the sea nomads, a jilted chieftain of the shore people and a gentle, heaven-sent gale that facilitates the sea nomads' exodus.

Sopher proposes an interesting theory based on his analysis of the available data on the sea nomads of southeast Asia which somewhat confirms these legends: "The thesis advanced here is that all these boat people of the sea belong originally to one culture, a primitive one socially and technologically."[9] He even goes further and asserts that some of the shore people were once sea nomads so that there is a historical line of development from nomadic-to-sedentary. There is evidence for this in Sulu today. There are sedentary communities which developed from a group of boat-dwelling sea nomads within the last generation. On the other hand, however, there are also numerous isolated cases of abandonment of sedentary life for a nomadic one in boathouses. The historical line of development, therefore, proceeds both ways, but the more significant tendency is towards a sedentary life.

The Nomenclature

The earlier literature on the boat-dwellers of Sulu referred to them by several names: *Badjaw, Samal* or *Samal Laut, Orang Laut* and *Lutao*. The name *lutao* is used in the letters and official reports of Spanish Jesuit missionaries in Zamboanga toward the end of the 19th century. Today it is rarely used. It was supposed to have meant "floating people." But the word does not have that meaning in the dialects of Sulu. It rather means "ghost." However, in the Bisayan dialects, *lutao* means "to float." It is, therefore, highly probable that the missionaries learned that name from the Bisayan speaking people of southern Zamboanga.

Orang Laut is Malayan in origin, *orang* meaning "man" and *laut* meaning "sea". Thus the full name means "people of the sea." The name is unknown in the dialects of Sulu today.

The word *samal* is a very vague term. In its broadest sense, it is used in opposition to *Taosug* which refers to the inhabitants of the islands of the Jolo group. In this usage, *samal* is generic for four more or less distinct groups of people who inhabit the islands south of the Jolo group: *Samal Talon, Samal Gimba, Samal Laut* and *Samal Pala-u*, the last mentioned being the local name for the Badjaw. The foregoing distinctions are made by some of the natives quite arbitrarily, the basis for the differentiation being the locus of residence, type of dwelling and means of livelihood.[10] In this paper we shall

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

[10] The Samal Talon (the wild or primitive Samal) are farmers who live in the mountains and rarely associate with the lowland native. The *Samal Gimba* (the Samals of the forests and fields) are also farmers but engage in considerable fishing for home consumption. They build their houses over the water along the shore line and sometimes inland on farm lots. But they are called "Samal Gimba" not so much because of their place of residence but because they depend on farming as their stable occupation. The *Samal Laut* (Samals of the sea) are commercial fishermen and very rarely engage in farming. They build their houses entirely over the water, very often without any connection to the shore line so that their dwellings are accessible only by small boats. The sea nomads are frequently known by their name and quite legitimately so. But they are locally known by another name which seems most proper to them, not only because it is current but also because it expresses the fundamental characteristic which differentiates them from all other ethnological groups in Sulu. They are called the *Samal Pala-u*

refer only to the broad distinction between the *Samal* and *Badjaw*, the former referring to the *Samal Gimba*, *Samal Talon* and *Samal Laut* and the latter to the *Samal Pala-u*.

Pala-u is the word for the boathouse of the sea nomads. It can be broken down to the prefix *pa* and the noun *la-u*. The prefix adds the connotation of "going towards" to the abbreviated form of *la-ud* which means "open sea." Thus *pala-u* is a kind of watercraft used for long distance travel. The name *Samal Pala-u*, therefore, perfectly describes the Badjaw since it contains the two basic characteristics of their way of life, that is, being boatdwellers and being nomads.

It is very interesting to note that the Badjaw do not refer to themselves as *Badjaw*. The word has no meaning to them and many have never heard of it. Some of the older Badjaw, especially those who have done much nomadic wandering south of Sulu, claim to have heard vague rumors about the name *Badjaw*. It is a bad name, they say. South of Sulu, it means "pirates." So it is only with some reluctance that these older Badjaw will allow their people to be called Badjaw. The etymology of the word is uncertain. It seems to be a generic term for people with strong maritime interests. Sopher claims that it is of Buginese origin and that it is also used for some of the coastal people of British North Borneo.[11] This wide usage of *Badjaw* south of Sulu is confirmed by an informant who claims to be a native of Sempurna, a coastal town in North Borneo, and who now lives in a Badjaw community in Sulu.

The Badjaw of Sulu are also known by two pejorative names of local usage. These names seem to be adjectives rather than proper nouns, and they express an attitude of contempt and ridicule: *Kaliaggeh* in the Samal dialect and *Luwa-an* in the Taosug dialect. *Kaliaggeh* means "people who are dirty and crude in their ways." *Luwa-an* probably means "outsiders or outcasts" since it seems to be derived from *luwas* which means "out of doors."

The Field Research Data

The data presented here were gathered both during the October field trip and the summer research referred to above. The informants included Badjaw who were interviewed through an interpreter, Chinese businessmen and Northerners residing at Bongao, and Oblate missionaries working with the Badjaw in Sulu. For the limited purpose of this exploratory report, we can only present data which have been verified and which are deemed pertinent to the research problems that will be proposed later. This will include a description of the Badjaw communities in Sulu, an exposition of the concept of Badjaw nomadism, an estimate of the population, and a brief survey of their material culture, modes of interpersonal relations and their religious beliefs and rites. Throughout this paper we have used the "anthropological plural" in referring to both singular and plural forms of the term "Badjaw."

The Badjaw Communities

The Badjaw communities personally seen by the author are located in the following places: a) Southern Zamboanga, b) Jolo island, c) Sisangat island, d) the islands of the Tawi-Tawi group, and e) Sitankai island. It is also claimed that there are communities in the other islands of the Jolo group, the islands around Siasi and those of the Tawi-Tawi group. The following description

[11] Sopher, op. cit. p. 86.

will be limited to those that were personally visited by the author.

The community off Zamboanga City Bay is quite small. It is composed of a few families residing in elaborately decorated boathouses which are anchored in such a disorderly fashion as to suggest that the bay is not the locus of a regular Badjaw community but only a temporary anchored for trading purposes. People point out another community in an inlet farther away from the city, presumably a much bigger and more organized one. In this connection, it is interesting to note that "Zamboanga" is derived from the Badjaw word "zamboang" which is the stake used in anchoring their boathouses. According to one legend, the sea nomads who first arrived in Sulu came from Zamboanga where they "anchored" their boathouses after strong winds had driven them away from their homeland.

In Jolo Island the community located at Busbus is fairly settled in landhouses built over the shoreline. It is certain, however, that these strand dwellers were very recently nomadic boatdwellers. In general, boathouses are not a common sight in the strand area of Jolo town proper. The groups that are occasionally seen there are transients and certainly do not form a community, strictly so called. The Badjaw today, as in earlier times, tend to avoid Jolo island.

Sisangat is a sandbar a short distance outside of Siasi harbor. It is bare at low tide and is submerged from four to five feet at high tide. A number of crude and simple nipa shacks are built over the sandbar by people who are generally considered to have been boatdwellers within the previous generation. Today, there are no more nomadic boatdwellers at Sisangat, although it is still claimed that the Sisangat people are quite nomadic in their way of life.[12]

Sitankai is a tiny islet in the Sibutu group no more than 400 x 300 yards in land area but whose strand area is more than twice the area of dry land. Almost all of the earlier literature on the Badjaw refer to Sitankai as their center of concentration. Today, it is claimed that the settled strand population are, for the most part, Badjaw who were boatdwellers within the last ten years or so.

The Tawi-Tawi group of islands probably has the highest concentration of small Badjaw communities in the whole of Sulu today. It is around these islands, too, that the Badjaw are still most nomadic. The vast majority are still boatdwellers. The author personally visited communities at Sanga-Sanga, Bongao and Bilatan. It is certain that there are at least two separate groups on Bilatan. It is also claimed that there are several communities at Banaran, Mandolan, Lu-uk Tulay and Simandagit. These communities are more or less equal in size but vary in their degree of nomadicity, the communities at Mandolan and Bilatan being most nomadic and those near the port town of Bongao being most sedentary. The summer field work was conducted in one of these communities. A brief description of this community will give a good idea of a typical Badjaw community.

The site of the community is a shallow inlet formed by a 50-ft. wide sandbar that extends about 1000 ft. north to south along the southeastern shoreline of Sanga-Sanga island. This inlet, which the Badjaw call Tungkalang or "the inlet of the coral heads," is empty at low tide and the water level at high tide varies

[12] Dolores Ducommun, "Sisangat: A Sulu Fishing Community," in this issue.

from three to six feet. Protected by the sandbar from the waves of the open sea to the west and from the rip-tides of the Bongao channel to the south, the inlet waters preserve a lagoon-like calm the whole day. Here the Badjaw anchor their boathouses, sometimes fifty to sixty are crowded in, and at other times no more than twenty five are left depending on the condition of the winds and the tides favorable for fishing. Besides the boathouses, the Badjaw also live in houses built on stilts over the water. There are ten landhouses in Tungkalang at this writing, with two more under construction and one abandoned. One of these landhouses is the mission schoolhouse built by the Oblate missionaries for the Badjaw of Tungkalang. It is the only landhouse constructed over the shoreline on the sandbar. The rest are built over the water without any connection to the shore. The people of Tungkalang claim some sort of relationship among themselves under the vague term *kampong* which is the Taosug expression for "relatives" in general. In this sense, Tungkalang is one huge clan. The members of this clan trace their descent to a certain headman or *pang-lima* who is supposed to have founded the community one or two generations ago.

The Badjaw of Tungkalang are very familiar with certain communities and frequently refer to them. These can be enumerated here not only as points of geographical but also of social reference. *Tubig-Sallang*, *Pang-asinan*, which is two or three miles east, and *Tubig-Basag*, four or five miles north, are all small Samal Gimba villages located along the shoreline. It is in these villages that the Badjaw barter their fish for farm products and secure their fresh water supply. There are two clusters of Badjaw communities with which the people of Tungkalang have almost daily social relations: those at Bilatan and Mandolan. It is at Bilatan that the Badjaw have their burial grounds. The most important point of reference in the minds of the Tungkalang Badjaw is the port town and commercial center of Bongao. Here the Badjaw earn cash income for their fish and obtain numerous articles of civilized conveniences. Mention can also be made of the peculiar form of social interaction of the Badjaw with the Oblate missionaries who run the Notre Dame high school and college at Bongao. From the Oblates the Badjaw receive great quantities of rice and corn, clothing and free medical care and a charitable respect which is altogether unlike the contempt and ridicule they bear from everyone else. The Badjaw do not seem to have understood all this, although they are certainly grateful for it.

The Badjaw as Nomads

Maritime nomadism is the specifying characteristic of the Badjaw way of life. They themselves look upon their nomadic wanderings as their *kaul-luman*, "the means by which one survives." The concept, is of central importance to everyone who wishes to understand Badjaw culture since it pervades every aspect of their view of life. Fundamentally, the Badjaw do not feel any permanent attachment to the locality where they reside. They will move out at the slightest provocation. The degree of nomadicity, however, varies to a great extent.

At the nomadic extreme, there are those who are considered as simply wandering around "looking for a living"—*maglawag kabuti-an*. The radius of nomadic movement is often estimated at 150 miles from the home community. It would seem that this is true only

when one speaks of extraordinary travels. The ordinary range is half of the usual estimate. Nomadic wanderings are not patterned or scheduled, and ordinarily extend over one week. The usual motives given are fishing, visiting relatives and attending social gatherings such as weddings, religious ceremonies and burial rites. In the Tawi-Tawi area this involves no more than fifty miles of maritime travel. However, Oblate missionaries working along the coastal towns of southern Cotabato claim to have seen Badjaw wandering around the area in their boathouses fishing and trading, sometimes staying over a week in one place. If the home communities of these nomads are somewhere in Sulu, they certainly have traveled more than the usual estimate of 150-miles. But more probably, these Badjaw are from communities off the southern coast of Zamboanga.

At the sedentary extreme, there are Badjaw who are fairly settled in a place which is considered as the base for nomadic wanderings. The people of Sisangat may be cited as a good example of a very sedentary Badjaw community but who still retain a fundamentally nomadic mentality. To prove this fact, informants relate the post-election event around 1958 when Sisangat became a ghost town ovrnigeht. It seems that some powerful politicians whom the Sisangat people had "double-crossed" during the previous election, threatened them with violent repraisals. As a result, the nomads tore down their shacks and moved out. Besides this extraordinary display of nomadism, it is also claimed that whole families often move out of Sisangat at the slightest provocation.

The Badjaw themselves make the distinction between those who are really nomadic and those who are semi-sedentary among their people. In the community at Tungkalang, for instance, there are those who are referred to as "the people wandering around looking for a living." These are true nomads. The semi-sedentary Badjaw are referred to as "people of Tungkalang, or Bilatan or Mandolan," meaning that they are more or less permanent residents of those places. The semi-sedentaries of Tungkalang can quite easily point out the wandering nomads who usually anchor their boathouses near the mouth of the inlet. The spontaneous conjectures for the reason why they should be there can be reduced to the following: a) they have come to visit relatives or attend some sort of ceremony or feast; b) they come to barter their fish for farm products; c) they are making an overnight stop for water. Occasionally, there are those who come to have a sick man exorcised of some evil spirit.

The Population

The high physical nobility of the Badjaw presents a great difficulty when one tries to make an estimate of their number. The earliest estimate of the Badjaw population made by Taylor in 1931 was 30,000.[13] Beyer (1942) gave their number as 1,650.[14] Kasman's estimate based on a legendary account is 25,000.[15] Sopher, however, estimated the total number of sea nomads in all of southeast Asia as only 20,000.[16] This wide divergence emphasizes the difficulty of making an accurate estimate of the Badjaw population in Sulu. A fairly good estimate might be made with the help of the following data: a) the average number of occupants in a boathouse

[13] Carl Taylor, "The Gypsies of Sulu," *Asia*, Vol. 1, No. 8, pp. 477ff.
[14] Otley H. Beyer, "Table 1: Population in the Philippine Islands According to Recognized Ethnographic Groups." (Ms Chicago: Philippine Studies Program, 1942, p. 4.)
[15] Kasman, "A Study of Rituals," op. cit.
[16] Sopher, op. cit., p. 4.

is between five to eight persons; b) an average Badjaw community is composed of thirty to fifty boathouses; c) there are about fifteen Badjaw communities in Sulu today. Thus we come up with an approximate round figure of between 4,500 and 6,000 Badjaws in Sulu.

This estimate is substantially in agreement with Sopher's over-all estimate of the sea nomad population in southeast Asia. And, if we allow a population increase of about three to four thousand in twenty years, then the present estimate is in consonance with Beyer's. But certain facts have to be considered when making this allowance of population increase. First, there is the general tendency among the sea nomads at present towards a sedentary life in landhouses. This results in the abandonment of the boathouse and the consequent loss of their cultural identity as boatdwelling nomads. Secondly, there is the unusually high rate of infant mortality among them which can be fairly estimated at fifty per cent. Lastly, there is the evidence of a continuing migration of boatdwellers from the southern islands to the Sulu Archipelago.

The Material Culture

Like all of the sea nomads in southeast Asia, the Badjaw of Sulu are characterized by a poverty of material culture. Wherever they are to be found, they are despised as a group of dirty and primitive outcasts. They possess a few simple techniques of food gathering. Their farming activity is almost negligible and their fishing is designed for the shallow area around the strand. This results in a literally hand-to-mouth existence which is reflected in every aspect of their material culture.

Dwellings. The Badjaw boathouse is a thirty-foot dugout over which a roof or small nipa shack is built allowing four to five feet of ceiling clearance for a family of about seven persons. They distinguish three kinds of boathouses: the *Lipa*, *Dapang* and *Jenging*. The lipa has no outriggers. It is the best and most expensive of the three, spacious, good to look at and well suited for long distance travel. The dapang and jenging have outriggers. The jenging is much smaller than the dapang, and it is the cheapest of the three. It is used only by the poor among them. The dapang of itself is not as expensive as the lipa nor as good to look at. But over the dapang elaborate houses can be built, sometimes with wooden walls and galvanized iron roofing four to six feet above the deck. It is the dapang, therefore, that can properly be called a boathouse. The jenging is too small for this, and the lipa without outriggers is not stable enough for a structure of such height. The most that a jenging and a lipa can accomodate is a nipa roof hung over a pole running the whole length of the boat some three feet above the deck. However, the lipa and jenging have the advantage of mobility over the bulky dapang, and can be equipped with sails for speed.

A large number of the Badjaw today live in landhouses. The name "landhouse" is used here in the absence of a less misleading one; for the Badjaw landhouse is not built over the land but over water without any connection to the shoreline. This characteristic differentiates the Badjaw house from that of the Samal who also build their houses over the water, but with some sort of a house to house bridge to the shore. The Badjaw landhouse is a simple affair. Some are no more than temporary shelters with about 5 X 10 ft. of floor space and about 5 ft. of ceiling clearance. The more elaborate ones are much larger, with

wooden floors and walls, galvanized iron roofing and separated bedroom and kitchen.

In general, it seems that the landhouses function more as status symbols of prestige rather than as dwellings. This may be inferred from the fact that many of those who do have landhouses still sleep in their boathouses, saying that they get "dizzy" in the landhouse. Furthermore, they claim that when a Badjaw has to earn more money, say to pay a debt, he must abandon the more expensive life in the landhouse and return to his nomadic life in the boathouse.

Clothing and Adornment. This aspect of Badjaw culture also reflects the poverty of their way of life, for there are no articles of clothing and adornment that can be considered as proper to the Badjaw. As a matter of fact, they can only afford a few pieces of adornment and some scanty clothing. The men usually have trousers but work with only a loin cloth or short pants. They are bare when they go into the sea for fishing. The women sometimes wear a kind of blouse and skirt but in the camp site they usually go around bare from the waist up. There is hardly a single article of adornment for men. The women, however, use fancy earrings, necklaces and bracelets. And those who can afford it and who can stand the painful process, have their teeth filed and fitted with artificial gold fillings — which is obviously designed to add sparkle to a lady's smile.

Sopher, however, has well pointed out that the Badjaw of Sulu are an exception to the general lack of art work among the sea nomads of southeast Asia. They adorn the prow and sides of their boats with elaborate carvings that have not failed to attract the attention of tourists and visitors. Their graveyard markers, too, are veritable works of art. There are specialists among them who execute these intricate carvings with only one sharp knife and a piece of wood used as a hammer. This particular art of carving seems to be proper to the Badjaw only, being strangely lacking among the settled strands population.[17]

Occupational Specialization

Strictly speaking, occupational specialization is unknown in Badjaw culture. Almost every household can literally secure for itself the material necessities for survival. But a good number among them have turned to fishing on a commercial scale and to other commercial ventures such as farming, carpentry and stevedoring. These may be loosely classified as forms of occupational specialization.

Fishing. All of the Badjaw do some fishing at least for home consumption. It is second nature to them. Some have been so impressed by their versatility at it that they claim these sea gypsies know the "psychology of the denizens of the deep" and can "hypnotize" fish at will. The Badjaw do know of certain strong stupefacients and of a method of attracting sharks to their hook and line. In general, their fishing gear is extremely simple, designed for small-quantity fishing around the shallow area of the strand. The bulk of their commercial fishing is in the small salted fish business. The small fish are caught at night by means of fishing lamps and nets, and then salted in gallon tin cans. These are sold to Chinese middlemen at Bongao who in turn ship them on interisland vessels to the Visayas through Zamboanga. The middlemen often own the fishing paraphernelia and the Badjaw simply supply the labor. Recently, however, the Chinese

[17] David Szanton, "Art in Sulu: A Survey," *Philippine Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (July, 1963), p. 463-502.

have become dissatisfied with the inability of the Badjaw to do continuous fishing and supply the increasing market demands. Consequently, they have secured well-equipped fishing boats and engaged the services of Visayan fishermen, mostly from Cebu and Negros. As a result, the Badjaw now sell their own catch at Bongao themselves.

Farming. It was pointed out earlier that farming activity among the Badjaw is almost negligible. Of the fifty or so families in Tungkalang, only two own farm lots on Sanga-Sanga island. There are many among them, however, who consider themselves as farmers. They are actually tenant farmers for the Samal Gimba who claim ownership of the fields in the inland forests. The real ownership in terms of deeds and titles is another question. For it is a common practice among the Samal Gimba to allow the Badjaw to start and continue cultivating a piece of land and to give him all of the produce, the idea being that as long as the farm is kept under cultivation he can always claim the title later if it be necessary to do so. In effect, therefore, the Badjaw often cultivate land without any title or contract and in such a way that they can be dispossessed at the will of a claimant.

Carpentry. There are also some among the Badjaw who are engaged in the making of small boats and "moro boards." In Tungkalang there are at least two men who are famed in the area as expert boatmakers. People come to order boats from them. But the ordinary boatmakers usually enter into a common form of arrangement whereby the Samal Gimba supply them with materials and tools, and they simply get paid in cash or kind for their labor. The "moro boards" are produced by the laborious process of chipping split logs into the shape of planks. The boards are very crude but they are in great demand in the area because they are cheap.

Stevedoring. Many types of commercial occupations are included under the category of stevedoring. The common form is working as a dock hand at the Bongao pier when the interisland vessels dock. There are three or four of these boats that make regular voyages to Sitankai through Bongao. On days when no boats are in port, the dock hands work as carriers of all sorts of baggage and even water for the residents of Bongao, Another type of activity which can be conveniently classified under stevedoring is ferrying between Bongao and Sanga-Sanga. This, however, is not a regular occupation.

Interpersonal Relations

The bulk of the data on this aspect of Badjaw culture, gathered during the field work, has to do with relations within the Badjaw community itself. However, in order to present a more complete view of their way of life, some generalizations can be made concerning their relations to the four other ethnological groups in Sulu today. This inter-group relation has been the subject of a special study, but it is here presented precisely from the point of view of the Badjaw themselves.[18] These generalizations, therefore, are no more than summary statements of subjective judgment. The Badjaw realize that they occupy the lowest status in Sulu society. They suffer intense prestige frustrations in varying degrees from those of the other groups who all treat them with at least a condescending attitude. Thus: they fear the fierce Taosug, because they often suffer physical abuse from them; they envy the Samal who tolerate but despise them, because they are rich

[18] Richard L. Stone, "The Peoples of Sulu," in this issue.

and possess farms and landhouses; they loathe the Chinese with whom they must of necessity have commercial relations, because they are shrewd businessmen; as for the Northerners, some are good and kind, but they resent the supercilious and condescending attitude of government officials and teachers, and they fear the uniformed army men because not a few among them are trigger-happy. The evangelizing groups are a source of hand-outs and easy earnings. Having made these preliminary generalizations on intergroup relations, we now pass on to relations within the Badjaw community.

A Badjaw community is basically a flotilla of thirty to fifty related nuclear families residing in boathouses. As may be expected from a community of this sort, the political structure is quite loose being neither strictly juridical nor territorial. The powers of the headman or *panglima* are undefined but his authority is recognized and respected as strongly patriarchal. He is both a religious and political leader. He represents his people to the local government and officialy receives visitors to the community. He is expected to arbitrate in quarrels, to solemnize marriages and to officiate in certain religious ceremonies and burial rites.

Each Badjaw boathouse ordinarily corresponds to one nuclear family composed of the conjugal partners and an average of five children. Exceptions occur when aged parents too old for economic activity come to live with one of their married children, usually with a daughter's family, or when newly married couples live with the wife's parents for the first or second year of marriage or until they can afford a boathouse of their own; or when a divorced or widowed individual joins another family.

The Badjaw marry at a very early age according to parental arrangements. The ordinary age for marriage is thirteen to fourteen for girls and about fifteen for boys. The Badjaw youth are exposed to the struggle for existence quite early in life. As a result, they are already quite mature at the age of fifteen or sixteen. Besides, marriage and separation from the parents is hastened by the eventual overcrowding of the parental boathouse. This overcrowding is sometimes remedied by certain forms of adoption which could not be satisfactorily investigated during the field work.

The Badjaw family tends to be matrilocal. However, on account of the high physical mobility of the household, this tendency is no more than the preference for a particular area of nomadic movement. This general preference is expressed either by frequent and extended visits to the community of the wife's parents, or by simply settling down there as the home base for nomadic wanderings.

Polygamy is theoretically allowed, following Muslim customs, but it is seldom practiced because of economic difficulties. One form of polygamy is a second marriage with the consent of the wife because she cannot bear children for her husband. This, too, is quite rare. It is a common joke among Badjaw matrons that if this second marriage should be necessary, it is *she* who will choose the second wife.

Divorce is quite common. No systematic investigation was made on this practice but there were several reported cases which allow some generalizations. The fundamental attitude is that if a woman cannot "agree or get along" with her husband she must be "returned" to her parents. Perfect conjugal harmony is considered as a practical necessity for a

family that has to survive a nomadic life confined in a boathouse. Besides incompatibility, jealousy is the usual ground for divorce. The children and property are divided by arbitrary agreement.

Religious Beliefs and Rites

This aspect of Badjaw culture is fully discussed by Kasman. The data gathered during the field work substantially confirm what he has to say about their various beliefs and rites. However, the assertion that the Badjaw are "pagans" must be clarified. It does not mean that they are atheists. They do have a real though vague and confused knowledge of a supreme being, and a consciousness of personal moral obligations. "Pagan" should rather mean that they are neither Christians nor Muslims. And even here, "Muslim" has to be taken in its full and formal meaning as a religious and cultural reality. For the Badjaw often claim that they are Muslims. In fact, they practice certain Muslim customs and rites of marriage, burial and circumcision which they call p*ag-islam*. They also use Islamic prayers and avoid pork meat as taboo. There are, however, certain rites and beliefs that seem to be proper to the Badjaw, as for instance the practice of burying their dead in communal graves, the cult of their ancestors and the belief in the existence of evil spirits who are supposed to dwell among the mangrove shrubbery along the shoreline. They put up small white banners — *panjih-panjih* — to indicate the dwelling places of these spirits so that people may not make the mistake of desecrating them and thus incur their anger.

Assumptions and Hypotheses

From the ethnographical material that has been presented, the following assumptions are proposed as the possible basis for future studies: 1. There are numerous small and simple social grouping of the Badjaw throughout the Sulu Archipelago whose members interact in distinct patterns quite different from those of the other ethnological groups in the area.

2. These social groupings are nomadic in the sense that:

a. The majority of their members do not live in permanent dwellings on land but on boathouses. This results in high physical mobility.

b. A good portion of their population does not feel any permanent attachment to the locality of residence. This makes their society highly dispersive.

c. Actual movement and dispersion are frequent not only because the society is of a waterborne fishing culture but more so because it is an outcast society, its members suffering open derision and physical abuse from those of the larger society. They are, therefore, reluctant to maintain any prolonged social contact with those of the other groups, shunning population centers and living in isolated places.

3. The economy of these social groupings is on the subsistence level which results in a culture that is highly orientated to bare survival.

Given these assumptions, the general area of research which seems most profitable is that of the effect of nomadism on social structure. Thus: How is the culture of a nomadic society so structured as to provide for survival in the event of actual nomadic movement and dispersion? Within this broad problem, the results of the household census and structured interviews allow a few tentative hypotheses on the relationship be-

tween the degree of nomadism and a) the nature of the household, b) the type of economic activity upon which the household depends. As was pointed out earlier, the Badjaw themselves make a sharp distinction between true nomads—"people who wander around looking for a livelihood," and "people residing at a certain definite place" who may be classified as sedentary for the sake of convenience. We have in this distinction a convenient empirical basis for taking geographical mobility (sedentary/nomadic) as an independent variable in analyzing the characteristic of a nomadic family unit.

Nomadism and the Household

The first significant variable is that of the composition of the household. Of the fifty households studied, twenty-four are classified as true nomads and twenty-six are sedentary. Of these, forty are primary or nuclear families and the rest are extended families composed of parents and married offsprings, and the families of two brothers. It seems clear, therefore, that nomadic households tend to be composed of single nuclear families, and that sedentary households tend to be composed of extended families.

Another significant characteristic of the nomadic household is the tendency not to include those who may be classified as adult dependents, that is, adults in the household who cannot support themselves. In the concrete situation, these may be a) unmarried offspring between the ages of 15 and 20, b) parents too old to survive by themselves, c) divorced or widowed individuals living with the family of a close relative. It cannot be said that these dependents contribute nothing to the support of the household. There are only three cases of complete dependents. But on the whole they cannot provide themselves with the necessities for survival. Nomadic households generally tend not to have adult dependents.

Nomadism and Specialization

The second significant variable in relation to geographical mobility is that of occupational specialization. Of the thirty-six respondents to the occupational questionnaire, 17 are nomadic and 19 are sedentary. Twenty-six claimed to be engaged in one of the four commercial occupations listed previously, namely, carpentry, farming, stevedoring and fishing. The only one of these occupations in which the nomads engage with any frequency is commercial fishing. The other occupations are left to the sedentary households, though they too tend to avoid stevedoring.

From the foregoing analysis, a general hypothesis with regard to the effect of nomadism on social structure can be formulated as follows: Nomadic households tend to be composed of small nuclear families which are economically independent both from the other households within the society itself and from the market system of the outside and larger society. It would seem that as a result of the highly mobile and dispersible nature of a nomadic society, the nuclear family must be able to function as a self-sufficient unit of survival.

Besides the effect of nomadism on the household and on economic activity, the following are also suggested as fruitful areas for future research:

1. The Power Structure of a Nomadic Society: The problem here is the evident lack of any real authority system among the Badjaw. This seems to be an effect of their nomadic culture.

2. The Badjaw as an Outcast group: This could be a study in intergroup relations which could be conveniently undertaken at Tubig Sallang and Tungkalang. These are two small communities of Samal Gimba and Badjaw which are closely interacting with each other but are culturally distinct and separate.

3. Religious acculturation studies to determine the extent of Islamic influence on Badjaw beliefs.

By way of concluding this exploratory report, the following observation might be made: The Badjaw of Sulu today function in the area as a distinct cultural group only in so far as they remain boatdwelling nomads. The transition to sedentary life in landhouses is inevitable. There are communities that have already made the transition quite successfully and smoothly by a process of natural social development. An interesting question, from the practical point of view would be whether this transition could be made abruptly by artificial means with the same smoothness and success; for the Badjaw identify nomadism with their very way of life and as sedentaries they would be altogether unable to compete with the socio-economic system of the larger sedentary society.

Occupation Evaluation in the Philippines

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Introduction

Social status refers to position in the social structure. Each status consists not only of "norm-prescribed privileges and obligations but also of the comparative esteem and disesteem in which these social places are held."[1] Within a particular society, social positions are evaluated, ranked, and arranged in a hierarchy of socially superior or inferior ranks and a society which displays this system of inequalities is said to be stratified.

An occupation is a position in the social structure and as such it confers status in its own right. As a position in the social structure it is subject to the process of evaluation and ranking within the social structure. Differential evaluation of occupations or what is known as occupational stratification is associated with differential life chances for people in different occupations.

Among sociologists there is considerable agreement that occupational stratification is an important area of sociological investigation. Occupation is considered as one of the best indicators of social status for it combines in a single measure economic status and educational background.[2] Centers sums up this position in his statement that "occupation is the most satisfactory single index of stratification."[3] Furthermore, to a large extent, a person's way of living is determined by his occupation.

[1] E. T. Hiller, *Social Relations and Structure: A Study in Principles of Sociology* (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1947), p. 330.

[2] Joseph Kahl and James Davis, "A Comparison of Indexes of Socio-Economic Status," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2, April, 1955, pp. 317-3125.

[3] Richard Centers, *The Psychology of Social Classes* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1949), pp. 206-219.