

NOTES ON THE MARANAO

Charles K. Warriner

BACKGROUND

The Maranaos are one of the so-called "Moro" tribes of the Southern Philippines. Although they have the same general biological, social and cultural origins as other Philippine and Malay peoples, their experiences during the past millenium, especially since the 15th Century, have served to isolate them from other Philippine groups and thus they have developed some distinct cultural characteristics. In their folk history as well as in their cultural and social practices, we can still find traces of influence from major civilizations: Indian, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and American, in that order. The Arabic influence, through Muslim visitors, came in the 15th century; Spanish influences began in the 16th century, while the American influence began with the Treaty of Paris and U.S. control after 1900. During the Second World War the Maranaos were heavily involved in fighting the Japanese along with U.S. military forces. These and other events of the 1940s brought rapidly increased contact with the larger world and many changes in Maranao society. The materials which follow seek to describe the pre-1940s society and ignore changes and "modernizations" of the past half century.

THE PHYSICAL WORLD AND THE TECHNICAL SYSTEM

Lake Lanao is the center of the Maranao territory (Maranao, literally, means "people of the lake"). It lies at a half mile elevation about 30 km (18 miles) southeast of the seacoast on Mindanao, the second largest of the Philippine islands. The lake is ringed by mountains on the sides away from the coast, but there are many small flatlands through which run streams and rivers. These are fertile lands with a wide variety of useful flora. Coconut palms, bananas, guava, star apples, durian, grapefruit, coffee, cabbage, palm, edible ferns, papaya and rice are among the edible or fruiting plants in abundance. The forests are a rich source of lumber including lauan (Philippine Mahogany), narra (a beautiful hardwood) and other commercially useful trees. Bamboo is widespread and widely used. There is also much game and other animal life including deer, monkey and many kinds of birds.

The Maranao technical system includes diverse technologies. They are primarily agriculturalists growing rice in abundance, but few other regular crops. Secondarily, they are fishers (Lake Lanao and the streams), and also hunters (of deer) and gatherers of fruits and nuts. They have an elaborate metal-working tradition for the manufacture of weapons (swords and knives), household goods (jars, pans, containers, cooking implements) and decorative materials (gold and silver jewelry). Brass and copper, more than iron and steel, along with gold and silver appear to be the materials of long usage and more developed artisanry. Wood-carving and wood-working techniques are primarily used in building construction and in decorative arts, but are also used in creating some household and personal objects (tobacco jars, storage containers). Weaving of fibers for clothing, rugs and tapestries is an old art with many wooden implements (loom accouterments) of highly specialized utilities. There appears to be no clay or glass technology. Window are made from shells scraped thin. There are indigenous medical practices using herbs, but much medical technology relies upon magical and spiritual help.

The Maranao use the carabao (water buffalo) as the main supplement to human energy. Although carabaos may be eaten, they

WARRINER: NOTE ON THE/5

are not raised as food animals and are prized primarily as work animals for plowing the rice paddies and as signs of wealth. A few Maranaos keep dogs as pets, but they are generally regarded with distaste (for religious reasons), and some have pet cats, deer or monkeys. In some areas small horses are kept and used primarily for transportation but the primitive wooden saddles and other gear suggest that there is not a long tradition of equine use.

THE SOCIAL WORLD AND THE SOCIAL SYSTEM

The Maranao myth asserts that all Maranaos trace their descent from either an epic hero or from Mohammed and hence, in relation to others, they see themselves as superior beings, as royalty in relation to commoners. They recognize affiliation with other "Moro" groups, but others, especially Christian Filipinos are thought of as "foreigners." They recognize kinship ties with peoples of Borneo and the Sulu archipelago, but their closest affiliations are with the Moro groups that adjoin their boundaries, especially the Maguindanaos of the western coast of Mindanao.

Prior to WW II there were about a half million Moros of which the Maranaos with about 200,000 population were the largest group. Since that time the population has grown and there has been an increasing movement toward Marawi City. In 1958, Warriner's census showed just under 24,000 residents. Two years later a government count showed 47,000, but there are reasons to believe that government censuses systematically overenumerate. Even so, there is much evidence of a rapid growth in this urban concentration.

The Units of Social Organization

Maranao social organization is characterized by four basic units: the household, the community, the state and the nation or society as a whole. The latter two have symbolic more than relational importance. In addition to these relatively permanent units there are recurrent gatherings, such as wedding ceremonials and

ephemeral corporate structures that emerge during feuds. Although these forms recur, they do not have a continuous membership. Participation in gatherings and membership in the feuding "corporations" is defined by closeness of kinship to the principals and hence each feud and each wedding involves a different array of persons.

Household (*isa ka koman*, literally, "one cooking pot") is the basic unit of daily life. All persons reside in households which usually consist of sibs, their spouses and children and the senior parents. Households may have as many as forty resident persons (children and adults) with 35 a frequent size. Household membership frequently changes as individuals or "couples" and their children move to different households or different communities for longer or shorter periods of time (usually, as a result of some special activity whether ceremonial or work, but sometimes because of "spats"). There is much integration of activity within the household around work, play and "communing," ceremonial and religious events, etc. These activities are often unscheduled, impromptu and informal.

There is usually a division of labor in the household, not only with respect to work, but also in the social and ideational activities. This division of labor generally follows gender and age lines, but personal preference and skill may also influence who does what.

Community (*agama*) is the most important unit of social organization. Most activities of a ceremonial, social and political nature are carried out as an *agama* effort and, as I shall show later, it is the basic unit of identification for persons. Although most work activities are carried out by the household or several households, some work, including agriculture, may be organized at the *agama* level. *Agamas* as wholes build dams, roads, recreational fields, mosques and other public buildings and, most importantly, are the units involved in feuds or wars.

The community consists of a set of households, sometimes as few as three or four but often as many as twenty-five or more, within an explicit, traditional territory. The houses are usually close together, either strung out on either side of a small river, or

arranged around a central plaza. Households in the community are interconnected through *kandadawaga* (food sharing) and other reciprocities, by participation in common activities, and through kinship responsibilities and duties. The households and their members belong to the *agama* by virtue of descent from a founding ancestor thus all members of the community are kins. All persons who are descendants of those ancestors are members of the community whether or not they reside therein. Persons may reside in the community without being members, but have no claim to the protection of the community nor do they have any obligation to it.

The focal points of the community are three :the mosque, the *torogan* (sultan's house or "town hall") and the *lama* (the plaza) or town square which is usually also the handball court or race course. Devout Muslims pray five times a day and usually go to the mosque for this; meetings are held at the *torogan* whenever there is a community decision or problem (these are often informal and impromptu), and there are gatherings in the plaza throughout the day for the exchange of news, for play or purely for socializing.

Agamas have a set of "elected" leaders consisting of a sultan and two or three advisors who may represent specific lineages in the community. These persons hold office for indefinite terms, usually a function of their own interest and the support of the community. Most decisions are arrived at through discussion and consultation involving all the persons in the community according to their prestige and importance and persuasiveness. The *imam* (priest) is the religious leader who is powerful in mosque affairs and activities, but usually takes little interest in secular activities.

Eligibility for office is inherited. Those with the most descent from the founding persons have the greatest eligibility for office, but often several persons will be equally legitimate claimants. In these cases, each may seek "election" through "political" campaigns (parties, pledges, promises) involving the spending of money to entertain and give support to possible supporters. These may be costly and some claimants may not exercise their rights because of the cost or because they are not interested. Where two

persons contest the right and where the community is already large, the loser may take his followers and leave the community. Historically, this was often the start of new communities, but is no longer possible because there is little unoccupied territory.

The State (*pangampong* = "principality," territory or [super] sultanate.) In historical times the state has been more an idea and a territory than a unit of social organization. It consists of sets of *agamas* in a particular territory whose boundaries are fairly clearly defined and whose responsibilities to each other are derived from kinship. As a whole, the state has little other existence today.

The Society (*pat a pangampong*, or four states) is not an active unit of social organization. The four states are interrelated by common ancestry (mythical?) and all members of the Maranao society recognize their commonality and common identity, but there is not and has not been in recent history any organization of the whole. It is thus a territory, a common identity, a common (mythical) history, and the bounds of (close) kinship connection, but not a unit of social organization.

The Patterns and Principles of Social Relationships

In Maranao society we have three levels of units whose relationships must be described and accounted for: the individual, the household and the community. Among the Maranaos, the same principles are used in the patterning at each of these levels. Two such principles are fundamental, pervasive and encompassing: (1) descent or lineage, and (2) relative worth or prestige.

Bangsa (descent line). Who one is, what rights and duties one has in relation to others, who one is affiliated with and where one belongs all depend upon who one's ancestors were. It is for this reason that one of the most important occupations in the society is that of the genealogist. Every important ceremonial that brings people together from diverse communities involves long recitations of each household's *bangsa* (often starting with Adam and Eve). Claims for land rights, for public office, for the protection and support of others and for personal prestige are supported or denied by the recitation of one's lineage. One is a member of a

household, a community, a state and of the society only by virtue of one's lineage. Market relationships, political relationships, participation in work and in feuds, friendship and enmity, are defined by the relative closeness or distance of the several parties' *bangsa*.

Descent, however, is bilateral (i.e., through both the mother and the father) and because of frequent *agama* and even *pangampong* exogamy (marriage out) many persons today can claim membership in a variety of communities and states. It is for this reason that Goodenough, commenting on the pattern as it is found throughout Malaysian peoples, calls it the "conical clan," for each individual is at the apex of an everwidening set of ancestral lines as ancestry is traced backwards.

The *bangsa* principle relates individuals to individuals, relates households to households, relates *agamas* to *agamas* (through their founding "fathers" or "mothers"), and relates the states to each other (again through founders).

Class, rank, prestige. The second major principle is that of relative worth, especially of the descent lines. Lineages are superior or inferior in terms of (a) priority of founding, (b) whether founded by older or younger sibs and (c) whether founded by male or female ancestors. Generally, the oldest lineage, the elder sib, and the male lineage are superior to the later, younger and female, but the gender distinction is least important. In general, the prestige principle is that of *pegawid* (that which carries or supports) and *pegawiden* (that which is carried or supported). The useful imagery here is of a litter borne by the supporters for the transport of the older, first born, or most important.

Three ranks or class levels can be discerned in Maranao society though all Maranaos admit only to membership in the superior of the three, the *datu* class (all Maranaos are of "royal" ancestry). At the bottom is the *bisaya* (from visaya), the slave class, probably so-called because many slaves were those captured in battle with the Visayan islands. In the middle are the *sakop* or common man class. No Maranao admits to being *sakop*, but in fact there are many Maranaos who are followers and who, even if they could, would not make the lineage claims for leadership positions perhaps because their ancestors for several generations have

not exercised such claims.

It is important to recognize, however, that these classes, by rule, are classes of ancestral lines. Because of bilateral inheritance a person whose parents were a *datu* and a slave may claim either ancestry. The slave parentage may somewhat reduce his personal prestige, but it does not tarnish the *datu* half of his lineage. Similarly, in one community a person may have *pegawid* ancestry and in another *pegawiden*. In the first community, the fact that he has "supported" ancestry in another carries on weight; his lineage there is that of one of the supporters and thus he will have no claim on offices, titles or seats in the mosque that go with *pegawiden* lineage in that *agama*.

Not only households, but communities and states are *pegawiden* or *pegawid* in relation to each other. Because of the "conical clan" character of ancestry, it is probable that history and genealogy are rewritten as individuals, households and communities gain power and success in practical affairs and leadership. People use the literal factual genealogy when it is useful to support their achievements and claims, but there is considerable evidence that the system is not as mechanical and deterministic as it appears. Without written records, history is easily rewritten to conform to contemporary needs and experiences. In fact, even Maranao oral history describes persons who, as slaves, achieved reknown (through bravery in battle, through achievement in the arts of crafts, or as advisors to leaders) and were rewarded by "adoption" into a lineage, so that their children were then full-fledged members of the "clan."

Gender, Age, and Occupation. Gender is used as a principle in the division of labor in the household and between the household and the field or stream. Generally, women are *in charge* within the household, but men may engage in household activities (cooking) and women may often help in the productive activities of farming, metal work and fishing. Traditional history has many women leaders and community founders. Even today, although women seldom hold community office, they are often powerful political figures behind the scenes, arranging, ideating, manipulating and consulting. The men are the orators at public gatherings,

but the women on the periphery may often be advisers in crucial ways by a few words of contempt or advice. Relative age of individuals and of lineage is perhaps the most important influence on prestige, but there are no sharp or clearly recognized age grades. Childhood blends into adulthood as an individual gains skills and participates more frequently in adult affairs. Adulthood blends into old age as persons gradually give up active involvement. As far as I could discover there were no *rites de passage* connected with age-grade movement.

Occupation does not define social roles except for a few connected with the most important community activities: the *imam*, the genealogist, and the orator-politician. Sultans may be fishermen, farmers, merchants or even janitors in governmental buildings. The only connection between occupation and social position may come through the accumulation of wealth and its capacity to enable a person to make claims on inherited offices.

Marriage is the most important specific relationship. It is, however, primarily an affiliation between lineages, rather than between persons. Marriages are contracted in the interest of lineage groups and *agamas* to facilitate political power, to ensure a body of supporters and to resolve feuds. It may also be used for the accumulation of wealth. Because of this, even very young children may be married.

For the rural and less well-to-do, marriages establish relatively permanent family units that have social, economic, religious, child-rearing and other functions. However, following Islamic law, divorce is relatively easy and the economically more successful may have several wives. (A neighbor of mine had four wives and four slave-concubines plus a large number of children.)

THE IDEATIONAL SYSTEM AND THE WORLD OF MEANINGS AND IMAGES

The world of meanings for the Maranao is a combination of ancient folk ideas and beliefs, Islamic cosmology, some Spanish concepts and many English terms related to practical matters and

modern technology. The inconsistencies among these various idea sources, apparent to the outsider, are not so apparent to the Maranao.

The ideational system of activity through which these ideas and others are sustained, communicated, reaffirmed and changed consists, first of all, of continual consensus-building activities ranging from informal discussions in the marketplace and public square to the more formal meetings in the *torogan* and mosque, from the household discussions to excited crowds that gather upon hearing of some important small events involving particular persons (such as someone's trip to Marawi City) to larger public problems such as the visit of a governmental agent, the killing of someone, or an epidemic or natural catastrophe. One discussion in Marawi City, for example, was concerned with the meaning and implications of the several styles of men's headgear.

Secondly, these ideas are handled through ceremonials and rituals, the religious meetings in the mosque, marriage ceremonies (several for each wedding), and ceremonials connected with the departure and arrival of pilgrims to Mecca or various holidays.

Finally, these ideas are handled through the instructional activities of sacred and secular teachers—those formally appointed such as the *imam*, and those informal teachers, the orators, folk singers and recitors of the epic poetry which recounts the past in metaphoric terms.

The Maranaos do not have a written language of their own. Some are able to read the sacred texts of the Qur'an in Arabic, a larger number read and write in English; but most Maranao, especially those outside of Marawi City rely upon oral history, oral records and oral communications.

REFERENCES

- Kriegers, Herbert W. *Peoples of the Philippines*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1942.
- Isidro, Antonio and M. Saber. eds., *Muslim Philippines*. Marawi City, Philippines; University Research Center, Mindanao State University, 1968.

WARRINER: NOTE ON THE/13

Mednick, Melvin. "The Moros," Chapter 24, *Area Handbook of the Philippines*, Vol. IV, Chicago: University of Chicago, Human Relations Area File, 1956.

----- . "Encampment on the Lake: The Social Organization of a Moslem-Philippine (Moro) People." Chicago: Philippine Studies Program, University of Chicago, 1965 (Mimeographed).

Saber, Mamitua. "The Transition from a Traditional to a Legal Authority System: A Philippine Case." Lawrence, Kansas: The University of Kansas Libraries, 1967 (Typewritten Ph.D. Dissertation).

----- and Mauyag M. Tamano. "Decision-Making and Social Change in Rural Moroland: An Investigation of Socio-Economic Problems in Community Development." Quezon City, Philippines: Community Development Research Council, University of the Philippines, 1961 (Typewritten research report).

Warriner, Charles K. "Myth and Reality of the Social Structure of the Philippines," *Philippine Sociological Review*, VIII (July-October 1960), 26-32.

----- . "Traditional Authority and the Modern State: The Case of the Maranao of the Philippines (There are no *bangsa* in the barrio)," *Social Problems*, 12 (Summer 1964), 51-56.

----- . Unpublished field notes on the Maranao, 1958-1959.