

# **FOLK BELIEFS & RITUALS IN CONTEMPORARY MARANAO SOCIETY**

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A study of the Maranao religious beliefs and rituals provides a means of understanding the interactions and interrelationships of religion and society. It serves to focus and illustrate the cultural significance of religious beliefs and practices, the forms and kinds of interactions that take place and their effects on Maranao social life. A study of the Maranao belief system also serves to contribute to a better appreciation of their rites, beliefs and practices and their functions in contemporary Maranao society.

Our focus on certain aspects of Maranao religious institutions is based on the notion that religion is one of the most basic social institution performing vital functions necessary for the operation and maintenance of a society. For a society to survive, a set of institutions should work and operate to provide a framework of social life. Hence a study of the dynamics of Maranao institutions necessitate exploration of the varied characteristics of its social institutions, one of which is religion.

## **I**

### **FOUNDATIONS OF THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY**

One of the most important aspects of Maranao life is religion. Islam to Maranao thinking is more than a religion; it is a way of life. It should permeate all human activities in the Muslim community. A Maranao's actuations and behavior are expected to be greatly influenced by his religion. To the Maranao, religion serves

as a vital tool in the maintenance of good conduct and behavior. It serves as a medium for the inculcation of values. It is the core through which social activities should be undertaken, consequently, fostering initiative and cohesion among the members. It provides channels for effective participation in the decision-making processes of the community. It should also serve as the basis for the exercise of authority and power in the community.

### The Mosque System

One of the basic foundations of the Maranao religious community is the mosque (prayer house) system where people gather regularly as members both as a single community of neighbors and as a single *djuma at* (religious congregation). The mosque is built through the cooperation and initiative of the people. In some cases, it is built with permission of the sultan. It serves primarily as a religious building where congregational prayers and other religious services are held. Besides its function as a sacred place of worship, it is also the physical sign which indicates that the community is separate from other *agamas*. It also serves as a place for the assembly of people and other traditional leaders in order to discuss religious as well as secular matters pertaining to the people and concerning community interests. It is also a place for the gathering of people together in order to mobilize their support on important political issues. In many instances, it serves as a community or assembly hall for secular and religious leaders to meet and decide on some community projects. Political speeches are made in the mosque especially during Friday congregational prayers when most of the people are present.

The mosque personnel forms one pyramid of leadership within the community, a second pyramid which is locally almost as influential as the secular one. It is headed by the *imam*, the chief preacher, and other officials affiliated with the mosque. Regarded as the chief functionary of the mosque, the *imam* leads in the congregational prayers. He acts as a guide or leader during the Friday prayers. He has also the duty to educate people in the fundamen-

tals of Islam.

Other officials who are charged with the routine operation and physical administration of the mosque are the *katib* and the *bilal*. The former is designated to deliver the sermon whenever the *imam* is absent and is responsible for delivering speeches during Muslim holidays. The latter is assigned to make the prayer call during the congregational prayers.

Another religious official who is known to have extensive knowledge of Islamic law is the *kali*, who assists the *imam* in the resolution of disputes of the people. Other religious personages also include the *alim* (plural *ulama*), the learned man who has studied Islamic theology and has a deep knowledge and understanding of Islamic laws. He is often called to teach the people on the fundamentals of Islam in *madrasah* (plural in Arabic: *madaris*). He is also considered a religious leader in the Muslim community. In addition, there are also religious practitioners belonging to the class of *hadjis* and *tuans*,<sup>1</sup> who take active leadership in religious affairs. These positions in the religious hierarchy are obtained through birthright or inheritance. Age and experience are the most important factors necessary in the recruitment of the officials in the religious hierarchy. It is necessary for the *imam* to have experience and a good knowledge of the Qur'an. In this case, the right of succession through inheritance may be disregarded.

The religious officials assume a position of prestige more or less equal to that of the officials in the political hierarchy as the sultans and *datus*. As religious officials, they provide community leadership and guidance particularly in relation to the religious obligations of the people in the community. In exchange for these services, gifts are offered to them during community celebrations. Moreover, in recognition of their positions, they are entitled to receive the *sadka* (charity contributions) during wedding and funeral or death celebrations. During a wedding ceremony, they receive the head of the carabao, a symbol of their positions.

The significance of their functions as religious leaders in the community arises from their role in making important decisions regarding religious matters. They spearhead the collection of con-

tributions for the construction, maintenance and administration of Qur'anic schools. They coordinate with other traditional leaders with regard to the people's participation in religious celebrations and festivities. All these functions and activities generate and strengthen their position and influence within their own sphere.

The religious leaders do not only exert influence on religious matters by virtue of their position. They also have influence on matters outside their domain. In this connection, they are often called upon to advise or, if necessary, adjudicate on matters pertaining to the field of Qur'anic domestic law. Marriage, divorce, inheritance, adultery and illegitimacy are among the most common points of conflict among the people which are brought before the religious leaders for decision. As a rule, the people seek the aid of the *sultan* and the *kali* in resolving disputes. In some instances, the sultan designates religious leaders to settle the disputes in his behalf.

As shown, the authority of religious leaders primarily emanates both from their religious functions as well as their legal or secular functions and responsibilities. All these functions become sources of prestige and influence. These multi-faceted basis of influence reflects their significant role as administrators of the mosque and as religious leaders in the community.

## The Agama<sup>2</sup>

The *agama* is considered the smallest socio-political and religious unit of Maranao society. It is organized at the base of the pyramidal structure of the Maranao traditional political system of organization. It is relatively a small community bound together by kinship bonds, group alliances, as well as socio-religious and political activities.

One of the most important functions of the *agama* is the administration of organized religious activities. Every *agama* has a resident *imam* who is in charge of the services and administration of the mosque. The performance of religious functions and activities in the *agama* underscores the very little distinction between

the legal and religious spheres as they take place in the system. Actually, the *agama* operates on the basis of political and ecclesiastical authority system. Both temporal and spiritual offices interact on matters of general interest. In the political sphere, authority in the *agama* is vested in the sultan who is both the political and ecclesiastical authority. The sultan advises the *imam* on religious matters. He operates on the basis of religious and customary laws, being the exemplar of religious and traditional values.

Roughly paralleling the political hierarchy are the religious officials headed by the *imam*, who in the performance of supportive political functions within system, helps the sultan in the settlement of disputes. He is aided and assisted by other religious officials. He also leads in the celebration of socio-political and religious feasts in the community. This politico-religious hierarchy as it exists in the *agama* underscores the close and complementary relationship that exist between the two authority systems.

Apart from the performance of socio-religious functions and activities, the close relations between the two sets of officials is also shown in a variety of community affairs which call for their presence as in religious festivals, holidays, ceremonies, marriage, birth and death. Their cooperation is also shown in community projects as the construction of mosques and madrasah schools (*madaris*) where both are expected to participate.

### The Madrasah

The *madrasah* (plural *madaris*) is a religious school designed to preserve and strengthen the religious faith in Islam. The emphasis of this school is in Qur'anic studies. It is found in almost every *agama*. Reading of the Qur'an is a must in the curricula. It is also established to provide training in the Arabic system of writing. In addition, there is also the aim for the *madrasah* to meet the requirements of standard elementary and high school curriculum. Girls attend up to the secondary level but are kept separate from the boys.

In the *madrasah*, one undergoes the three stages of Islamic

education: the one-year kindergarten stage (*takdiyara*) and the four years primary stage. During these years, the students learn the fundamentals of the Islamic alphabet (*kapagalip*) and the pronunciation of Arabic words (*kapangorop*). Another four years are undertaken for the intermediate stage. For others, a higher stage, the tertiary level, is also offered which includes in its curriculum advanced Qur'anic studies as well as additional higher courses in Islamic laws and the interpretation of the Qur'an. In addition to these stages there are other divisions of learning organized in *madaris*. Among these are the division for adult education and literacy campaign, and a division for special studies of the Qur'an. To encourage students to enroll, school fees are minimal and for those granted scholarship, no fees are required. Teachers (*gurus*) who have finished their studies abroad are hired in the conduct of instruction and are paid by Islamic communities abroad. *Gurus* who are graduates of local *madaris* also assist in the management of the *agama*. Funds to pay the teachers are also obtained from donations and contributions given by *datus* and religious leaders. Substantial contributions and financial support also come from other Arab countries. Arab missionaries who are experts in Islamic jurisprudence also help in the management of the *madaris*.

To bring Islam to the people in the rural area, *madaris* are also established in these areas. One of the most populated *madaris* in the city maintains twenty-five branches established all throughout the province. Some of these branches hold classes every Saturdays and Sundays giving the students the opportunity to enroll in the public schools and studying during weekends at the *madaris*.

The *madaris*, with the cooperation of religious leaders in the community, initiate and lead in the celebration of Muslim religious feasts. They also organize their students into groups and send them to the houses of well-to-do members of the community to solicit contributions for the construction of more *madaris*. This is done especially during holidays.

In Marawi, the first *madrrasah* known as the Kamilol Islam Society was established in 1938 by a group of religious leaders.

This step was then followed by the establishment of other *madaris* in the area.

## Religious Organizations

Religious organizations are established to solicit cooperation and assistance in the performance of religious activities and function of the community. Cooperation and assistance are also sought for in the interaction between groups and other social entities in the community. In Marawi City alone, there are seventeen religious organizations, seven of which are very active. Most of the members of these religious organization consist of *datus* and *sultans* who hold political positions. The strength of these organizations is reinforced in view of their close alliance with *madaris* and, as a consequence, are often used and mobilized for political purposes. Among the most common objectives of these organization are: first, to strengthen the Islamic faith throughout the Islamic community in the Philippines; and second, to build many *madaris*.

One religious organization in the city is the Imam's League. It consists of religious officials or leaders of different *agama* units. One of the most significant functions of the organization is to undertake religious education of the people and provide them spiritual guidance. The purpose of the organization is to unite all the *imams* throughout Lanao. In the achievement of their goals, the organization coordinates with other traditional organizations such as the Marawi Sultanate League. With their active involvement, people partake in the celebrations.

Another active religious organization is the Ansar Al Islam (Helpers of Islam). It was organized in 1969, the year believed to be the year of the Muslim renaissance in the Philippines. One of the political leaders of Lanao and a former ex-senator organized this religious organization. After more than ten years of existence, it has acquired many followers. A counterpart of this religious organization is the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs in the Philippines. It was organized to have a forum for discussion of religious as well as political matters and aims to build more *madaris* in the region.

Religious organizations are also established by *madaris*. Among these are the Kamilol Islam Society, the Agama Islam Society, the Mahadul Islam and Surajul Islam. Considered the oldest.

religious society established by the *madaris* is the Kamilol Islam Society. It was founded by one of the respected *ulama* in Lanao. The society's aims are geared to the strengthening of the Islamic communities in the Philippines. Such an objective is consistent with their program of building more *madaris* particularly in the rural areas in Lanao.

Religious organizations are also organized among the youth, the male youth organization is called the *Tabligh* while its female counterpart is the *Insanah*. The primary aim is the islamization of the youth by means of establishing more *madaris* necessary to impart the true essence of Islam.

## II

### BELIEFS AND RITUALS IN THE LIFE CYCLE

A study of the Maranao folk beliefs and rituals provides us basis for understanding how Islam is observed and practiced among the Maranao.

#### "Folk-Islam:" The Maranao Life Cycle Rituals<sup>1</sup>

The life cycle focuses on important stages of the life of an individual in the society from birth to death. It manifests the patterns of social behavior of members in the society in accordance with their age roles. Since each stage of the life cycle is marked by ritual events, it is here that religious values, beliefs and practices reveal themselves.

A study of these stages in the Maranao life cycle focuses on the rituals and beliefs inherent on each stage. All these constitute part of the ritual-belief system that pervade the Maranao world. It is in the life cycle where we can see the merging or co-mingling of religious values inherent in the various stages of the individual's life cycle.

Here, four stages in the Maranao life cycle are given emphasis namely, birth, marriage, sickness, and death. These stages of the Maranao life cycle involves a complex set of social and ceremonial

practices. There are some variations in the manner in which the ceremonies are performed and directed in different municipalities in the Lanao area, yet despite the variations, there is a similar pattern of Maranao life cycle observances.

### Birth

There are a number of rituals and folk beliefs associated with birth. Accordingly, the purpose of these ceremonial acts and practices is to contribute to the physical welfare of the mother and child and to keep away the bad spirits who might do harm to the child. These rituals associated with birth starts during the conception period. During this stage, certain rituals are undertaken to ensure the health of the expectant mother and child. One of these rituals is called by the people as *kapangolit* or the placing of the woman's stomach in order. This is done by the *panday*, a woman who does not have professional training and who attends to the pre-natal needs of the mother. Her male counterpart is the *pangaway*. One informant explained that during the ritual, the pregnant woman is instructed to lie down flat on her back, then her abdomen is massaged by the *panday*. An herb is chewed and is then applied in her stomach or abdomen. The *panday* also gives advise to a pregnant mother to constantly wear an amulet (*agimat*) made of the skeleton of a lizard and a small Qur'an. In return for the services rendered, the herbalist is given one ganta of rice, a bowl, a knife, a coconut and a small amount of money. This ritual is performed in order to ensure the good health of the mother.

### Delivery

A blending of native and Islamic practices is also reflected in the other stages of the Maranao cycle, as when the woman delivers her child. When labor starts, the expectant father places a ganta of rice outside the wall of the house. This is done "in order to ward off the entrance of any evil spirit." During the delivery, the *pan-*

*day* who attended to the pre-natal care of the expectant mother, together with the *pangaway*, is called to assist in the delivery. As soon as painful contractions start, both of them apply native herbs on the abdomen of the mother. This is accompanied by acts and religious prayers intended "to bring safe and easy delivery."

An informant coming from a remote community around the lake further illustrates the ceremonies that take place as soon as the child is born. The *panday* gets the bamboo knife and cuts the exterior extension of the baby's navel. While the umbilical cord is being cut, the father gets a bamboo and strikes it on a hard object and shouts. This is done not only "to welcome the child" but also "to make him strong, healthy and courageous." Following this rite is the assignment of property (*sengay sa tamok*) which involves assigning of articles needed for the welfare of the baby, if the child is a boy; and cosmetics and plates, if the baby is a girl.

### Post-Natal Rites and Ceremonies

Several rites and ceremonies are observed by the Maranao after birth. The rituals include the preparations of good food and calls on the spirits to partake of the delicacy prepared. This occasion marks the formal introduction of the child to his spirit neighbors. During these rituals, the *imam* and other religious practitioners such as the *tuan* actually participate in the rites, an indication of the blending of Islamic and indigenous beliefs and practices.

The introduction of the child to his spirit neighbors is further reinforced by other rituals done after the birth of the child. Within four or seven days after birth, the *kaganat sa lantay* (literally, "leaving the bridge") follows. For some Maranaos, this ritual is done two or three days immediately after birth due to the fear that if it is not performed early, illness or even death may happen to the child. This is a rite intended "to prevent the child from being molested by evil spirits." It is also done "to bring good luck to the child." To another informant, this is done before the child is placed on a cradle. Before starting the ceremony, the *imam*,

*tuan* or *panday* prepares a big stone and attaches on it a piece of cloth and wooden knives. Then the rite begins. A chicken is beheaded and its blood is allowed to spill over the stone. The *imam* then recites Qur'anic verses. After the ceremony, the stone is hung outside the house near the door.

Food is prepared. Ten chickens are cooked and other Maranao delicacies are prepared. Before the people start eating, the father of the child selects the most delicious viands to eat (*kapa-maropot*). This is done "to provide both the father and the child a chosen course of life." Thereafter, the guests and relatives partake of the food. If the *imam* is present during the delivery, he then holds the baby and faces the *kaaba*, the holy place in Mecca and recites some verses. This gesture serves to show that the child is born within the folds of Islam.

The midwife or, as she is called, *panday*, then prepares a white piece of cloth and uses it to wrap the cut-off portion of the umbilical cord together with a bamboo bark and some grains of rice, the purpose of which is "to insure good health and material prosperity of the child." In exchange for their services, the *panday* and *pangaway* are given a pair of clothes and a Maranao woman's headress (*kombong*) and a small amount of money.

For other Maranaos, particularly those who are residing in municipalities around the lake, there is another way of performing the ceremony. This ceremony (called by them as *Kaganat a lantay*) is attended by a medium (*penderpaan*). The ritual starts with the medium fetching water which she puts in a kettle half-filled with water. Later, chicken entrails and blood are placed in a half-cut coconut shell. They are then loaded in a small boat made of banana stalks decorated with feathers—others decorate it with flaglets. The boat is then released in the lake and prayers are then uttered. It is believed that the misfortunes of the child will go with the small boat. After this ceremony, a sumptuous meal is prepared consisting of mudfish (*arowan*), cooked yellow rice and chicken. At a given time, the medium starts inviting the spirits of the rivers, forests, trees and winds. He invites them to partake of the prepared food, then he takes the child to introduce him to them. He also asks the spirits to watch over the new member of the

family. Then the persons who are present then partake of the food prepared for the spirits.

To some of the people, the above-mentioned rites are considered "un-Islamic." In lieu of this practice, others perform another rite which they consider Islamic. They call this rite "*prawati-ban so Nabi*." This rite is performed during the third or seventh day after birth and is done during sunrise. First, the food is prepared and is then placed on a *tabak*, a Maranao tray. On top of the tray is a lamp (*tubong*) which is made to emit smoke or incense. On top of the lamp, some amount of money is placed to be given to whoever is designated to solemnize the rite. An *imam* or any religious practitioner may be requested to solemnize the rite. He sits in front of the tray where the lamp and the prepared food are placed, then he recites some verses to praise the soul of Prophet Mohammad. He also prays for the proper guidance of the soul of the baby and seeks the aid of Allah for providing the mental, spiritual and physical well-being of the child. After the ceremony, the visitors partake of the food. Money and other special gifts are also given to their invited guests.

After two or more weeks, the child is given a name. In some cases, the *imam* is called to help in giving the name of the child. He does this by consulting the Arabic calendar or the Qur'an in giving the name of the child. During the occasion, the parents are obliged to slaughter a male goat and prepare it as an offering (*korban*) to be given to the *imam*. Also, relatives come to offer gifts to the mother and are obliged to give money or any kind of gift to the child as a sign of good luck or good fortune.

### Initiation to Islam

A significant part of a Maranao life is marked by his initiation to Islam. This is initially done by educating the young Maranao on the rudiments of Islam through informal means. The boys and girls are taught by the mother at home. This starts usually at ages six or seven years. In some cases, an *imam* or a respected elder may be called occasionally to teach them to read (*mangadi*)

the Qur'an. With constant practice he learns to read or recite and generally expands his reading ability and fluency of the basic Qur'an when he goes to the *madrasah*.

Moreover, part of his exposure to Islam is during the time of fasting, when he performs this religious obligation together with his parents and other members of the household. At this stage, he also learns to sing commemorative songs in preparation for the month of the Prophet's birthday (*Maulud en Nabi*).

Also part of his initiation to Islam is facilitated through the obligation of every adult Maranao to fulfill the other pillar of Islam: the pilgrimage of Mecca. With these undertakings, the Maranao is now considered a full initiate into the Muslim community.

### Marriage and Adulthood

Marriage to a Maranao usually comes early. Before the marriage ceremony is finalized, there are several rites and ceremonies that are performed. The first step is the *kapangilay-ilay* (literally, means "to search"), where the man goes to the parents of the girl in order to talk to them.

A particular medium of communication (*tubad-tubad*)<sup>3</sup> is used by the man to express his intentions on the girl. The medium of communication involves the exchange of verses and poems. This initial stage of negotiation is followed by the stage where the sizing up of the dowry (*kapanoksam*) is made. Here, the sultan or *imam* tries to verify the size of the dowry, assisted by the parents of the boy or his relatives who serve as go-between. The dowry (*btang a adat*) is a must before the wedding ceremony is finalized. It may consist of a large amount of money, parcels of land, carabaos, etc. The status of the girl and boy usually determines the size of the dowry. The main portion (*watang a btang*) goes to the parents of the girl and may include several hectares of land, buildings, residential lots and other forms of property aside from cash. The other portion of the dowry (*pangkatan a adat*) is divided among the relatives and close friends of the bride which consist primarily of divisible items, such as household utensils, pieces of

brass and some amount of money. After the dowry has been decided and the man has agreed to come up with the dowry, the next step involves the giving of gifts to the girl (*kapangakap*). A festivity is prepared for the occasion, where all relatives and friends are invited. The gifts to be given to the bride are additional gifts apart from the dowry consisting primarily of cosmetics, dresses and cash. During the occasion, a gift usually in the form of cash is also given to the *datu* or sultan. Furthermore, to allow the man to dine with the girl from the same tray for the first time, the man also offers another kind of dowry to the parents of the girl.

To finalize the marriage ceremony, a final negotiation is made between the parents of the prospective bride and groom (*kambitiyara*) in the house of the girl. This marks the beginning of the wedding celebration. During the occasion, the dowry is announced and the presentation of gifts is also made to the *datus*, the sultans and the *imams* as well as the ladies (*ba'is*) who help in the preparations. These four *adats* which are taken from the principal dowry consist primarily of cash and parts of the butchered carabao distributed to those concerned. The *imam* receives the head of the carabao, the *sultan* the neck and the *datus* the breast.

The final step is the wedding ceremony (*kakawing*), usually performed on a day selected by native astrologers in order to bring prosperity and good luck to the newlyweds. Preliminary to the solemnization of the wedding ceremony is the presentation of the *adats* which consist primarily of money. One of the *adats* presented is known as *pagayanan*. This is presented to the *ba ñ a labi* or the grand old lady of the community. The gift is also given in gratitude for her services in supervising the decoration of the hall where the wedding is held. Another *adat* presented during the occasion is given to the *imam* who solemnizes the wedding ceremony. Additional gifts are given to close relatives, friends and ladies present during the ceremony. Finally, an important *adat* that is also presented is the gift by the groom to the girl to allow him to sleep with her after the wedding (*sayat*, or *Lt a igan*). This consists of a set of dishes and some cash.

After the presentation of the *adat*, solemnization of the wedding ceremony starts. The *imam* who is requested to solemnize

the marriage, calls for the groom to enter the ceremonial hall. However, before starting the ceremony, the *imam* asks those present whether there are objections to the wedding. If no objections are raised, the *imam* now asks the girl's parents for their consent to the marriage.

Then the principal part of the wedding ceremony begins. The *imam* takes the right hand of the bridegroom and presses his own thumb against the thumb of the bridegroom. He covers the thumb with a beautiful kerchief (*taboo*). He then recites the prayers of the Qur'an. After the prayers, the *imam* shouts in a loud voice, "*kawing tano,*" (Let us wed now) and is answered positively by the audience with an equally loud voice. The *imam* then prays for the prosperity of the couple.

After this, the groom stands and goes around the hall to shake hands with those in the audience. Finally, he goes to his own bride and touches her forehead with his fingers. He then steps on her foot to make her subservient to him. The the wedding ceremony.

### Sickness

The world of the Maranao is filled with unseen environmental and ancestral spirits hovering around all natural objects and human beings. These spirits which are known to inhabit mountains, rivers, rice fields and trees are revered by the people. They are often invited during certain ceremonies, during fishing, planting and harvesting seasons and also even during the baptism of the child.

Disease and other misfortune are attributed primarily to the machination of spirits. It is believed that the spirits possess supernatural powers who intervene during important but uncontrollable situations. As a rule, the *tonong* can either be helpful or harmful to man. If they are respected and their demands are fulfilled, they help man fight their unseen enemies. They are also deemed to save seriously-ill persons but are destructive if their wishes are violated and are not performed.

To the Maranao, there are two types of spirits: one type are non-hostile spirits, the benefactors that Maranaos invoke from

time to time particularly during times of illness or crises; another type are vengeful and can cause illness and death unless properly propitiated. Each of these types of spirits have specific functions to perform, one of which is to guide and lead the sick to fast recovery. There are two defenses that human beings can mobilize against them: first is to give the spirits their regular offerings of rice and food. Aside from these offerings, a festivity (*kalilang*) is also performed to appease them. The Maranao musical instrument, the *kolintang*, is played for three days. This festivity is done to provide and maintain friendly relations with them so that in times of crisis, the spirits would be on hand to help them. It may also be done by way of entreaty or thanksgiving given to them after they have done something good.

The *tonong* can also help persons who are sick. A ritual (*katulod*) is solemnized by the Maranao for the sick child. In this ritual, the parents of the child appeal to the spirits of the lake early in the morning. Chicken dish, yellow rice and other food cooked for the occasion are brought near the shore of the lake and a festivity (*kalilang*) is held. Relatives and other people in the community are invited. A medium (*penderpaan*) who is asked to communicate with the *tonong* together with the parents of the sick child goes to the middle part of the lake in a boat. Then the medium starts communicating with the spirits and at the same time utters Qur'anic words and verses to praise them. He calls for their help in curing the sick. A kettle brought by the parents of the child to fetch water from the lake is used for the purpose of curing the sick child. Once again, they go back to the lakeshore and the medium reiterates his plea for help from the spirits. Then food is served and distributed to the people.

Another ritual is also done for the sick. A square-like contraption (*lamin*) draped in yellow, white or red cloth is hung in one of the corners of the house. Food offerings are placed in the *lamin* which is regarded by the people as the abode of the spirits. Accompanying prayers are then recited to appease them. This is done by one who serves as an intermediary between the *tonong* and his subject persons. He cures by reciting hastily some verses

and then blows on the affected parts of the sick.

Closely related to the belief of spirits and their role of curing the sick is the notion that every child has a twin guardian spirit (*inikadowa*). This twin guardian spirit must not be displeased. Healthy and harmonious relations have to be maintained between the child and his twin spirit. If the spirit is displeased, the child becomes sickly. To continuously appease the spirit, a rooster, preferably red and white with yellow claws, is set aside as a kind of living sacrifice. The rooster should be fed and well cared for. If the rooster gets sick, the child also gets sick. The substitute (*itoto-ro*) is honored in the following ritual: The rooster is brought to the child. The child with the assistance of an adult pours water over the rooster. Also incense may be burned and the rooster is held over its smoke.

Apart from spirits, sickness among the Maranaos could be cured by the medicine man (*pamomolong*). The medicine man prescribed some herbs or other extracted elements from animals. The application is usually accompanied by religious prayers or magical spells (*tawar*) to reinforce the desired effect of the medicine applied. For cases believed to have been the work of malignant spirits, a person who is believed to be a spirit medium (*penderpan*) is employed to conduct ceremonies of appeasement to the offended spirit.

For other sickness supposed to be caused by sorcery, *pamamantak* is employed to defend the person against the magical work of another sorcerer. For both the medicine man or the sorcerer, their healing powers are strengthened through the use of amulets (*agimat*) made by the *tuan*. The amulet is something written on paper or even in a durable material. The writing which is taken from a portion of the Qur'an is regarded as sacred. It may also be taken from plants or herbs or they may be made out of the extracts from animals or even a combination of these materials. It may be in the form of necklace, belt or arm band and sometimes tied or pinned in clothing or just kept. It is wrapped either in white yellow or black cloth. A pregnant woman or baby is usually given an amulet in order to ward off evil spirits.

## Death

To the Maranao, a dead body must not remain unburied overnight except in cases where death takes place in the very late afternoon or during the night. If a dead body is laid in state in the house overnight, the people undertake certain steps to safeguard or protect the body from being taken away by the evil spirits. Incense is burned to drive away the evil spirits and witches. In addition, orange leaves and herbs are also burned and are hung at the entrance of the house. While the vigil (*diyaga*) is done in the household, verses from the Qur'an are read for the departed to prevent witches from taking the dead body.

Like other stages in the Maranao life cycle, death among the Maranao require socio-religious rites and ceremonies which are painstakingly performed and accorded deep devotion. The first rite that takes place consists of whispering the fundamental Islamic creed of the dead. This rite is then followed by the cleansing of the dead by the *imam* or *tuan*. Meanwhile, a plate of rice and food is prepared and placed in a Maranao tray (*tabak*) which serves as an offering. The *iman* then recites some Islamic verses to bless the dead (*polosan sa rowatib*) and, thereafter, the body is washed and bathed (*rigoon*). The cleansing of the body carries similar functions of the ablutions (*abdās*) that the Maranao undertakes before saying their prayers (*salat*). This ritual of cleansing the body is performed because of their belief that it is unworthy for a person to present himself to God, either living or dead, if he is unclean in body and spirit.

While cleansing the body, they recite verses from the Qur'an. Then the body is wrapped in a white shroud consisting of seven layers of white cloth, about fifteen meters long and then placed in a position facing the *Kaaba*, the holy place in Mecca, with his face kissing the soil. The *imam* or *tuan* will then call the relatives and friends to pray for the dead (*sambayangan*). After prayers are done, the dead body is placed in a coffin (*osonan*) or a portable platform decorated with attractive curtains, and then brought to the grave.

When the people reach the grave, the *imam* calls for them to pray and start the final rite of burial (*kokobor*). The white shroud is then pulled out and placed on top of the dead body. Before covering the grave, the relatives and friends place a golden tray consisting of cosmetics, combs, mirror, if the dead is a woman, and rice and betel nut (*mamaan*) and other accessories if the dead is a man. Three big stones are placed to cover the body in order to ward off the entrance of the evil spirits.

When the burial is completed, the *imam* again recites some Qur'anic verses while sprinkling water around the edges of the grave. At this point, it is believed the dead wakes up for a while and regains consciousness. After all these rites, everybody goes home to prepare for the vigil (*diyagaan*). Traditionally, the vigil lasts for a period of seven days. During the period of mourning, the reading of the Qur'an is an important feature, together with the reciting of ballads (*bayok*) and the reciting of the eulogy for the dead (*katuturo sa lalag*). Chanting and singing (*kasakim* or *kapagma*) are done by the *imam* or *tuan* or whoever is designated, and consist primarily of conciliatory words to comfort the bereaved family.

Most of the mourning period is also spent in offering prayers for the dead (*rowatib*). This offering is usually done by an *imam* or *tuan* who in the early morning brings an empty decorated portable seat (*korsi*) which, according to the relatives, is intended to fetch the soul (*arowak*) or spirit of the deceased from the grave to the house. Then an offering (*rowatib*) is performed. Food is prepared and served to those who are present. The same ritual is repeated in the early morning.

During the vigil, alms or charity for the dead (*sadka*) is given to the bereaved family. The *sadka* is either in the form of cash or in kind; the most commonly given are clothes, jewels and household articles. A customary fee is given to the builders of the coffin and also to those who participated in washing the body of the dead. A fee is also given to those who participated in the prayer. The one who guards the dead body while in state also receives a fee. Other persons who also help in the performance of other rituals related to the burial also expect some payment for the ser-

vice. Among them are those who are requested to read the verses of the Qur'an (*mangadi*) and those who sing and chant (*mambabayok*). Likewise, the sultan, datus and other traditional religious leaders who are present also receive their fees. All these expenses are shouldered by the relatives of the dead person.

During the last day of the vigil (*dowali*), the bereaved family prepares the most delicious food to be served to the people who are present. The bereaved family spends lavishly on this day, as it is believed to be the final departure of the soul of the dead from his family.

The celebration of the dead does not end after the seventh day. Celebrations are held every ten days starting from the seventh day of mourning (*kasapolo*); every one hundred days (*gatosan*) and after one hundred twenty days (*kapanalikodan*). After these occasions, a celebration is held yearly to recall the departed. Food is prepared and served and those who are present are also given money (*sadka*) by the relatives of the dead. To them, giving a bigger amount is an indication of high status.

### III

#### BELIEFS AND RITUALS IN DAILY ACTIVITIES

Folk beliefs and rituals also permeate other phases of Maranao daily life.

#### Rituals During Planting and Harvesting<sup>4</sup>

The rich soil, the favorable climate and the evenly distributed rainfall allow the Maranao farmers to make farming a rewarding means of livelihood. Among the principal crops are rice, corn, sweet potatoes and cassava. During the planting season, the Maranaos perform certain rites.

One of the planting rituals is known as *katipad sa sariringan* (cutting of the bushes). An informant from Wato, a municipality around the lake, explains how this ritual is practiced. The farmers prepare the field for planting. However, before any actual plant-

ing takes place, certain rituals are performed for the purpose of appeasing the spirits of the soil. It is believed that certain spirits have control over the fields and unless they are properly appeased, the fields may not yield a good harvest.

The ritual starts with the people preparing food to serve as an offering to the spirits. The principal dish that is prepared is chicken meat that is highly spiced and cooked with coconut milk. The non-edible parts of the fowl such as the entrails, claws and feathers are gathered together and used as part of the offering. It is believed that spirits prefer their food raw. After the preparation, the ritual is then centered on the balete (*nonok*) tree, known to play a significant role in producing abundant rice. A bamboo pole, about twice a man's height, is placed under the tree decorated with small flags and feathers of the sacrificial fowl. Many brackets are attached to the pole with bags of food tied on them in tier arrangement. Shorter poles are erected around the center of the big pole. Rice offerings placed in banana leaves are spread under the poles. The people witnessing the ritual gather around the tree but only the farmers are allowed to participate in the ritual. The participants stand about a hundred feet away from the center pole. The ritual leader, usually a medicine man<sup>5</sup>, holds a long sword in his right hand and another sword in his left. Two small-sized cornbells are tied to the handle of the sword; on his head is a war helmet made of wood. The ritual leader begins mumbling what is presumed to be names of the spirits and breaks away from the crowd to begin the fight. He starts his dance by rapidly wriggling and twisting his body. He shakes his shield as though he is fighting an actual enemy. He walks then runs around the sacrificial offerings. His pace is slow but increases gradually with rapid intensity.

The "war" dance takes an hour to finish and ends after all the names of the spirits has been called. Among the spirits mentioned during the rite are those who are regarded to have dominion over streams, rivers and lakes. Finally, he approaches the center of the pole and raising his sword high, he cuts the pole with a single stroke. His assistant then takes hold of him and quickly disarms him with the help of other spectators after which, the ritual leader brings him outside of the circle of people so he can rest. This ritual

is intended to entertain the spirits and invoke from them a good harvest.

After the performance, the people prepare themselves to eat and try to get as much food as they can reach. To them, it is considered good luck to be able to get some food, which assures the farmer of a good harvest. It is also believed that he who gets the food offered to the spirits will not go hungry during the year. After the feast, the people go back to their homes and prepare for the planting season.

Another version of the same ritual is practiced by the Maranao especially those cultivating in dry agriculture. The informant explains that this is practiced in some areas around the lake. Before the ritual is performed, food wrapped in banana leaves (*lipet*) is prepared. Then a festivity (*kalilang*) is held. It is usually held near the forest or the fields where the ritual is supposed to be performed. Those who participate in the *kalilang* are served food, then the ritual begins. Half of the participating farmers go to the forest and half of them remain in the village. Those who go to the forest clothe themselves with leaves and put masks on their faces to disguise themselves. Then the ritual leader starts appealing to the spirits of the forest in order to ask for a good harvest. They encircle the balete tree and start getting its leaves or fruits for them to bring back to their village. Thereafter, a mock war is staged between them and those men who are left behind. Each one tries to snatch from the other the leaves and fruits which have been taken from the tree in order to ensure a bountiful harvest.

Another ritual (*kashawing*)<sup>6</sup> brings many people from the neighboring villages around the lake and is performed during the planting season. This is a rice ritual performed by the farmers through a medium and involves the calling of the spirits before they clear the field in order to protect it from pests and other destructive animals and unseen creatures. If the harvest turns out to be poor it is interpreted to be due to the poor performance of the ritual.

Usually, the site selected for the performance of the ritual is in the area where the balete (*nonok*) tree is located. The tree is believed to be the abode of the *tonong*. Before the farmers start

out for the ritual, food consisting of rice, vegetable, fish and cakes wrapped in banana leaves (*lipet*) is prepared to serve as food offering for the *tonong*. Three men are designated to stand on the rice-filled dike: the first beats the gong before sunrise in order to assemble the farmer-participants of the ritual; the second carries a can and rolled mat (*dempas*), and the third man carries a red flag flown on a pole. To them, the red flag (*dapo a mariga*), about a square yard in size, serves as a symbol of life and prosperity. When the farmers are gathered, the flag bearer plants the red flag at the ritual site while the second man spreads the mat. Food is offered to the *tonong* invoking at the same time their assistance in the planting of the crops and asking them for prosperity and good fortune. One by one the farmers place the banana leaves on the mat as an offering for the spirits of the field. The ritual proceeds with the can bearer wading near the shores of the lake and waving a yellow-green cloth about one and one-half feet long, a gesture of inviting all the *tonong* of the lake to come to the ritual. While inviting them, the can bearer gives praises to Allah and prays for a bountiful harvest. He also invokes all the other spirits of the four sultanates of Lanao and asks them for aid. All of them are mentioned during the ritual in order not to displease anyone. He then fills the can with water and some weeds of the water lily from the lake. The fetching of the water symbolizes invitation for the *tonong* to come to the ritual while the weeds serve to connote the carriers of the same.

Meanwhile, the prepared food (*lipet*) is unwrapped and the three leaders of the ritual draw back the crowd to the rice field where the ritual site is located. When the group reaches the rice-field, the yellow flag which symbolizes the dead and unseen spirits is planted near the mat. The planting of the yellow flag is an indication that the *tonong* from the lake has arrived. The red and yellow flags near the mat also signify the reunion of the people and the spirits, as well as the renewal of their ties. The can bearer then invites the *tonong* to partake of the food offering, then starts invoking and praising them. He sprinkles the food with water signifying that they have already partaken of the food and thereafter invites the crowd to eat. After the meal, the *kolintang* is played, sig-

nalizing the end of the ritual. The second ritual, the *katagak* or choosing the right seedlings, is then scheduled to be held four days after the *kashawing*.<sup>7</sup> This rite is a semi-religious one with either the *imam* or the *pamitoon* (star-gazer) as the ritual leader. The first step of the ritual is the *topili* (literally, means "breaking of the soil"). Before anyone does anything, he would first "speak" to the soil about his intentions. The soil is looked upon as a living thing and it is well to secure its permission whether one is to build a house or till its crops.

Prayers are first recited, then seeds are thrown in the plots. The people who prepare the plots erect a long bamboo pole and hang some herbs and other materials believed to be helpful in getting a good harvest. In addition, a small bag called *bengat*, consisting of sacred writing, is tied on the pole by the medicine man. It is believed to drive the evil spirits and prevent the pests from harming the plants. After these rites, the people go home and the farmers can then plant their crops any day thereafter.

Another ritual is performed by the Maranao farmers who cultivate upland rice. This ritual relies first on astrology or the direction of the stars. It is believed by the people that the time for planting is dictated by the position of the stars (*bitoon*). An expert in interpreting the appearance and position of the stars (*kapa-mitooon*) is summoned. The appearance of a constellation of stars (*bengal*) is taken as a sign of fair weather. The brilliance of this group of stars is a good sign of bumper crops. Another group of stars (*lara*) seen at a certain time of the year is believed to mean the arrival of abundant rainfall. From time to time, native astrologers gaze at the heavens to seek for guidance on the opportune time to plant their rice.

Similar to planting, there are also rituals done during the harvesting season. No rice can be harvested without performing another ritual (*ketowan*).<sup>8</sup> This ritual is done during the first harvest. The farmer goes to the ripened rice and gets three to seven of the biggest and best grain-bearing stalks. He brings them home, wraps them carefully with unused yellow cloth (*lamin*) and hangs them securely at the outside walls of the house and at the wall of their sleeping quarters. These serve as an offering to the spirits. After

this is done, the rice is then ready for harvest. The farmer gives part of the harvest as a gift (*kandori*) to the *imam* and to their neighbors and friends, in gratitude for a bountiful harvest.

Another ritual during the harvesting season is called the *pa-rayan*. A bamboo pole is planted at the center of the area to be sowed during the eve of the sowing. Seven dried rice stalks are then knotted to it. Then the ritual starts with the farmers calling all the spirits to insure a bountiful harvest.

### Rituals in Celebration of Muslim Holidays<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the year, the Maranao household participates in rites celebration of Muslim holidays. The religious leaders lead the people in observing these rites. They celebrate and perform these rites by offering food to the *imam* and other religious leaders as well as to other people. The traditional leaders, the sultan and the *datus*, celebrate them with a big feast.

One of the Muslim holidays celebrated by the people is the *Maulid en Nabi* or the birth of the Prophet. The traditional leaders celebrate the day with a big feast. They gather the people together and religious activities are held. On this occasion, a ritual is performed which the people call the *morod* (literally means festivity). This is usually held in the house of the sultan or the *datu*. During the occasion, food is prepared. Dessert and rice cake (*amik*), flour cake (*tiyateg*) and sweetened ground rice (*dudol*) are also served. Food is served and some amount of money is distributed to those present during the gathering to commemorate the birth of the Prophet.

The ceremonial activities attendant to the *morod* is coupled by the performance of a socio-political and religious activity: the selection of the sultan or *datu* in the community. It is during the occasion that the incumbent traditional leaders deliver speeches informing the people what they have accomplished for them and their future plans for the community. They also rally for support and campaign for retention. Another religious activity held during this occasion is the program sponsored by the *madrasah* to solicit

contributions for the construction of more schools.

Another Muslim holiday celebrated by the Maranao is the *Ramahdan* or the fasting month. It is the month during which the Holy Qur'an was first revealed. It is also the month of sacrifice during which days the Maranao fasts. One of the rituals performed in the celebration of *Ramahdan* which to some informants is considered unislamic is the serving of food in the mosque (*katoton sa masjid*). The *ulama* consider this unislamic since the mosque is regarded as a house of prayer. Many people around the lake still practice this ritual and in some cases even distribute money to the people in the mosque. Another practice during the *Ramahdan* is the giving of food to other persons, with the belief that the food will be eaten by the dead. The food is usually served after the evening prayers (*magrib*).

Another related ritual (*rikor*) is done three days before the end of the *Ramahdan*. In this ritual, people clean their graves and light candles during the daytime. The people believed that the graveyard should be cleaned in order that the dead would come to visit them. To celebrate the soul (*arowak*) of the departed, delicious food is served. Still related to this ritual is the ceremony which involves the offering of food and other rites for the dead performed by the *imam* or any respected religious leader in the community. Mosques, houses and streets are lighted. Food is prepared consisting of rice, fish, cakes and dessert, which are all intended for the soul of the dead, but are given to people. Then reciting of Islamic verses (*rowatib*) is done. However, before the prayer starts, a coconut shell with wax perfume is burned under a brass tray (*tabak*) to let the soul enjoy a good smell in the houses they visit. Before the prayer commences, the host, as she burns the coconut shell with wax, then invokes the soul of the dead. The *imam* then leads the prayer while the host prepares money to be distributed to everyone.

Another ritual practiced during the month of *Ramahdan* is the *Lailathul Kadr*, which when translated literally means, "night of grandeur or majesty." To the Maranao, the name has come to mean the search for a "spirit." People light candles and lamps at night in search for the elusive spirit who is known to hide in cor-

ners. It is believed that the one who finds the spirit will be granted three wishes. *Lailathul Kadr*, according to the Maranao, appears like a beam of bright light. It is considered the night of great wonders and blessings which the Holy Qur'an describes as "better than a thousand months." The reward to be obtained from devotions during the night is better than the rewards to be expected of devotions in one thousand months.

*Lailathul Kadr* is one of the odd-numbered nights of the last Tuesdays of the fasting month. Following this month is *Shawal* known to be the worst month since its name suggests trouble. Any socio-economic activity initiated or conducted during the month is deemed to be unprofitable. To prevent unexpected troubles, *kakandori* or *kapanolak sa bala* is held wherein food and some amount of money is distributed to those present. Neighbors and relatives are also invited. This is done with the hope of preventing all unexpected troubles and disasters.

Finally, another religious holiday which the Maranao celebrate is the *Boka sa Hariraya* (Arabic *Id-ul-Adha*). People celebrate this with festivity and they go to the mosque to pray. Then they prepare food and distribute it to the people. Another set of rituals is done during the *Boka sa Powasa* when people take a bath in the lake or river. In rural areas, a *tabu*, huge drum at the mosque, is beaten rhythmically. The people go to the mosque to pray and listen to the sermon (*khutba*). Money or rice is brought to the mosque. The rice brought to the mosque is considered blessed by Allah and hence medicinal. It is also used by the farmers during the planting season in order to have a bountiful harvest.

Another practice, which informants say is unislamic, is the beating of a huge drum within the mosque. This is to inform the people of the end of the *Ramahdan*. Money or rice are then brought to the mosque and are given to the *katib*. After the sermon (*khutba*), rice is distributed to the people and after the prayers a house visitation takes place. The houses visited most often are those of the houses of the sultan and datu. All those who have attended the sermon are invited to come. Meals are served in the house and after the prayers are said, money is distributed to every one, including the children. In this occasion, a discussion may

dwell on who should be the next sultan or how much money has been collected for the construction of the mosque.

#### **IV**

#### **BELIEF – RITUAL SYSTEM: PERSISTENCE OR CHANGE**

Our discussion of the Maranao religious culture highlights the pervasiveness of beliefs and rituals in the life of the Maranao community. It pictures in detail the varied and distinct features and characteristics of the people's culture.

#### **Persistence of Maranao Folk Beliefs and Rituals: Their Functions in the Maranao Society**

Many traditional beliefs and rituals still persist in and influence the lives of the Maranao. The "folk elements" of the Maranao indigenous belief system are fused together with Islamic beliefs and have been accepted by the people as part and parcel of their total culture.

The pervasiveness of beliefs and rituals in Maranao life suggests that the Maranao society is strongly patterned after socio-religious norms. The belief system regulates important areas of Maranao life, from the time he is born, and becomes an adolescent, during marriage and after death. Likewise, in the religious sphere, its influence starts from the time he is initiated into Islam and continues for the rest of his life as a Muslim. This shows how religious practices and beliefs on one hand interpenetrate social behavior and norms in the various stages of the life of the people in their community.

The persistence of these beliefs can also be explained in terms of the Maranao's orientation toward the past, to what they regard as valuable to their heritage. The Maranao preserve their traditions and practices since they consider them a part of their heritage. These beliefs are further reinforced and fortified by numerous myths and folktales that elaborate the exploits of their myti-

al ancestors. Retaining much of their old beliefs also serves to enhance their identity as a people. Since these beliefs are a part of the legacy handed down by their ancestors, they feel that they would be ignoring their past and incurring the wrath of their ancestors if they disregarded them.

Persistence of Maranao beliefs and practices can also be explained in terms of the role that they play in Maranao daily life. Maranao folk beliefs permeate the day-to-day activities of the people. They continue to persist because the people find them useful and practical in satisfying their psychological as well as social needs. Rituals are considered by the people as important ways of coping with community and personal needs in a world of uncertainties. They serve as a way of manipulating the supernatural world in order to support their efforts to achieve physical health, emotional well-being, as well as material prosperity.

The belief system provides the Maranaos with psychological security by giving them an interpretation of reality and helping them deal with the forces of nature which they do not fully understand. It serves to help them cope with the powers that effect their lives and given sanctions to their practices as they relate themselves to other members of the community. It also serves to perform a significant role in regulating and defining social conduct and behavior based on what is considered acceptable by the society. The prescriptions imposed by their belief system regulate the various stages of their development as well as their periods of life crisis. While these prescriptions do impose obligations on their part, they serve to guide the Maranaos in dealing with their daily problems in life.

Moreover, the ceremonies and rites associated with these day-to-day activities of the Maranao life also perform significant social functions. Performance of these rites and practices imply the entrance of the Maranao life into a new life, a new set of relationships. These rites exert influence on the social relationships between individuals and groups in the society. While these rituals are performed largely for religious purposes, their religious significance is coupled with social and economic functions. Their social significance is found in the reunion of members and other people

in the community in celebration of occasions such as weddings or burials, thereby facilitating interaction among them. These rites serve to draw the people as well as traditional leaders together, consequently strengthening cohesion or the feeling of unity among them. They serve as a way of affirming and reinforcing relationships and obligations within the society.

The ceremonies associated with the day-to-day activities of the Maranao life are also social and prestige feasts. They serve as a means to enhance one's status, a channel for social prestige. The lavish offerings are intended to impress others. This is particularly shown during weddings. Even sickness and death rites are socio-religious events reflecting prestige and status.

Furthermore, these religious beliefs serve to validate, justify and reinforce social beliefs and values. They serve as a means of strengthening values that are considered acceptable. They regulate and define conduct and behavior based on the prevailing values adhered to by the people in the society—especially the values of *maratabat*. *Maratabat* involves love of one's religion and especially of one's identity and family status. It also involves one's obligation to enhance this status in the society. The perceptions of the Maranao towards their traditions and beliefs are reinforced by these values continually.

### **Movement Towards the Revitalization of Islam: Factors for Change**

Several factors are contributory to a new perspective of change in the Maranao religious system, one of which is the pilgrimage to Mecca. The fulfillment of one of the pillars of Islam does not only give a new cultural experience but also provides knowledge of Islamic life. More exposure to the way of Islam is also facilitated by scholarships offered to young Maranao students who study at various Islamic centers of learning in Arab countries. Also facilitating this exposure is the opportunity given to Maranao leaders to attend meetings of different world Islamic groups.

The emergence of a new religious elite also reinforces the

movement towards a deeper knowledge and understanding of Islam. With its emergence comes the need to identify and delineate between what is considered Islamic and non-Islamic, between beliefs and practices which are considered customary (*adat*) and those which are based on the Qur'an. Among the elite, the old practices which are unislamic should be discarded.

The movement towards the revitalization of Islam is further enhanced by the proliferation of *madaris* while continuous teachings and study sessions are regularly conducted to provide understanding of the true Islam. These religious schools serve to encourage the people's receptivity to religious instruction. In addition to the *madaris* are institutes established by the movement in order to provide advanced Islamic studies.

The rise of religious associations and societies also lead to beneficial effects pertinent to change. These religious organizations established in the local, provincial and national levels undertake activities not only for religious purposes but also for social and political reasons. These activities are primarily geared at strengthening the religious solidarity. They also provide support for the *madaris* in the area, thus intensifying their influence over the people. The rise of Islamic societies also pave the way for group activities which provide channels for change.

Furthermore, Islamic revitalization includes religious activities held annually to awaken the religious consciousness of the people. Regular religious festivals are celebrated to develop religious awareness and a definition of the true meaning of Islam.

## V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purposes of this study are: first, to describe Maranao religious institutions as a socio-cultural phenomenon and second, to determine their functions on the Maranao society as a whole. With these purposes in mind, the study attempted to examine and analyze the components of Maranao religious culture: their beliefs, rituals and practices. It also identified significant areas of Maranao

life which are permeated with ritual. It also shows how the older beliefs have been retained despite external influences.

### Maranao Religious System: Characteristics and Features

This study has pointed out a number of significant features and characteristics in Maranao belief, which may be summarized as follows:

1. Maranao religious system in the community level operates on the basis of major religious institutions, among which are the *agama*, the mosque, the *madrasah* and religious organizations. These institutions are used not only for religious but also for social, cultural and political purposes. They also serve as forums for the articulation of community problems and serve as effective channels for decision-making on matters pertaining to community interests.

2. Folk tradition has permeated all aspects of Maranao life. It can be discerned in the Maranao life cycle and day-to-day activities, in their work, at prayer, at the mosque, in their farms, during periods of crisis as well as during family and community celebrations and gatherings. In these activities, we see how the dominant *adat* exerts its influence over the lives of the people.

3. A strong adherence to Maranao belief system and practices could be explained in terms of adherence to traditional values and attitudes which supports and reinforces these beliefs and practices, the perceived benefits and rewards arising from such adherence, and their orientation towards the past which impels them to adhere to these practices.

4. One major characteristic of the Maranao belief system is its syncretic feature. Islamic beliefs and practices are fused and articulated well with indigenous culture and have been accepted by the people. Such fusion, however, is difficult to identify and disengage. The old beliefs have been closely associated with Islam to the extent of being taken by many to be a part of it. The people profess Islam alongside local indigenous religious beliefs. The "fused elements" now constitute significant elements in the total culture of the individual and the community.

5. Following the functionalist view, we see that Maranao beliefs and rituals perform integrative and pattern maintenance functions. They contribute towards the maintenance of stability by means of promoting and strengthening unity and solidarity among

the people. The religious rites marking the major life events of the people serve to link him and his immediate family and other groups. This is most evident during marriage and burial. Moreover, ritual appears as an important way of coping with community and personal needs in a world of insecurity, of affirming relationships and obligations within the society. It also serves as a way of manipulating the supernatural world in order to support the efforts of the people to achieve health and prosperity. These beliefs naturally form an extremely strong personal bond which exercise a profound influence on the family, unifying the members into a cohesive group. This force, in turn, exerts influence on the socio-economic and religious relationship between the individual and other peoples and groups in the society. Beliefs serve as means to bring society together into a patterned, coherent and unified whole. This underscores another important characteristic feature of the Maranao belief system: its strong cohesive power.

6. Aside from its integrative function, the beliefs and rituals also reinforce patterns which have been socially and culturally determined. They serve to legitimize, validate and reinforce beliefs and values of the people. This shows how religious practices and beliefs on one hand interpenetrate social behavior and norms in the life of the people in the community.

7. A number of factors contribute to change in the Maranao religious culture: the regular activities conducted to awaken religious consciousness of the people, the rise of religious organizations, the proliferation of *madaris* and the emergence of a new religious elite. All of these forces and activities reinforce the movement towards change.

8. Since Islam permeates the social, economic, cultural and political life of the people, the religious elite exert a tremendous influence among the people. As such, full use must be made of the religious network for the diffusion of change. They can serve as potent forces for change. The role of the religious elite are of paramount importance as leaders of the community. They can be instrumental in building a sense of personal involvement. Their influence and effective leadership coupled with efficient organization provide necessary elements for cohesion, for change.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>A *badji* is a title conferred to a Muslim who had gone to the Muslim Holy Land (Mecca) and who has complied with the requirements of the Haj rites during the pilgrimage season in Mecca. A *Tuan* is considered a Muslim who is knowledgeable about Islam although he may not have attained the level of knowledge attained by an *alim*.

<sup>2</sup>A lengthier discussion on the nature and operation of the *agama* particularly as it relates to authority distribution and leadership patterns is made in my other paper entitled "The Maranao Political System."

<sup>3</sup>For example of *tubad-tubad* (short love poems), see A. Madale's paper, "A Preliminary Classification of Muslim Literature in the Philippines," mimeographed, Feb. 1974.

<sup>4</sup>As in the previous chapter, data on rituals and practices down from informants were supplemented with insights obtained from a few existing literature related to folk beliefs and practices cited in the study. Moreover, for purposes of identifying possible variations in traditional practices, this study selected available informants who can share experiences on this regard. In addition, examination of existing literature on the rituals and practices of other Muslim Filipino groups was also conducted to provide insights necessary for further analysis on the dynamics of Muslim religious culture. A few of these studies are: Eric S. Casino, *The J ama Mapun A Changing Society in the Philippines*. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1976). Inger Wulff, "Features of the Yakan Culture in P. Gowing and R. Mcamis (eds.), *The Muslim Filipinos* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House), pp. 242-255 and Juanito Bruno, *The Social World of the Tausug :A Study in Culture and Education* (Manila: Centro Escolar University Research and Development Center I, pp. 101-107.

<sup>5</sup>A medicine man is known to be a spirit-medium whose physical being or premise is entered by the spirit.

<sup>6</sup>According to the informants, there are only several places around Lake Lanao where this ritual is still practiced. One of them is in Taraka where the traditional ritual site is situated. This is one of the areas peopled mostly by farmers. For additional information, and explanations on the ritual, cf.

Nagasura Madale, "Kashawing Rice Ritual of the Maranaos," *Mindanao Journal*. July-September, 1974, Volume I, No. 1, pp. 54-79.

<sup>7</sup>In this connection, there are two kinds of rice culture known to Maranao farmers: one is the dry or upland rice farming and the other is wet or lowland rice farming. The ritual discussed focuses on upland rice farming. Data are obtained from the two informants, one a college student from Tampang, Lanao del Sur and the other from Balindong (Wato) of the same province.

<sup>8</sup>For discussion on ceremonies connected with this ritual, see, Batua Macaraya, "Brief Essays on Culture and Rites of the Maranao; cited in Gowing, *Muslim Filipinos: Heritage and Horizon*, pp. 65-67.

<sup>9</sup>Some variation in the practice of these rituals can be discerned. For purposes of comparison and to provide elaboration on the details of rituals celebrated during Muslim holidays, particularly during the period of Ramadhan, cf. Nagasura Madale, "Ramadhan as Observed in Lanao," Paper presented in the 7th Annual Seminar on Islam in the Philippines and Asia, Xavier University, Dec. 19-22, 1974).

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