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## **OVERSEAS LABOR MIGRATION: ITS CONSEQUENCES TO THE MARANAO**

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Federico V. Magdalena

What happens to Filipino workers when they return home from Saudi? This question has been repeatedly raised about overseas laborers, that group of migrants who go and stay for work in the Middle East for a brief period and then return home as "rich" men. But contract labor, as overseas employment is also called, conjures up varying images. It tells of a saga of "milk-and-honey," as well as of darkness and misfortunes. For some, work in the Middle East means cashing in precious (petro) dollars and securing the wherewithal for a comfortable life. For others, however, it is an experience not worth recounting at all. To them, work abroad summons frustrations of every category: indebtedness, marital discord, loss of valued property (at times, loss of a dear spouse due to infidelity), embarrassment, return to a wretched life, and more.

This is how the question presents itself, or so it seems, based on the many, uncatalogued reports. The state-of-the-art on overseas employment is at best gloomy, muddled by extreme accounts of what it is or should be. It is a mixed picture of boon and bane.

Some of the reports portray the workers as exploited masses -- a case of Machiavellian victims of man's foibles, gullibility and greed. Others are heart-breaking stories, told through the news-

papers, evident from this sample of evocative headlines: "illegal recruiter fired"; "ten workers reached Saudi, found no work, deported"; "man beheaded by Arab police"; "worker's wife turned infidel, killed," etc. Procedures on illegal recruitment and the equally revelatory news on dubious methods and practices in processing travel documents are some of the venalities associated with contract labor abroad.

De Guzman (1984) has brandished a more pointed barb on the problem besetting the workers. He notes that work conditions in the flaming desert of Saudi Arabia are deplorable, not that it is hot there but that the workers' contracts are often deceptive (the ones Filipinos sign in the country are not implemented in the Middle East), or arbitrary (revocation or termination of work contracts are made earlier than agreed upon). Very few are said to have savings of decent amounts, and whatever money they do remit back home is washed out to amortize excessive loans or mortgaged property for securing a job. In short, the workers benefit little in the way of improving their socioeconomic status. The ones who truly prosper are the placement offices, which stash away huge profits for placing an applicant to a job, and the government, which enlarges its foreign exchange holdings.

In a subsequent work, De Guzman (1985) makes a class analysis of labor migration according to what may be called a Marxist framework. Rejecting the "push and pull" factors of migration, he sets out a theoretical framework based on two laws of the capitalist mode of production. The workers are thus seen as a helpless, oppressed and exploited mass. They are mercilessly taken advantaged of by the foreign capitalists. As a way out of this dilemma, he suggests that workers should organize and unite themselves to be able to achieve economic, political and social liberation.

On the other side of the ledger, the plight of the workers is not pityingly hopeless. A recent survey (Aban et al., 1985) indicates that overseas employment is not without its favorable

effects. Interviews of 218 Muslim and Christian workers from Lanao provinces have depicted favorable experiences. The income capacity of these workers shot up after their brief stint abroad, and their level of living also increased correspondingly. In addition, about a third of them invested their savings in small business (typically a sari-sari store), and about a similar portion were able to build their own houses or purchase real estate. Their corresponding habits changed nonetheless, toward the direction of greater materialism (a consumeristic tendency as the authors term it) and leisure characteristic of the upper class. Whether the net benefits derived from overseas employment are large enough or will last long remains uncertain, however. What is known is that it has some positive impact, at least in the short run.

What is also certain is the fact that the workers have their own "definition of the situation," to use W. I. Thomas's phrase. To them, overseas employment has a reality of its own in their perceptions. Contrary to the unfavorable reports, their enthusiasm for work has never flagged. Despite the unsavory tales, applications for work have remained at high levels, flooding placement offices and the government's Department of Labor and Employment. In themselves, the arsenal of applications and the staggering number of workers who departed for various work assignments in Arab lands bespeak of the current fever for overseas labor. To cap it all, newspaper reports have stated that the number of workers who leave for work in the Middle East range from 30,000 to 40,000 per month, or a yearly average of close to half a million Filipinos. This number, if anything, is a conservative estimate as many workers who go abroad are not registered as such. They leave the country as "tourists," "entertainers," or "students" but later are absorbed in the labor force of a host country.

Favorable or not, contract labor is here to stay. There are signs that the migration fever, that upsurge of overseas employment, will continue to afflict a large number of workers who itch for change. It will do so, as it were, despite the changing demand for contract workers abroad due to international competition, avail-

ability of cheaper labor elsewhere, and fluctuations in the supply of skilled labor, among others.

### *Why Migrate? A Search for Meaning*

On a historical plane, labor migration is a deeply rooted phenomenon in the country, which is why the Philippines has acquired a status as a labor exporter in Asia. The exodus of workers to the Middle East is but a replay of an old recording. Consider the episode when the country sent out thousands of workers to the United States at the turn of the century. There, the workers filled the high demand for plantation labor, particularly in the states of Hawaii and California. As if reminiscing that pattern, the country is again involved in sending out waves of migrant laborers, this time to the Middle East, during the late 1970s on to the 1980s. In 1981, Smart (1982) placed the number of Filipino workers in Arab lands at 183,590, three-fourths of whom are assigned in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Official reports have estimated that Filipino labor constitute 12.4 percent of all foreign workers in Saudi Arabia alone.

Culturally, we shall find that labor migration to the Middle East provides satisfaction to the needs of many workers. To the Muslims in the Philippines, who share some established cultural ties with the Middle East, going to that part of the globe is like visiting a familiar territory where they are always welcome, or so they think. This feeling of identification is enhanced by religion. Muslims all over the world are ideologically united by virtue of the concept of *Dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam) and the fraternalizing relation defined by the *ummah* (brotherhood in Islam).

This is not to say that the Muslim workers place their economic needs subservient to religious consideration when they decide to migrate to the Middle East. For among them, the desire for economic improvement is a singular factor in their aspirations (Matuan, 1983). In one study (Cantril, 1963) it was observed that their economic aspirations were, in fact, more pronounced among

the Muslims than were those of other Philippine groups as revealed by a survey during the 1960s. In the words of its author:

For the small Moslem population in the Philippines the most widespread desire was to have great wealth, mentioned by a third of them; less than 1 percent of the small Protestant population there expressed any such concern.

Considering further that economic motivations rank very highly among migrants, which many studies have repeatedly shown, the concern for economic change must necessarily be a tall order among the Muslim labor migrants. Already there is evidence to show that this is the case among the Maranao Muslims. Matuan (1983) has found this to be highly emphasized among the Maranao migrants in Metro Manila during the past decade. In Manila alone, some 30,000 to 50,000 Maranao migrants are recently found.

That economic aspirations seek outlet in labor migration is thus another theory behind the overseas employment to the Middle East. These aspirations must be higher now than they used to be considering that the economic crisis of the 1980s had imposed a heavy burden to the rural areas, afflicting as it did the poor and the weak.

Bad as the economy was, in the troubled areas of the southern Philippines the deterioration of the peace is worst. It has pushed residents out of their communities into safer places. One ecological effect is the shifting pattern of ethnic diversification and integration, making neighborhoods ethnically homogeneous but sustaining the tense situation in between them (Costello, 1981). For Lanao, this appears to be one concrete effect since the social conflict of the 1970s broke out. But more distressing, perhaps, is its effect on migration. The province of Lanao del Sur registered an unusually high rate of outmigration during that period up to the early 1980s, in part due to the armed disturbances and in another to the itching desire for economic change. About 100,000 Maranaos from Lanao were counted to have "disappeared" from the

1980 census. It is believed that this loss in population is attributed not to genocide, but significantly to outmigration. Without doubt, there is more to migration than just the issue of peace or economics.

Search for meaningful explanations, we believe has to encompass an understanding of the actors' perceptions of their world. That is, the workers themselves must be asked how they construct their own categories, how they perceive the reality of their own situation. This notion sounds psychologically valid in its pristine connotations. It does appear sensible to find out whether the workers perceive benefits from contract labor, whether they are satisfied with it, and whether they see their lives changing with or out of it. Thus this research.

### ***The Research Problem***

Having set out the general perspectives for the conduct of the present research, it is well to consider how exactly we view the problem for investigation. For a given population and time, we believe that research has to follow an empirical validation. It must demonstrate convincingly which side of the many aspects of reality is more "true," using evidence from the workers' point of view. More concretely, from this vantage, the research has to show if overseas employment is more beneficial than harmful, more useful than useless, and more satisfying than frustrating--at least as the workers see it and actually integrate it in their repertoire of social experiences. For in the final analysis, it is the workers who should be their own judges. They look at overseas employment through their own lenses, and they actually live in it according to their own terms.

Following up on earlier leads (Aban et al., 1985), this study shall continue to probe for additional answers regarding the incentives or disincentives of overseas employment. Focusing on the Maranao Muslims as a cultural community, it shall determine the perceptions they have about working in the Middle East. The

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present research will also outline the contours of certain changes in the economic and social milieu which are shaped by overseas employment. More concretely, the problems for investigation are the following:

1. Economically, do they perceive improvements in their socio-economic status? How does this perception compare with actual improvements, if any? Do the workers envision a better or bleak life in the future? How, for example, do they now look at the prospects of their jobs and economic security in their hometowns?

2. Socially, is there an accompanying change in their relations with other people? How do the workers feel now about their families and relatives? Does their attachment to them diminish or increase? Does overseas employment entail a corresponding participation or apathy in those activities concerning the welfare of the kinship?

3. In psychic terms, it is well to inquire into the "effect" or feelings of the workers about their experiences noted above, and make them evaluate such and other experiences as to whether they are satisfying or fulfilling. It is also important to find out if overseas workers have imbibed the values of, say, a forward-looking stance, measurable by the kinds of aspirations they have for themselves and for their families.

### ***Propositions and Hypotheses***

Two competing or rival propositions on overseas employment are evident from the questions just raised. The first one is derived from accounts of "men-across-the-street," so-called because it is pessimistic and argues for retrogress instead of progress. Stated formally, this proposition argues that:

$P_1$ : In general, the workers have not significantly benefitted from overseas employment in terms of economic

and social improvements. Neither do they perceive any benefits accruing to them along these lines.

For the present analysis, this idea implies that economically the workers will not feel any substantive change in their lives. Their work abroad has not contributed to an improvement or enhancement of their living conditions.

The proposition also implies that no favorable changes in the economic aspects of the lives of the workers have occurred in a significant way, at least according to their perceptions. In addition, the workers will not feel any more satisfied in their jobs abroad than their previous or present jobs, if they happen to have one. Their work overseas has nothing to do with their social relations in the family or kinship. If it has, then they will fail to envision a good life in Lanao, or at best will perceive that that prospects is dim. The workers will express unrealistic or no aspirations for themselves and their families.

In contrast, the second proposition is based on the researcher's observations. As this study is a sequel to an earlier research, there are grounds to argue that:

**P<sub>2</sub>: Overseas employment is objectively beneficial and is perceived as such by the workers to have changed their lives significantly in economic and social contexts.**

This proposition means that employment in the Middle East not only improved the lives of the workers materially but that they also perceive it to be so. The workers express high satisfaction with their occupational experience abroad, which, as a result also changes the way they perceive or relate themselves to their environment. They develop stronger attachment to and, by any indication, acquire deeper involvement in the welfare of their families and relatives. Consequently, they make an attempt to maintain a sound social relationship. Parallel to this changed outlook is the expectation that the workers also perceive their lives in the future as more promising than what the present holds. This

optimism leads to a widening of their horizons--they become more planful and aspiring of a better future than before.

Several specific statements, or hypotheses, may be deduced from the second proposition for purposes of testing or confirmation. Statistically, they shall be compared with the "null" hypotheses that no significant changes have occurred in the lives of the workers as a result of contract labor. The word "significant" requires some qualification. By significant change we mean an alteration in the cultural, economic, and social spheres that cannot be attributed to random or chance occurrence in 5 out of 100 possibilities or better (one out of 100). It also means, technically, that the null hypotheses are rejected at a probability of .05 or less by the application of an appropriate test. Otherwise, these null hypotheses are considered "true," hence, invalidating our stated stance and accepting the logic of the first proposition.

### ***Data and Methods***

As this study is a follow-up research (cf. Aban et al., 1985), the present author has gained considerable insights into data sources, quality of information, and problems of sampling which had served as drawbacks in the earlier study.

#### ***Sampling***

From an initial list gathered in 1984, a sampling frame has been constructed and enlarged by enumerating names of potential informants through the method of "interactive" sampling (Coleman, 1970). In essence, the procedure consisted in asking people to provide names of overseas workers from the area, who in turn were visited and interviewed. Then, from these informants the process of collecting names of others was again applied for the subsequent interviewees until a comprehensive list was developed.

Through this method, the reader may imagine a picture of a "social" sample. That is, the members of the sample are in many ways assumed to be in interaction with one another, judging from

the fact that they know others from the community who have worked abroad. Thus, one is able to map out by inference an organizational structure presumably operating among the informants. The group-like character of the sample provides some social meaning which hardly exists in purely random samples. The latter are characterized by anonymity and a creation by statistical artifact rather than by any meaningful social relations. That the sample approximates a "social group" is confirmed in part by the information that the workers under study have mostly worked in one place, Saudi Arabia, as indicated by a full 95 percent of the cases.

Following the above procedure, we have estimated that there are about 300 contract workers from Marawi, and a somewhat smaller number from Balo-i who have recently returned from the Middle East. (About the same number of workers or 600 strong, are said to be still abroad at the time of fieldwork early in 1986.) Our field interviewers have visited and talked to 324 such returning workers, distributed as follows: Marawi City, 178, and Balo-i, 146.

Fieldwork began in January 1986 but was stopped shortly, and then resumed, as a result of the uneasiness generated by the Presidential snap elections the following month. After the "February Revolution," a brief lull was observed to let subside the post-election hangover. The collection of the data, done through a standard interview schedule, was carried out until June 1986 at which time we decided to interview no more cases. All interviews were conducted in the vernacular (Maranao). Where appropriate, English was used to elicit the desired information.

### ***The Research Setting***

This study covers two geographical areas known to be inhabited by Philippine Muslims: Marawi City (or the Islamic City of Marawi, as people there prefer to call it) in Lanao del Sur, and the municipality of Balo-i in Lanao del Norte. Both have a predo-

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minantly large and homogeneous Muslim population, the Maranao, which constitutes in many senses an ethnic community, distinct and separate from others within or outside Lanao. In 1980, Marawi City had a population of 53,812, 95 percent of whom claim to be Muslims (mostly Maranao). During the same period, Balo-i posted a population of 19,383, also with a hefty Maranao majority.

Marawi and Balo-i are contiguous to each other, spanned only by a physical distance of some 15 kilometers. Perhaps the social distance between them is much closer than anything. Their people maintain common ties forged by kinship and alliances, and partake of similar trade, education, and other modern structures. Politically and religiously, they are united under the old Pat a Pangampong ko Ranao (Four States of Lanao), although governed by somewhat independent sultanates. This traditional structure more than befits the description of the residents as belonging to one ethnic community.

Selection of these areas for the research is prompted by the knowledge that the bulk of Maranao overseas workers comes from Marawi City and Balo-i. That this is so is further reinforced by the observation that recruitment and placement offices are actively found there, where they are conspicuously absent or lack institutionalization in other areas of Lanao with a predominant Muslim population. These offices assure the regularity and availability of the supply of skilled labor. It is equally possible, however, that earlier contract workers from Marawi and Balo-i have contributed largely to the employment links with Arab countries, with or without the blessing of placement institutions.

But what seems to be more striking about these geographical communities is their high rates of outmigration, fairly high degrees of urbanization, and relative centrality with respect to communication and trade networks. Summing up, these characteristics point to the importance of Marawi City and Balo-i in the study of international migration and social change.

### ***Research Design***

In this study, the design is essentially a survey research dealing with a one-group, correlated sample. By the nature of the problem, reliance is placed on retrospective analysis for the same group by asking its members to provide data on their past, relative to their stint abroad, with which to compare their current experiences. This method of collecting data is not impeccable. It is sensitive to errors of recall. Either the workers forget what transpired in their lives before they got a job in the Middle East, or they just attempt to "copy" what information they have provided earlier to make themselves appear consistent. These limitations are inherently built into the technique, which is characteristic of most survey research; hence, they cannot be avoided. One has to work out an analysis within these constraints to make the most out of them.

As in most experiments, the data are compared for the same respondents in a "before" and "after" format to be able to track down changes in certain behaviors. The internal changes perceived by the workers were then ascertained if these have significantly departed from random occurrences by the use of the McNemar test for the significance of changes (Siegel, 1956). We then decided whether the hypotheses were to be accepted or not at the 5 percent probability. The test is "distribution free," deemed appropriate for the present research design and for the quality of data gathered. Besides, the data are not assumed to be interval measures, on which the assumption of normality is not strictly imposed.

### ***Variables***

Attempts were made to measure the variables in categorical or ordered terms, although some are clearly interval measurements (e.g., income). The impacts were discerned from differentials within each variable, classified broadly along cultural, social, economic and psychological lines. That is, results of the comparison "before" and "after" employment in the Middle East

are determined if they are large enough to warrant calling them significant changes.

Many of the variables had been spelled out earlier, but for cultural, social and psychological factors a need is up to mention something about their measurements. "Cultural change" is a catch-all term for variations of a people. It would be presumptuous to fully dwell on it in a short work like this, with all this change's complexities and idiosyncracies. For this study, it has been operationally defined as a change in religious tradition as well as in some aesthetic matters like values surrounding food and music. Thus, the question is whether the workers have become more (less) religious, prefer (do not prefer) Arab music/Philippine traditional music to other kinds of music, and that goes, too, for food preferences. Has there been a notable change from native (food) taste to another culinary taste? Imbedded in these questions is a desire to infer changes in certain basic values and practices from the verbal admission of people.

Changes in the social aspects of life cannot be divorced from cultural alterations. What we mean by the phrase "social change" is that there is an accompanying deviation, positive or negative, in the way people are related to each other. Has there been a decrease or increase in the attachment between the workers and their families? This question is dealt with by asking them to indicate the strength of their attachment before and after working abroad, and to show the extent to which they participate in such activities that help maintain kinship relations. Among the Maranao, mutual aid (locally called *awidan*) is a recurring activity that defines or gives essence to the vibrant kinship network by the rendering of assistance to needy relatives. High-status and financially able members of the community are often sought after by relatives who run into troubles (e.g., during conflict situations) or are locked in moments of economic crisis (someone gets married or sick, goes to Mecca for the *hajj*, etc.). The question thus is: will the "modernized" worker oblige to the traditional *awidan* practice with the same frequency as before?

Another important variable is mobility in occupational status, measured in terms of shifts in jobs before and after working abroad. Occupation is a self-report of the categories of income-generating activities, for which the workers evaluated themselves as "better" or "worse" (if not similar), relative to another job they held in the past at home or in the Middle East.

Finally, the respondents are asked to verbalize their perceptions of their work, life in the future, their personal or family aspirations, their religious life, etc. so as to measure the impact of their having worked abroad. The variables are plenty for a detailed examination of what happens in the psychological world of the workers. They are used here to determine if the workers have become alienated, frustrated or pessimistic instead of having returned as happy and active men, hopeful of leading a better life in the future. For these variables, simple descriptive analysis shall be performed to augment the statistical tests.

A word of caution must be observed in the measurement and interpretation of the variables. They are not meant to be indicators of social and cultural changes no more than mere alterations in the psyche of those who perceive them, the workers. Thus, in an objective sense there may not be a corresponding physical or visible modification in behavior. Perhaps it is accurate to say that the observed change, if any, occurs only as part of the complex of attitudes and beliefs. The ideal would have been to see the unity between thoughts and deeds, but that is too far-fetched to capture in a survey research or to consider in the analysis of a reality that has just begun.

### ***Findings***

Our preliminary observations on the characteristics of the workers (Aban et al., 1985) generally hold for the present sample, with few exceptions. The commonalities are these: the workers are by and large young or middle-aged, married, highly educated (Table 1) and desirous of upward mobility. The exceptions are

found in the size and type of sample and, to a certain extent, in the level of education. This work deals with a much larger sample of workers ( $N = 324$ ) as compared to the previous ( $N = 119$ ).

Table 1: Educational Attainment of the Workers (Percent)

Education	Balo-i	Marawi City	Total
College grad.	18.5%	32.6%	26.2%
Some College	24.7	21.9	23.1
H.S. graduate	32.9	13.5	22.2
Some high ed.	6.8	4.5	5.6
Elem graduate	13.0	8.4	10.5
Some elem.	4.1	1.7	2.8
No schooling	-	1.7	0
No response	-	15.7	8.0
% Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	146	178	324

Surprisingly, the workers comprising the present sample are somewhat "less educated" than those of the earlier sample, the difference being about 20 percent. In this study the respondents are composed of workers almost half of whom (49 percent) had some college education or better in contrast with 68 percent of the earlier sample.

The last but perhaps negligible difference is that the two studies are spanned by a time gap of two years.

Such clarifications are important to clear away misconceptions, or explain "real" differences, that may arise from our analysis. The discrepancy in education between the two

samples is an important one. It is a potential source of other anomalies, given the acknowledged role of education as a crucial variable in social change. However, the effects of education are here assumed to be secondary to those of overseas employment, which is the bone of contention in this undertaking.

We may also mention that majority of the cases (56.4 percent) stayed in the Middle East for 1-2 years, while 138 or 42.6 percent worked there for at least three years. (It is interesting to note that about a fifth or 20.3 percent worked there for five or more years.) Nearly all of the workers (95 percent) went to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. About three-fourths (74 percent) still nourish the idea of going back abroad for work.

### *Economic Impact*

We have said much about the economic impact in an earlier study. Additional findings on this respect, however, may be worthwhile presenting. Taking income, which is often regarded as a ticklish indicator of status (Tilman, 1971), Table 2 shows that the workers' income level has increased by more than 200 percent from an annual average of P12,360 (N = 230) before leaving for abroad to P39,432 (N = 196) at the time of interview in early 1986. Disregarding the rise in the cost of living (measurable by the price index) and the consequent decline in the "real" income, the observed change is nonetheless drastic in a span of 1-3 years, which period most of the workers (71 percent) spent in Saudi. There are reasons to believe, however, that the reported income is an underestimate of the actual (see Aban et al., 1985).

Is the improvement in income significant? Our data point out a "Yes" answer. Test of the significance of this difference makes us believe that the change cannot be dismissed on account of random errors in 1 out of 100 (Table 3, Chi-Square = 65.98,  $p < .01$ ). Before working abroad, 162 or 70 percent of all the workers who reported their income (N = 230) earned P1,000 or less a month. This number significantly declined to only 41 cases or 21

percent at the time of the interview. The pattern observed here holds true for both sample areas, Balo-i and Marawi City.

Table 2: Percent Distribution of Gross Monthly Income of the Workers. Before and After Going Abroad

Monthly Income (Pesos)	Before	After	Difference
P12,001 & over	-	2.6%	-2.6%
11,001-12,000	-	2.0	-2.0
10,001-11,000	-	1.5	-1.5
9,001-10,000	0.4	3.1	-2.7
8,001-9,000	-	3.6	-3.6
7,001-8,000	-	1.0	-1.0
6,001-7,000	-	5.1	-5.1
5,001-6,000	0.9	3.1	-2.2
4,001-5,000	1.3	3.1	-1.8
3,001-4,000	0.9	6.6	-5.7
2,001-3,000	4.2	11.2	-6.9
1,001-2,000	21.7	36.2	-14.5
501-1,000	55.2	15.3	39.9
500-& below	15.2	5.6	9.6
TOTAL	99.9%	100.0%	
N	230	196	
Mean Average	P1,030	P3,286	

Table 3: Changes in Income Level

Income (Monthly) "After"	"Before"			
	Balo-i		Marawi City	
	Low	High	Low	High
High (over P1,000)	48	11	31	25
Low (P1,000 & below)	19	1	9	3
	67	12	40	28
Chi-Square =	43.18 (p < .01)		21.44 (p < .01)	
Combined sample, Chi-Square =	65.98 (p < .01)			

*Note:* The formula used in the calculation of the Chi-Square is that of the McNemar test for the significance of changes, with Yate's correction for continuity. This formula has been applied throughout, except in Table 7, where the Chi-Square formula is for the test of independence. In every table, cases with missing data have been excluded from the computation.

It is perhaps germane to mention here how the workers stand relative to others. In 1985, the average Filipino family earned only P30,748 per annum (NCSO income data, as cited in *Mindanao Focus*, 1986: 8-9). Thus, an indication is clear that the workers have a much higher income than that of the typical Filipino family. It must be stated here, however, that the sample workers are also more highly educated than the average Filipino or the typical Maranao.

The price of obtaining that much income is nonetheless crucial in this analysis. How much did it cost the average worker to obtain a job abroad? In answer to this, he dished out an average of P8,231 just so he could secure a job there. This amount included the fares to Manila and back to Lanao, placement fees, travel fees, food and related expenses. (Upon deeper analysis, even the reported cost is quite conservative as the prevailing cost in 1985 averaged P15,000 just for the "asking fee" of a recruitment agency.) This job-related expenditure constitutes a singular, most important item that erodes the gains of overseas workers under the assumption that it is paid in "advance" (or "post-deducted") from future savings, which most of the workers easily confirm. On balance, the average worker is left with a gross saving of about P31,201 to fend for his needs and those of his family members, at least during his first year of stay upon returning to Lanao.

Result of this simple "cost-benefit" analysis leads to a tempting conclusion that the worker is not much better than the average Filipino family, even if he does appear to have improved financially, considering his high educational attainment and the relatively low cost of living in Lanao. It is apparent that he would have become worse than almost everybody had he failed to secure a job, or had he worked in Saudi for no more than a year. (The latter analysis is based on a rough computation that the worker's annual income would be cut by about two-thirds, leaving him a measly P4,129 for the rest of the year to live on.)

Given these figures, the question remains thus: Has the worker truly improved his lot? Or, is the improvement only a temporary relief? From the data, it is clear that the answers are generally in the affirmative, taken from the overall economic changes in the lives of the workers, and from their favorable perceptions of the same and their outlooks in life. Following findings shed more light on this matter.

As regards level of living, defined here as the material goods and services which a family consumes to satisfy some of its wants, we found a striking evidence. Like the change in income of

the workers, there is a significant improvement in their level-of-living status after returning from the Middle East (Table 4, Chi-Square = 57.55  $p < .01$ ). But unlike the previous finding for Muslim and Christian workers where the change in the level of living was insignificant, the present discovery is indeed a surprise. Based on the same scale developed from Guttman scalogram principles, the number of workers classified with 'low status' (those with scores of 0-2 decreased from 109 to 41,  $N = 171$  cases). This change is a substantial one to be suspected as arising from random errors.

Table 4: Changes in Level of Living ...

Level of Living "After"	"Before"			
	Balo-i		Marawi City	
	Low	High	Low	High
High (3 or more)	56	26	17	31
Low (0-2)	14	0	22	5
	70	36	39	36
Chi-Square =	54.01 ( $p < .01$ )		5.5 ( $p < .05$ )	
Combined sample, Chi-Square =	57.55 ( $p < .01$ )			

Occupation-wise, there appears to be a combination of both "upward" and "downward" pattern, perhaps suggestive of a cycle. On the positive side of it, contract labor enhanced the acquisition of skills (and perhaps the will) necessary for economic adaptation to the local setting. The number of professionals and those engaged in related, independent occupations increased significantly from 61 to 93 out of 180 cases with known occupational histories

(Table 5, Chi-Square = 18.48,  $p < .01$ ). The workers from Marawi City, however, did not seem to experience a significant degree of upward occupational mobility, although the trend is in evidence. When the entrepreneurial occupations are isolated and analyzed, a much stronger pattern emerged: Entrepreneurs grew in number from only 30 cases before going abroad to 94 out of 165 workers (Table 5, Chi-Square = 50.88,  $p < .01$ ).

Table 5: Occupational Mobility ...

Occupation "After"	"Before"			
	Balo-i		Marawi City	
	All Others	Prof/Bus	All Others—	Prof/Bus
Professionals/— business	26	15	16	36
All other occupations	50	4	27	6
	76	19	43	42
Chi-Square =	14.7 ( $p < .01$ )		3.68 (n.s.)*	
Combined sample, Chi-Square =	18.48 ( $p < .01$ )			

\*n.s. means the Chi-Square value is not significant at 5 percent.

On the negative pole, it seems clear that overseas employment creates an immediate problem of re-integration into the occupational stream, a pattern common among many Asian countries (see Arnold and Shah, 1984). In Lanao, this appears to be even more so. It has considerably enlarged the pool of unemployed among the workers from 27 "jobless" applicants to 95 ( $N = 288$  cases), a significant increase by the McNemar test (Table 6, Chi-Square = 48.79,  $p < .01$ ). Unpalatable though this change

## ... and Entrepreneurial Mobility

	Balo-i		Marawi	
	All Others	Entrep.	All Others	Entrep.
"After" Entrepreneurial occupations	24	10	47	13
All others	34	3	30	4
	58	13	77	17
Chi-Square =	14.81 (p < .01)		34.59 (p < .01)	
Combined sample, Chi-Square =	50.88 (p < .01)			

may be, it looks like a temporary dislocation since most of the unemployed are recent returnees who probably "fallow" after a long, hard work abroad. In between their stories during the interview, they signified hopes to get back to work soon. But more important is the observation that they do not seem to look unhappy or detached. Instead, they exuded confidence in themselves and displayed optimism for the future, expecting, as most other workers do, that their "lives in Lanao will be better off in the future" (Table 7). No significant differences in this perception are found among the various occupational groups and the jobless.

What is in store for these jobless workers? From observations, it appears unlikely that they will land jobs in public offices or private industries which many of them vacated. Salaried employment in Lanao is rare and hard to come by. The most feasible alternative is for them to seek opportunities, as many others have successfully done, from small-scale entrepreneurship for which the Maranao are noted. Itinerant trading, small shops, transport business (PU cars and jitneys), buy-and-sell (falcatta business, for

Table 6: Joblessness has Increased

"After"	"Before"			
	Balo-i		Marawi City	
	W/ jobs	Jobless	W/ job	Jobless
Jobless workers	26	4	54	11
With jobs	96	3	85	9
	122	7	139	20
Chi-Square =	19.86 (p < .01)		33.59 (p < .01)	
Combined sample, Chi-Square =	48.79 (p < .01)			

example), and barter trade are among the popular ones engaged in by Maranao entrepreneurs who have little capital. These are the same activities followed by many of the workers who decided to go on their own after returning from the Middle East.

Finally, majority of the workers are able to satisfy a basic, irreducible need for shelter. Two or three years ago, only less than a third (88 cases out of 315) had roofs over their heads which they could call their own. Today, almost two-thirds (194 cases) fully own their houses (Table 8). This increase is doubtless significant to be relegated to mere chance (Chi-Square = 20.08, p < .01). While the findings are laudable, they do not apply to the workers in Marawi City in particular as there is no significant increase in the frequency of house ownership among them. In Marawi City, as elsewhere, housing is a major problem for many families. Where one does not have any, he lives with the extended family. Likewise, a house owner most possibly would offer his own to share with a relative, brother or sister who does not have one.

Among the workers who can afford, a substantial part of their savings must have gone to home-building as an "investment," which means a lifetime fortune to an ordinary family. Putting up a modest house would easily cost from P100,000 to P350,000.

Table 7: Present Occupation and Workers' Perception of Life in Lanao (Percent)

	Jobless	Prof.	Business	Skilled	Unskilled
My life here will be better	67.7	48.0	62.3	71.6	66.7
Worse or about the same	32.3	52.0	37.6	28.3	33.3
N	100.0 (96)	100.0 (25)	99.9 (85)	99.9 (74)	100.0 (12)

Chi-Square = 5.11, df = 3, n.s. at p = .05 level. (In the calculation of the Chi-Square value, the last two occupational categories have been collapsed because of the small expected frequency, thus explaining the df as reported here to be 3.)

We would like to take a special note of housing as a singular accomplishment among many of the workers, especially those from Balo-i, in view of its material cost and the social value it brings. In an open-ended question made during the interview ("what one most important item or possession have you acquired out of your savings from working overseas?"), "house and lot" was the most popular response (29.6 percent) we have recorded. While housing is a "lost investment" from the point of view of economic rationality, fulfillment of this important need transcends the social and cultural. For one, it symbolizes a long-aspired social or psychological want, that of expressing social status in the society.

Table 8: House Ownership has also Increased

"After"	"Before"			
	Balo-i		Marawi City	
	Don't own	Fully own	Don't own	Fully own
Fully own	6	45	8	27
Don't own/ share with others	52	34	140	3
	58	80	148	30
Chi-Square =	18.22 (p < .01)		1.45 (n.s.)	
Combined sample, Chi-Square =	20.08 (p < .01)			

Perhaps, housing is a singular, most important possession that affirms that status by the successful achievement of economic power or wealth (compare Llorca, 1985). This is not to argue, however, that the materially successful Maranao would always show conspicuous consumption this way. For there are many among them who do not have houses of their own, though they may be rich. At any rate, the observation about housing among the workers only confirms the expectation that wealth, once acquired, tends to satisfy more than just economic wants.

We shall keep tabs of this discussion in the subsequent section on the practice of *awidan* (mutual help) or *katatabanga*.

*Impact on Social Relations*

If cultural changes are dramatic and important, those which occur in social relations would have been more fundamental. Modernization of cultures seems to slacken the social bonds that used to unite families and kinds together, with the result that some kind of "individualism" takes place. Tribal and kinship loyalties are eroded gradually by the incipient values that come with modernity. Particularism paves way to universalism, ascription to individual achievement based on merit, expressiveness (or emotionality) to instrumentalism (or rationality), and diffuseness to specificity. These shifts in orientation tend to occur as part of social change, so argues Talcott Parsons in his well known typologies of "pattern variables."

Returning migrants may well be regarded, at least in theory, as carriers of new values, new outlooks or worldviews, which they have presumably assimilated while abroad. If so, does overseas employment bring about a corresponding change in the social relations among the Maranao workers? Does it increase or weaken their bonds of kinship? The answers to these questions are striking. Based on the evidence we have gathered, it appears that overseas employment has served only to heighten, rather than undermine, the social structure defined by kinship and family relations. Our findings show that the sentiments bedded in particularism and related Parsonian variables, could have found room in the experiences of the workers. Their emotional attachment to their children, wives, and families has dramatically increased when they returned from the Middle East (Table 9, Chi-Square = 25.35,  $p < .01$  level) as compared to what they said they felt before. That type of change goes, too, with the perceived relations or attachment to the kinship (see same table, Chi-Square = 44.18,  $p < .01$ ) as compared to what they said existed before. As to why this is so can be gleaned from a theoretical explanation below.

The centrality of the family and kinship in the Maranao social organization has been amply discussed elsewhere (see Saber, Tamano and Warriner, 1960; Llorca, 1985) and need not be elaborated here. What holds the structure together? Perhaps, the litmus test of the kinship system, a tightly knit union of related families, is provided by at least two factors: (1) economic activities based on mutual sharing or helping (*awidan*) or *katatabanga*), and (2) family honor or pride (*maratabat*). Among the Maranao, the concept of *awidan* animates the kinship into a vivacious social unit through such welfare activities as the rendering of material assistance, even social or moral support, to needy relatives. Mutual help is a normative process and an established tradition that goes beyond the acts of mere giving and taking. Like other kin-related behaviors, it is enforced, wittingly or unwittingly, by some process of social valuation common to most Philippine ethnic groups where the receiver values any help rendered by his kin and as a consequence feels obliged to reciprocate it in the future.

Table 9: Changes in the Attachment toward Children

	"Before"			
	Balo-i		Marawi City	
	Somewhat strong/weak	Very strong	Somewhat strong/weak	Very strong
"After"				
Very strong	24	76	22	80
Somewhat strong/ weak	6	1	1	7
	30	77	30	87
Chi-Square =	19.36 (p < .01)		6.76 (p < .01)	
Combined sample, Chi-Square =	25.35 (p < .01)			

## . . . and toward Kin Members

		"Before"			
		Balo-i		Marawi City	
"After"		Somewhat strong	Very strong/weak	Somewhat strong	Very strong/weak
	Very strong		21	88	54
Somewhat strong/ weak		37	0	18	12
		58	88	72	104
Chi-Square =		19.05 (p < .01)		25.47 (p < .01)	
Combined sample, Chi-Square =		44.18 (p < .01)			

Even so, *awidan* among the Maranao is a cooperative conduct which is invariably affected by, and gives meaning to, the family pride. On many occasions, it has been expressed within the confines of the kinship. It is activated in part by family *maratabat*. What thus appears as a simple act of giving and taking is sustained by the *maratabat* complex as a psychical ingredient deeply rooted among the Maranao. This is not to say that this phenomenon is only found in this society. It is widely in existence among many Filipino groups, known under the labels of *hiya* (shame), *utang na loob* (feelings of indebtedness), *pakikisama* (camaraderie), and related concepts. To the Maranao, however, *maratabat* is an "ideology" or an assumed "psychological substance" that justifies action. Saber, Tamano and Warriner (1960) have this to say:

(Maratabat) is a concept common throughout the society. Ranged around this concept are a number of explicit beliefs concerning its nature that explain and account for its existence that describe its causation and consequences. In addition, this substance and its consequences are given worth in terms of the basic value criteria of the society.

The degree of *maratabat* expected of a person is directly proportional to social rank. A person of slave status is not expected to show, and would be punished for exhibiting, *maratabat*. On the other hand, persons of highest status are expected to and do exhibit a jealous protection of their *maratabat*.

Both shame and duty (which are also equated with or are expressions of *maratabat*) are explicable only in terms of social position. One feels shamed to the extent that his role or actions do not conform to what he believes other expect of a person in his position. Similarly duty is always a function of position and membership.

These statements are clear as to what types of persons are obliged as a matter of duty to help others, especially relatives, so that they can maintain or live up to their family *maratabat*. Granting its validity, *maratabat* among the overseas workers is bound to be expressed in *awidan* considering that these workers are not only economically well-off but are also members of "high-status" families. Fully 91.4 percent of the workers claim to have "royal" blood, although only about 7 percent admitted that they were actual holders of traditional titles (datus, sultans, rajamudas, and others) at the time of interview.

In view of the above, it should be expected that the workers are conscious of their obligation to observe the *awidan*. According to the modernism thesis, however, there should be a decline in the observance of the *awidan* under the assumption that new values supersede the old.

Our findings indicate that the practice of *awidan* has been reinforced or strengthened, thereby supporting the first hypothesis. Observance of the practice has apparently increased among those who said that they "seldom" participated in it or practiced it only "occasionally" before they went to the Middle East (Table 10, Chi-Square = 50.16,  $p < .01$ ). These changes could not possibly be attributed to sheer chance in 1 out of 100 cases. The expectation of one-upmanship characteristic of those who have imbibed upon the Parsonian modernism does not seem to apply in the present analysis.

Overall, the findings cannot be regarded as a validation of the obvious. Perhaps, the Maranao workers are, in fact, more "modernized" than their compatriots of comparable educational and economic status who have not had the benefit of foreign exposure. That supposition raises certain possibilities beyond the account of the data at our disposal. If a "true" difference can be established along this line, that difference would probably be in matters of degree rather than of direction, of social commitment rather than private desires, and of living *in* rather than living *of* the cultural environment. The comparison, once fruitfully pursued, would shed more light on the completeness of the process of social change that we have outlined.

The observation just made is a silent pleading for the recognition of beauty in the traditional structure. Collectivistic orientation should not be judged as inimical to change or development but as positive assets that can serve as tools for its furtherance. The *awidan* sustains the vital links of social relations that animate society, particularly the kinship system. Its spirit shall keep the social structure against the threats of rugged individualism and unwanted secularization.

Table 10: Changes in the Frequency of Involvement in the *Awidan*

"After"	"Before"			
	Balo-i		Marawi City	
	Seldom	Always	Seldom	Always
Always involved	12	64	43	95
Seldom or never involved	15	0	33	1
	27	64	76	96
Chi-Square =	10.08 (p < .01)		38.20 (p < .01)	
Combined sample, Chi-Square =	50.16 (p < .01)			

*Impact on the Psyche*

Having presented the impacts of overseas employment on economic, religious/aesthetics, and social relations, which are largely premised on stated behavioral changes, it may be well to inquire what happens on the affective or emotive aspects of human behavior. More specifically, the question recapitulates an earlier one: what is the level of perceived satisfaction or benefit a worker derives from contract labor in the Middle East? This is critical in the analysis of whatever impact there may be on the worker with the belief that it is he who constitutes the appropriate locus of decision-making. The perspective thus adopted is that of the worker as an "actor" in order to arrive at some phenomenological insights into the tenacity or flexibility of his behaviors, or to the "rationality" that guides his decisions.

One index by which a particular behavior (e.g., migration) may be judged as psychologically fulfilling is the extent to which it is likely to be repeated under the same circumstances that previously governed this behavior. It is a clue to the magnitude of satisfaction of an individual. On this assumption, the workers were asked: "If given chance to go back to the Middle East, would you go there again?" About three-fourths (74.1 percent) or 240 cases answered in the affirmative. If this number validly indicates the proportion of "satisfied" workers, then we can say that overseas employment has vastly earned for the participants a psychological gain which has little or no equivalent in the objective or material benefits.

Another question quite related to personal satisfaction is the feeling for other Muslims. That is, the extent to which the workers consider the welfare of Muslims in the Philippines. The question raised is "whether the workers would regard overseas employment as beneficial to the Muslims" in their own country, to which they answered a resounding yes (291 cases said so or 90 percent of all the workers).

As to their assessment of their jobs abroad compared to their previous occupations in Lanao, 65 percent indicate that they are "highly satisfied" with what they did in the Middle East, with 25.3 percent saying that they are just "slightly satisfied." In contrast, less than a tenth (8.9 percent) mentioned "slight" and "high" dissatisfaction with their jobs abroad. Speaking of their perceived economic benefits, 69.3 percent basked in their jobs abroad as "highly beneficial" to them, while only about a fourth (25.9 percent) said that they had "slight benefits." A tiny minority (4.5 percent) disclosed that their economic lives only "worsened" or that they did not gain any benefit from working abroad (Table 11).

Table 11: Job Satisfaction and Related Matters (Percent)

Q1. *To what extent would you say you are satisfied with your job abroad compared to your previous job here?*

	Balo-i (N = 146)	Marawi City (N = 178)	Total Sample
Highly satisfied	75.3	56.7	65.1
Slightly satisfied	23.3	77.9	25.3
Slightly dissatisfied	0.6	7.9	4.6
Highly dissatisfied	0.0	7.9	4.3
No idea/no answer	0.6	0.6	0.3
	99.8%	100.0%	99.6%

Q2. *To what extent do you now understand Islam?*

	Balo-i (N = 146)	Marawi City (N = 178)	Total Sample
Better off now	96.5	84.3	89.8
About the same as before	1.4	12.4	7.4
Worse off now	0.6	2.8	1.9
No idea/no answer	1.4	0.5	0.9
	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%

Q3. *Now that you are back here, how do you see life in general?*

	Balo-i (N = 146)	Marawi City (N = 178)	Total Sample
Life will be better	52.0	71.3	62.7
Life will worsen	1.4	4.5	3.1
Life will be the same	37.7	22.5	29.3
No idea	8.9	1.7	4.3
	100.0	100.0	99.4

On the religious sphere, the workers favorably responded to the question: "To what extent do you now understand Islam?" A hefty majority or 89.8 percent said that their level of understanding now of their religion is "better off," with only 7.0 percent reporting that their understanding did not improve. As regards their emotive attitude toward their present religious life, much the same trends are in evidence. About 85 percent expressed that their religious life now is "better off," with only 15 percent admitted that such life has become "worse off" or has remained "about the same" as before.

Finally, there is a compelling need to know from the workers their conception not only of the "here and now" but also of the morrow (without necessarily invoking the sacred affairs). In plain language, the question raised was: "what are the aspirations of the workers for themselves and for their families?" By aspirations, we mean not the wishful desires that people want but things which they believe are realistically attainable. Answers to this question provide some substantiation to the notion of optimism raised earlier. More specifically, the workers are expected to express optimism by indicating attainable aspirations for a good life.

The data seem to favor the thesis of optimism, judging from the content of the workers' aspirations pointing to a forward-looking attitude on their part. However, their replies to the question revolve mostly around material aspirations, such as "economic advancement," "buy a house or lot," "own a car," or "establish a business." Together, these answers constitute 71 percent of all the coded answers. The younger or single workers interestingly expressed such ambitions as "acquiring a better education," and "getting married," as mentioned by 3 percent and 4.3 percent, respectively. Spiritual aspirations are mentioned by 5 percent of the workers. About 6 percent of the cases could not say what they wanted to have in life (Table 12).

For the workers' families, especially for the children, the content of aspirations are dissimilar but nonetheless interesting.

"Better education" is the most highly aspired thing for the children, according to 68 percent of the workers. Other aspirations include "economic" (3.1 percent), "better clothing" (2.5 percent), and a few minor ones. About a fourth (22.5 percent), however, refrained from answering for the obvious reason that many of the workers (54 cases) are unmarried at the time of interview, or if they are married, they are either childless or they feel that the decision is for their children to make.

Still, an independent line of evidence about the future may be provided by the answers to the question: Now that you are back here, how do you see your life in general. Those who said that their life would be "better" constitute 62.7 percent, followed by the somewhat pessimistic stance that their life would be "about the same" (29.3 percent) or that it would "worsen" (3.1 percent). On balance the workers expressed far more optimistically than pessimistically, at least from the perceptual data gathered thus far.

Table 12: Aspirations for Self and Children

	Balo-i (N = 146)	Marawi City (N = 178)	Total Sample
<i>Q1. What one special thing do you wish to have in life, something that you can get realistically?</i>			
Economic advance	39.7	22.5	30.2
House, lot, car	18.7	32.0	25.9
Business	27.3	4.5	14.8
Religious improvement	3.4	5.6	4.6
Get married	2.7	5.6	4.3
Better education	2.1	3.9	3.0
Improve social status	1.4	1.1	1.2
Others	3.3	14.0	9.2
No answer	1.4	10.6	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>99.8%</b>	<b>99.8%</b>	<b>99.7%</b>

	Balo-i (N = 146)	Marawi City (N = 178)	Total Sample
<i>Q2. What one special thing do you realistically want for your children?</i>			
Better education	71.9	65.2	68.2
Economic advance	4.1	2.2	3.1
Religious improvement	-	4.5	2.5
Better clothing	4.8	0.5	2.5
Love/comfortable life	-	0.5	0.3
Others	-	1.7	0.3
No answer/not applicable	19.8	25.3	22.5
	99.9%	99.9%	99.4%

If the psychological data, as presented here, are an indication of anything, that thing can perhaps be defined best in the negative: overseas employment does not engender disenchantment or frustration, does not make the workers feel unhappy about their jobs, does not detach them from the realities of their environment, and does not lead to resignation from the future.

### Concluding Statements

This study began with the premise that labor migration to the Middle East is not without its consequences, for better or for worse. It also assumed that perhaps the most qualified judges to evaluate such consequences are the workers themselves, who are the best persons to rate their experiences in terms of their own categories and perceptual lenses. They were, however, not entirely free to construct a frame of analysis (except their own), as this is the author's in order to maintain a certain degree of control. At any rate, the answers are the making of the workers; the interpretations are those of the researcher.

Contrary to observations of others, the Maranao workers do not see themselves as mere objects of contract labor who stand to lose rather than gain from what it offers. If there have been complaints about labor discrimination and malpractice, these were doubtless few and sparing. It is equally true that the workers had to sweat it out while abroad, or had to pay exorbitantly just to get there. But, again, this appears to be the risk and concededly part of the game, which many have recognized beforehand. It cannot be denied, however, that the financial cost of labor migration is "exceedingly high," and in more cases than one is abused by employment agencies. Perhaps, it is on this aspect that government has to exercise stringent controls to protect the interest of the job applicants while at home. If it cannot do so, then the more that it can hardly bail out hapless workers once they are in a foreign land.

It must also be conceded that many of the workers had to put in a lot of sacrifices and painstaking labor amid the severe emotional distress caused by separation from their families. This psychological problem is a trade-off between what they expect to gain and what they should give away in return. The possibility cannot be discounted, however, that for some of the workers the unpalatable effects of overseas employment are more "real" and exacting than its promised fruits. In fact, we stumbled upon some of these cases who tasted almost nothing but bitterness. The possibility is equally true that our sample of workers, as are the other workers who went to the Middle East, are generally successful because they represent the "chosen" ones. In a manner of speaking, they are but the "tip of an iceberg." The larger part of the iceberg has to be raised above the water to see its totality and expose that other part which is hidden from public view. For sure, there are more job applicants who did not make the grade, and scores of them are languishing in Manila or keep on following up their applications there which are hopeless in the first place. This group of workers who have not made it, or are consigned to be eventually rejected, are the persons for whom the sweetness of overseas jobs is just a bad dream.

Insofar as the results of the study are considered valid indicators of what the workers truly experienced, who by their own accounts regard themselves as successful, these conclusions are inescapable: overseas employment is objectively and perceptually beneficial, fruitful, satisfactory, and fulfilling. Economically, the workers have in general profited from it, or at least have gained lessons and confidence to lead better lives in their hometown. Culturally, their brief stint in the Middle East has made them more conscious of and familiar with their own religion, Islam, which are requirements for the ideal practices of good Muslims. Moreover, they have become more aesthetically appreciative of other people's needs and food. Short though their cultural exposure may be, the experiences they have gained have enormous implications for social understanding of others' cultures.

Socially, there appears to be an indication that overseas employment has also made some impact. In the short run, at least, the social ties between and among the members of the family in relation to the worker are fortified by an increase in the intensity of attachment (and perhaps love) they have of one another. But more importantly, the social bonds of kinship have also grown stronger by the practice of *awidan* and the reciprocity resulting therefrom. The symbolic function of this type of relationship is positive from the point of view of family solidarity and maintenance of the value of communal allegiance, which can usher in collective rather than individual development or mobility. When taken in a favorable light, the strengthening of the kinship system is a plus factor instead of an adversity in the process of economic development.

Lastly, there is reason to believe that the workers do not regret their going abroad for it has strengthened their resolve, where it might be absent or weak earlier, to live their lives in Lanao with meaning, direction and purpose. They seem to have become optimistic of their future, where others have viewed it with disgust and pessimism. Perhaps, they have found in their environment a vista of opportunities to be exploited, which the weak of

hearts consider lost or dwindling as a result of problems beyond their control.

To an outsider lacking in familiarity with the Maranao culture and society, some of the things observed here may not look totally healthy or promising. He might see, for example, constraints to upward mobility in the tradition of *awidan*. For, how can the worker improve his lot economically if his savings are drained by compliance with a traditional system that emphasizes the primordial importance of family and kinship? That practice, an outsider may argue, militates against the individualistic spirit of capitalism and private enterprise.

Yet, despite the odds the Maranao workers (about a third of them) are still able to found entrepreneurial concerns, though these are small. It is striking to discover that amid the seeming difficulty posed by kinship and familism, the workers are nonetheless happy and confident of success when they re-enter Lanao with jubilation.

Working abroad means, to the Maranao worker at least, far more than "looking for a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow," as the familiar saying goes. If successful, he is perhaps just too happy to share the gold with those whom he endears, or with those who helped him during his journey. Otherwise, he may ask for their silver and go on with the search anew. But he also goes abroad with another expectation, that of fulfilling a religious call to be himself and be a "true" Muslim before the eyes of others and those of his family. Thus, in the final analysis, labor migration to him may be the sweetest achievement in the performance of his role as a member of the kinship and the larger society to which it reflects.

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