

# • Conceptualization of the Maranao Personality

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**J**n a survey conducted by Bartolome (1998), entitled, "The Maranao Personality: An Exploratory Study," twenty-six (26) Maranaos from Mindanao State University, Marawi Campus, and other government agencies (22 females, 4 males; 12 college students and 14 professionals with ages ranging from 18 to 51 years old with a mean age of 26.89) were asked the following questions:

- 1) What is the Maranao term for "personality"?
- 2) What Maranao terms may be associated with "personality"?
- 3) What is your concept of "Maranao personality"?
- 4) How do you describe the Maranao personality?
- 5) What are some values of Maranaos?
- 6) How do you describe the Maranao culture?
- 7) What factors help shape the Maranao personality?

Data were gathered through an open-ended questionnaire supplemented by interviews. Responses were tabulated and content-analyzed. Results are summarized in this article.

## 1. On the Maranao Term for "Personality."

According to the respondents, the following are some Maranao terms for personality:

- 1.1 **guwa-guwai/gowa-gowai** (posture)
- 1.2 **kapaparangai; parangay** (behavior)
- 1.3 **bostan** (appearance)
- 1.4 **motra; kakasi** (traits or characteristics)

- 1.5 **kapakambebetad/kapakambubutad/kapambetad**
- 1.6 **kakaatawi** (knowledge/intelligence)
- 1.7 **ula-ula/ola-ola/ulao-la** (manners)
- 1.8 **kapia a tao** (being a good person)
- 1.9 **okit a di kapagnetao o manosiya/kapemanosiya** (lifestyle)
- 1.10 **isa ka giginawa** (pagkatao)
- 1.11 **so kamamanosiya-i ko taetanggisa** (uniqueness, individuality)
- 1.12 **dadabi-atan/so dadabiatan**
- 1.13 **sowa-sowa-i/suwa-suwa-i**
- 1.14 **aurat (aura)** (Arabic term for body parts not to be exposed in public, roughly equivalent to modesty)
- 1.15 **kapagin-tao/kapugintao** (lifestyle, way of living)
- 1.16 **pala-adat/adat** (attitude)
- 1.17 **manis** (beauty)
- 1.18 **kapaguyag-uyag**
- 1.19 **kapaeparasan/kapaparasan** (physical appearance including behavior)
- 1.20 **oman-i-waraan** (lifestyle, movements)

It appears from the data that there is no single best equivalent term for "personality" in Maranao. Such is rather a broad (multi-faceted) concept and (according to the respondents) "very difficult to define/tackle."

## 2. Maranao Terms Associated with "Personality"

The following are some Maranao terms that may be related to personality:

- 2.1 **adat** (attitude/character)
- 2.2 **parangai/paparangayan/parangay** (character, attitude and behavior)
- 2.3 **go-a-goai/gua-guai/gowa-gowa-I** (style/self-projection)
- 2.4 **sowa-sowai/soa-soai** (character/overt actions)
- 2.5 **bostan** (physical appearance)
- 2.6 **ola-ola/ulah-ulah/ula-ula** (manner/character/culture and traditions, attitude)
- 2.7 **kapiya a tao** (being a good person)
- 2.8 **kambilanga tao** (well-being, good manners and right conduct)

- 2.9 **titindegan** (principle)
- 2.10 **dadabiatan** (personality traits/attitude)
- 2.11 **wara-an** (style, nature)
- 2.12 **motra** (profile)
- 2.13 **kakasi** (charisma)
- 2.14 **moda** (style)
- 2.15 **kapaparasan** (physical appearance)
- 2.16 **kaoyagoyag** (lifestyle)
- 2.17 **kaatawiron** (behavior, characteristics)
- 2.18 **kapemansiya** (life existence/destructive characteristics)
- 2.19 **aurat** (aura)
- 2.20 **kambubulawasan, kambobolawasan** (physical appearance/health)
- 2.21 **tindeg** (prestigious status)
- 2.22 **bontal/buntal** (appeal to others/posture)
- 2.23 **kapakambebetad/kapakambubutad** (reputation, status)
- 2.24 **pamikiran** (intellect)
- 2.25 **kataid** (beauty)
- 2.26 **kawarao** (bravery), **waraan o buntal** (profile)
- 2.27 **butad o rupaan** (appearance)

Note that responses to this question are either identical or similar to those of question 1.

Says one respondent:

**So dingka di kinggolalanun ko langon a kakro kabintung ka** (Your execution of all your actions, ways and deeds.)

A 19 year-old female student admits:

**Personality is much related to ula-ula, "kapiya-a-tao, parangay. (I don't know if there's really an equivalent term for personality in Maranao.)"**

### **3. Conceptualizations of the "Maranao Personality"**

According to the respondents, Maranaos have maratabat (pride/self-esteem). They do not want to be belittled by other people. The Maranao personality consists of

how the typical Maranao looks and how he/she is noticed or affected by others. The Maranao Personality differs from those among other Muslim tribes.

Here's how one female respondent defines the concept

My concept of Maranao personality is enigma. It's like a puzzle. I can't sometimes understand it. Every Maranao differs in personality. Some are semi-liberated but some are old-fashioned in perspective.

Personality is the totality of one's well being. It is very difficult to (comprehend) tackle because it is somewhat pleasing to everybody.

The Maranao personality is "dominant but friendly, hospitable, courageous, even dangerous," according to a 43 year-old Maranao Law student. "He has his own identity."

"The Maranao is very conservative, **mahiyain** (shy). He is highly sensitive when it comes to his name and the honor of his clan. He has **dangal** (dignity) and enjoys reputation, wealth and status in society. He has a unique kind of personality. It is beyond comparison. It is influenced by **maratabat** (pride). The Maranao personality includes his sense of belongingness, status and class; he is conservative but strong in character."

Reports a 19 year-old Marana student:

"The Maranao personality is very aggressive. He has an extreme personality. It's either he is very bad or very good."

A 28 year-old high school teacher opines that everything you do reflects your personality.

"Para sa akin the personal qualities of Maranaos make them different or act differently from other ethnic groups. It is the total behavior (**ola-ola**) of the Maranaos that can be understood by studying their **maratabat**."

"Aya kiasabota kun ko personality na **gia-I so ola-ola a di na langon a ditadinggola-olaan na maka-ayon ko galubuk ta**" (What I understand about personality is the attitude/behavior or all the things we do in line with our individual lifestyle).

#### 4. Description of the Maranao Personality

##### 4.1 Positive Traits

One respondent observes:

"Maranaos always help their relatives even if they have low income. They are conservative not only in manner of dressing but also

intellectually. They have close family ties. Children who are married are still living with their parents. Very entertaining (hospitable) to visitors. They welcome them, give them all they can just to please the visitors.

“Maranao children tend to be obedient and helpful. They are proud of their own race and family. They are supportive/sympathetic (**kapamagogopa**) when there is a deceased relative or friend. They extend **kapamagawida** (cooperation) whenever this is needed.

“Maranaos are conservative and traditional. But they have good grooming. The Maranao personality exhibits the **pito a manis** (seven wonders of beauty) namely: a) family background/tribe b) religiosity c) education d) good manners e) intelligence f) clear conscience g) physical appearance.”

Says another:

“The Maranao Personality is very generous ‘cause like for example when someone is sick. Every visitor has to give money to the family of the sick person. When a relative is getting married, you have to give money (**tabang**) to the parents of the groom.

“The Maranao personality is clannish and assertive. Ha has **maratabat**. Once you touch his **maratabat** (pride/self-esteem/ego) during mourning, he will spend all he has for this purpose, just to please the visitors.

“Maranaos have a simple lifestyle. They are courteous, hospitable, gentle, charitable and soft-spoken to women. They are also supportive and sensitive; kind and concerned with the welfare of others.”

One Maranao professor notes:

“The Maranao is too hospitable, too kind, too open, too friendly, concerned with the welfare of others and prestigious.

“They are sensitive to other people’s heart. By means of **maratabat** (pride/self-esteem/ego) they look for ways to prove their concern of the welfare of others. Because of **maratabat**, a Maranao may lose all his property and life just for the sake of his children and relatives.

“Maranaos have close family ties, are unique and traditional, engaged in priceless preservation of their culture.

A high school teacher confides:

“**Mapia so ola-ola a Maranao maisa-isa so mga ola-ola o mga Maranao. Lagid igira ana mianggola-ola na di katigur o Maranao so lagidian na Maranao. Lagid opama o ana miasakit na ipumbuntul o Maranao so lagidian a Maranao** (Maranaos are good

for they are united. They help or support those Maranaos who are in trouble. They sympathize with them in time of sickness, grief or solitude.)

“The Maranao has [a] word of honor, **maratabat** (pride) that is easily challenged and value very much members of his family. They are good [as] friends.”

Admits one 38 year-old housewife:

“**Sila yung mga conserbatibo. Gusto nila palaging nasa tama ang lahat ng kanilang ginagawa** (They are conservative, always wanting to do right).”

#### 4.1 *Negative Traits*

According to the respondents, small arguments among Maranaos result in family feuds (**rido**), especially if a girl-lady is the cause of the arguments. They have no freedom of choice when getting married; unreachable pride (**maratabat**). The fault of one is the fault of all (tribal war).

Claims one female respondent:

“When a Maranao is provoked, it is difficult to deal with him/her since it involves his pride which does not entertain logical reason to excuse the provocation.

“Maranao children are too dependent and the old folks are too much ‘dictators’ to their children. They are usually arrogant because of their **maratabat** (pride/self-esteem/ego). Because of **kapamagawida** (cooperation) and **kambangsa** (kinship), the problem of the individual becomes the problem of the whole clan.

“Maranaos are ‘culture-bound.’ If some Maranaos wear something unusual to the culture they will be criticized. Some have unstable personalities. They are influenced by their high **maratabat**.”

According to one respondent:

“Due to **maratabat**, even if a Maranao is at fault he will not stay calm. To the extent of being made poor, he will spend all his money at the death of his loved one. Some use **maratabat** in negative ways. A Maranao becomes vindictive for the cause of tradition and high pride or **maratabat**. Because of **maratabat**, a Maranao becomes boastful and sometimes lacks self discipline. He becomes over-confident, meddles with others, becomes too assuming, sensitive and emotional. He could even hurt people. Even if guilty, he doesn’t want to accept his guilt. He is fierce and brave.

“Another negative trait of the Maranao is being **brak** (talkative), loud voiced, noisy. He is also lazy, hot-tempered, fond of procrastination (*mañana habit*), and clannish.”

Comments one housewife:

“**Dahil sa sobrang konserbatibo** (because of extreme conservatism) [their] children are not given freedom to choose for themselves.”

According to a 19 year-old Maranao female:

“They become isolated to new ideas and modernization because of their conservative lifestyle. They cannot simply talk to other men. . . and sometimes are prohibited to even use perfume.”

A 24 year-old Maranao elementary grade school teacher describes her feelings regarding the following “negative” traits among Maranaos:

1. **Borrowing pieces of jewelry** from cousins during vigil and wedding ceremonies. Because it is a must for a woman to have much jewelry during this time. For me, it’s bad because, what if you lose the jewelry you have borrowed, it is your problem now to replace it.”
2. **Attending Graduation.** “If graduation comes all your relatives go to the gymnasium to watch it. According to the Christian, the whole clan attends the graduation. This is true. It is bad because **nakaka istorbo sa mga** graduates. But for me, this doesn’t happen to me during my graduation because we don’t practice this thing. And one more thing is my cultural practices and traits are mixed because I was not raised here in Marawi City.”
3. **Discrimination.** “This is one of the traits of Maranaos that I hate. It’s not their fault (the “half Christian”) to have mixed blood. It is not good to practice this because we are equal. The Maranao man can marry a Christian woman. But the Maranao woman cannot marry a Christian man. It’s very unfair for the Christian. It is not the fault of the **mestizo and mestiza** to get involved with the full-blooded. A full-blooded Maranao can not marry a (half blood) **mestizo man/woman. (nililibak sila ng lipunan).**”
4. **Wedding Ceremony.** “During wedding ceremonies, even if you are a distant relative of the groom, if you are asked to provide 1 car to be used during the motorcade in going to the ceremonial place, you really have to provide, because according to them it’s one way of telling the bride’s family that the groom belongs to a big clan (**mala a pamilya**).”

##### 5. Some Values of Maranaos

The respondents were asked: "what are some values of Maranaos?" In reply, many pointed out the following:

5.1 *Being Conservative*. Being conservative in such a way that parents will not allow their daughter to walk with a man or go out with a man if that man is not her father, brother or relative because of the **maratabat** (pride) of the family. Or maybe that people will say that their daughter is a flirt or "**kalad karing babae**."

5.2 *Kapamagawida* (**bayanihan** spirit in Tagalog or cooperation). They share in social obligations. They help in times of marriage, death, sickness, crises, etc. When a poor member of the extended family (say 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin up to 8<sup>th</sup> degree of consanguinity or affinity) is confined in a hospital, help is extended by giving some money for medicine.

A government employee observes:

"Help is extended to clan members who suffer from financial difficulties, i.e., hospitalization, death of a member or marriage. This is the reason why only one or two out of thousands of Maranaos can be seen begging in public. These one or two are not members of a royal clan or they have no relatives or maybe they are mentally ill. Maranaos are **mala I kapdi** (helpful). **Kapamagawida** is a social obligation, e.g., giving monetary support, as in the **zadka** for a dead person."

Says a 24 year-old DECS teacher:

"Giving money to people who are around during the last vigil, for the soul of the dead person may go to heaven through big amounts of money given as **zadka**."

5.2.1 *Close family ties, clannishness, kinship*. Whatever problem or happiness encountered by the individual, relatives are always there by his side. This is closely related to **kapamagawida** (cooperation). According to a 19-year-old college student:

"Maranaos strongly value family, e.g. close family ties. They also value their **maratabat** (pride/self-esteem), the family name (in Maranao, the '**bangsa**') and their ancestor's history.

"Related to strong family ties is the practice of betrothal marriage (choice of marital partner by parents), familism, **kapamagawida**, extended family in which the married children who have their own children still live with their parents under the same roof."

According to one male college student:

"Parents choose husband and wife for their children. Parental consent in marriage among children is a desirable practice."

5.3 *Respect for elders, love for parents and family*. Being kind, friendly and hospitable.

One 26-year-old female researcher notes:

“The Maranaos have good manners. They are refined and preserve chastity. They have respect for parents and older people. They are clannish and have strong kinship ties.”

A 19-year-old female respondent reasons:

“The Maranaos are friendly and hospitable to relatives. They are principled. For example, if a Maranao is hit by someone, then it is value (important) that they should revenge.”

Claims a 38-year-old housewife:

“They are kind. They are persons who do not know how to say ‘no’ even if it is hard for them to do it because they are kind.”

#### 5.4 *Superstitious*. Believing in Deities, Religiosity, Spiritual Values.

Maranao culture is bound by principles, beliefs. An example is the belief in **pugad**. Three days after the wedding, a newly-wed has to prepare food for the relatives to eat. They can not leave the place without doing this because, according to the old folks, something bad would happen if they do not do so.

Here’s what a high school teacher respondent says:

“**Igira a ana occasion na ipagaply o mga loks so mga ola-ola o mga paloks-lokusan iran para pukatanodan o pukisalimbago a tao. Lagid opama o kambayoka**” (Every time there are occasions, elders [grandparents] insist on applying the styles and traits of the old Maranaos, so culture and traditions could be preserved like the singing of “**bayok**.”)

“Maranaos are against premarital sex. Keeping/protecting a woman from all odds is a must. Women are “intended (confined) in the home to avoid any misdemeanor/act that brings shame and disgrace to the clan. They keep her in anonymity in the home once she is . . . (pregnant). In matters of immorality, she is not excused from traditional laws, especially among royal families, thereby the only price to cover up humiliation is death of the girl as punishment.”

5.5. *Sensitivity to personal affront*. The Maranao is sensitive to everything he hears because he believes it could affect or destroy his family reputation. Thus he will try to find solutions to it. He is helpful to relatives when someone is sick.

5.6 *High value on education*. According to the respondents, Maranaos place a high value on education, especially on the tenets of Islam. They are also highly political. They would like to preserve their culture.

## 6. Description of the Maranao Culture

The Maranao culture is well-preserved, priceless and very traditional. It is a blend of Islam and native Maranao culture. Traditionally, the culture involves Maranao

folkways, beliefs, practices and principles. Maranao culture beliefs and practices is heavily influenced by Islam. Thus, it becomes difficult to differentiate, compare Maranao culture with Islamic culture. There are things like marriage, divorce, polygamy and other aspects of the Maranao culture which are practiced by every Maranao because of Islamic influences.

According to a 44-year-old female professor:

“Maranao culture is closely-knit, clannish, and strongly bonded. The Maranao can take any form of sacrifice just for the sake of the family’s prestige and reputation.”

As mentioned earlier, the Maranaos are conservative and religious. Their culture is unique. It differs from other cultures because it gives emphasis on relationships with people. The culture is hard to break (disintegrate) because Maranaos are devoted.

A 35-year-old government employee observes:

“Maranao culture has evolved into more complex alignment reflecting the political changes and intellectual milestones of the last century, but this time the exotic and moribund East has been transfigured into an energetic and menacing culture threatening the lifestyle and the very foundation of our culture.”

Maranao culture is unique, colorful and prestigious. It is best described in the Maranao epic *Darangen*. A 42-year-old professor says:

“At present, it is influenced by Islam, e.g., the father is considered head of the family. Males and females should not be mixed. Divorce is allowed. Muslim men marry more than one wife.”

A high school teacher reports:

“Maranao culture is very conservative. If we do not go with it, people will mock us behind our backs. They’ll say that we are christianized.”

Likewise a female researcher asserts that Maranao culture is

“very unique, rich in heritage, although with respect to women they suffer isolation from the growing impact of new ideas and modernization process.”

Maranao culture is bound by simplicity and a conservative style. It is based on policies and rules written in the *Qur’an*. One high school teacher gave these remarks:

“So Maranao culture na mapia a culture ka mapia anda ka matatago na dingka den ki surrender so culture ka lagid opama igira matatago sa sa Iligan na aya dun na katharo oka na so dun so Maranao culture ka.” (The Maranao culture is a good culture because wherever you go, you go with it. For instance, if you are in Iligan City, you behave and act in Maranao ways.)

## 7. Factors that Help Shape the Maranao Personality

According to the respondents, some factors that help shape the Maranao personality are environment, culture, customs, values and traditions.

Opines one high school teacher:

“I think the biggest factor that shapes the Maranao personality is our culture. . . We ‘carry’ our culture in personality development. But for me I have adopted (internalized) some good values (positive traits) of Maranaos and Christians. I was able to know what are good and bad practices in our culture.”

A Maranao student claims:

“Culture is also reflected in the wearing of *kombong*, long sleeve clothes in which the *aura* cannot be seen. The *kombong* is part of Maranao culture that help identify the ethnic tribe. Also, wearing the *tutob* for men.”

According to a 48-year-old professor, factors that help shape the Maranao personality are “external and internal environment, external influences and heredity”. This is concurred to by a 20-year-old student who mentioned:

“Factors include (1) Heredity. They have innate behaviors/attitudes, which they acquired from their parents and carry on as they grow up; (2) Environment. They behave or act the way they feel that suits the environment.”

The environment in which they live has a major impact on the Maranao personality. The environmental factors include the culture, the family, even their own behaviors. Reports an 18-year-old nursing student:

“They should follow their own culture – how Maranaos deal with people. Maranaos should always follow what are taught to them by their parents. In their environment, whatever they are used to or whatever they have observed in what their parents and relatives are doing they ought to follow it.”

However, one student respondent expresses his doubts by saying:

“I’m not so sure of it but I guess it’s the traditional beliefs that keep on affecting/moulding the Maranao personality including the culture.”

A 25-year-old student observes:

“Migration has affected the Maranao personality. People from outside come to Marawi City for employment and they live in the City. But Maranaos leave Marawi City, migrate to other places to look for livelihood, subsistence and to escape from tribal wars.”

Others believe that religion, culture, traditions, **maratabat**, education, family’s reputation, socioeconomic status, political position/power, wealth, even poverty – all these work together to help shape the Maranao personality.

Consider these other responses:

**Maratabat** (pride, self-esteem/ego) of the Maranao is a basic factor that shapes his personality.

Education is following the tenets of Islam. Religion shapes the Maranao personality. . .

There should be many factors such as the family's reputation, socioeconomic status, education, political power/position, religion, status in society, wealth and others. . .

One of the factors that shape/affect the Maranao personality is poverty and also heredity.

The culture plays a very important/crucial role in shaping the Maranao personality. For instance, in the datu system, it is the culture that dictates who becomes the datu; in preparation, the family raises the person in accordance with his expected role. (by a student respondent)

Factors such as environment exposure, modernization and the influx of new ideas help shape the Maranao personality. But Islam is the best single factor. (by a 51-year-old administrator)

A college faculty member concurs:

"One major factor that shapes the Maranao personality is Islam. Now that we have civilization and modernization, there are changes that have been developed, the same with 'liberalization' when Maranaos understand that Islam is 'liberated', this prompts them to be liberated."

A 35-year-old government employee comments:

"In spite of great diversity of climes and culture, the Maranao has to shape his personality by strengthening the institutions of civil society to ensure order and stability, as well as to protect the individual from unwarranted denial of his rights. In this regard, the renewal of tradition must mean relieving three ideals – truth, justice and compassion – and not resurrecting past aberrations of the deprived and decadent."

Indeed there are few words in the English language that have such a fascination for the general public as the term "personality." Although the word is used in various senses most of these popular meanings fall under one of two headings (Hall & Lindzey, 1978): The first use equates the term to social skill or adroitness. An individual's personality is assessed by the effectiveness with which he or she is able to elicit positive reactions from a variety of persons under different circumstances. The second use considers the personality of the individual to consist of the most outstanding or salient impression that he or she creates in others.

In the Maranao, it appears that no single best equivalent term for personality could be identified. This implies that personality un.masks itself in various ways, e.g., crisis situations reveal the real personality. Santos (1997) defines personality as the sum total of the qualities and characteristics of a person, as shown in her manner of walking,

talking, dressing and her attitudes, interests and ways of reacting to people. It refers to all factors within the person that influence his characteristic ways of behaving, thinking and feeling. It is your image to others. In life, Santos continues, "we tend to accept or reject others, according to what we think about their personalities. Employers often tend to hire or promote a person on [the basis of] personality than on what he/she knows about the job."

Why is the study of the human personality important? It is understanding of your own personality and the personalities of your fellowmen that spells the difference between success and failure in your dealings with them. An understanding of your personality and of others can make the difference between satisfactory and unsatisfactory adjustment.

We are all different because of three factors: (1) heredity (2) environment and (3) experience. We are born with a set of genes and chromosomes which we inherit from our forefathers and our parents. These set the limits to our potential. This potential is achieved to the fullest by the proper use of environment – our experiences over the years, especially our interaction with other people. The environment consists of our family, school, church, and social groups, with whom we interact from the very beginning. Each group puts pressure on us and we behave in certain ways as a result of being with these groups. Our behavior changes with each situation and with people we are with. We behave differently when we are with our friends than when we are with our parents, teachers and others older than ourselves. Our experiences consists of everything that we do or get in touch with, everywhere we go, in short, everything that we are exposed to in our lifetime, whether physical, emotional or social experiences.

Many psychologists agree that culture strongly influences the behavior of people, e.g., religion, customs, traditions, socio-economic status, birth order, race (Limpingco & Tria, 1997). Aside from these, a person's interpersonal relationships with his parents and other significant individuals in his life also affect adult personality characteristics. According to the learning theorists, the difference between a successful person and an unsuccessful one is found in the patterns of reward. Certain behaviors are rewarded. While others are ignored. Those that are rewarded tend to persist.

"Depth" theorists try to discover the underlying causes of behavior. According to this viewpoint, the ultimate causes of behavior are unconscious and have their origins in childhood. Still another viewpoint says, "You are what you do." Self theorists look upon personality as an internal mechanism that determines a person's personality (Ibid, 1997).

Most personality theorists agree that a person's personality can be described in terms of consistent behavior patterns. The tendency to respond consistently to various situations is what gives a person identity.

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