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The Emerging Role of Muslim Women

LUIS Q. LACAR

Filipino Muslim society, long considered to be the bastion of conservatism in the country among all the Philippine social groups,¹ has not been spared by the sweeping forces of change. Insulated for centuries by the protectiveness of societal customs and traditions, its women have managed to cling to customary practices longer than most other groups.²

Today, however, Filipino Muslim women no longer seem to be as bound by the traditional norms and practices that used to severely restrict their options within the confines of parental decisions.³ Although still very inhibited compared with their Christian compatriots, Muslim women are changing in ways that can only be described as radical given their traditional background and orientation. Visibly more sophisticated in education and outlook, they are likely to occupy positions traditionally reserved for men. In not a few instances they may hold jobs which have more power, prestige, and influence than those held by some of their male counterparts. Filipino Muslim women today play very salient and highly visible roles—roles which were inaccessible to them in years past by custom and tradition.

1. Usopar Cadar, *Context and Style in the Vocal Music of the Maranao in Mindanao, Philippines* (Marawi City: Mindanao State University Research Center, 1985).

2. Peter G. Gowing and Robert McAmis, eds., *The Muslim Filipinos* (Manila: Solidarity Publishing House, 1974; Antonio Isidro and Mamitua Saber, eds., *Muslim Philippines* (Marawi City: University Research Center, Mindanao State University 1968); Labi Hadji Sarip, "A Profile of the Economic Activities of Mulondo, Marantao, and the Islamic City of Marawi, Lanao del Sur," *Dansalan Quarterly* 7 (October 1985-January 1986); Ismael Pumbaya, "Kanggogorowa: A Maranao Game of Courtship," *Dansalan Quarterly* 5 (January 1984); and Ahmad Mohammad H. Hassoubah, *Teaching Arabic as a Second Language in the Southern Philippines* (Marawi City: University Research Center, Mindanao State University, 1983).

3. Isidro and Saber, *Muslim Philippines*.

This article indicates the areas of change that have taken place among Filipino Muslim women; points out some of the important factors that have influenced or propelled these changes, and assesses the wider implications of these changes with regard to the relations of men and women in Philippine Muslim society, and in the various Philippine Muslim institutions such as the family, the Madrasah, the *adat*, and the *Shari-ah*.

SEX AS A BASIS OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

The stratification of social groups along gender lines is a prevalent and widespread practice in many known societies of the world.⁴ Along with the social strata allocation based on sex are the behavioral prescriptions and proscriptions that society usually defines as appropriate for strata occupants.⁵ In the case of men and women the behavioral definitions for each sex are distinctly delineated and the penalty for their violation may be considerable in some social groups.⁶

In as much as many of the behavioral definitions tend to be internalized by strata occupants through the process of socialization, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish whether the behavior that strata occupants manifest is genetically transmitted or socially learned and acquired. Even the most lucid and respected thinkers of the world can be naively neanderthal in this regard. Will Durant, for example, proclaimed that in the adult process of courtship, the role of the male is that of "acquisitive advance and the female seductive retreat. . . . because. . . by nature man is a fighter and beast of prey whereas the female is a subordinate who finds glory and happiness in her self-surrender, and conquest."⁷

Tasks are likewise seen along sex lines. Certain jobs may be performed only by one sex but not by the other. In traditional East Africa, for example, agricultural tasks affecting annual crops are assigned to women mostly, while men are given the more difficult and heavier tasks. In addition, women are regarded as legally incompetent. They

4. See for instance, George McTurman Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1952); William Goode, *World Revolution and Family Patterns* (New York: Free Press, 1970); Mary Lou Randour, *Women's Psyche, Women's Spirit* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Katie Curtin, "Women and the Chinese Revolution," *Development Digest* 13 (July 1975): 68-78; and George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1949).

5. Paul B. Horton and Chester L. Hunt, *Sociology* (McGraw Hill, Inc., 1984); John Perry and Erna Perry, *The Social Web: Brief, An Introduction to Sociology* (San Francisco, Ca.: Canfield Press, 1977).

6. Perry and Perry, *The Social Web*.

7. Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1961).

cannot, for instance, plead their case and are considered neither economically nor legally responsible in disputes or claims for damages. Nor are women allowed to take part in religious rituals. Socially, they do not have the same access as men to the fund of knowledge that is necessary to control society, and have no political rights to participate in decisionmaking.⁸

In Brunei the stratification of the population based on sex is sanctioned by customs and traditions as well as religion. Men and women may not mix freely in public. Unmarried couples who do not comply with this rule are liable to be taken before a religious court and convicted of "khalwat" (close proximity between men and women), an offense that can earn for the offenders up to six months in jail.

Until very recently, interaction between Muslim men and women in the Philippines was strictly limited to special social occasions since Philippine Muslim customs and traditions do not allow men and women to mix freely except on special social occasions.⁹

In many cultures and religions, there seems to be a general tendency to associate women with passivity, timidity, dependency, vulnerability, helplessness, and emotionality. On the other hand, men are associated with traits opposite to these such as independence, aggressiveness, reliance, and rationality. Moreover, once differentiated, the traits associated with women are seen as inferior and either dismissed, demeaned, or despised.¹⁰

Among the Chinese, women seem to be regarded as even more lowly.¹¹ Confucius himself did not seem to have a favorable word for women. Thus in traditional Chinese society, women passed through three men-dominated stages. In the first stage, the woman was under the authority of the father. In the second stage she was under the command of her husband. Finally, if the husband died, she was the subject of her own son. The communist revolution that swept the communists to power in 1949 did not alter much of this, since even during the height of the communist regime, women's equality with peasant males was deeply resisted and resented by men.¹² This was so in spite of communism's vaunted ideology of classlessness.

In the Philippines, women among the Christian majority have been treated with a double-bladed affection and patterned ambivalence. On the one hand, their passivity, timidity, femininity, and tenderness are

8. Sylvana Zaia Maccan and Michael Bamberger, "Employment and the Status of Women in Venezuela," *Development Digest* 13 (July 1975).

9. Pumbaya, "Kanggogorowa."

10. Randour, *Women's Psyche, Women's Spirit*, p. 1.

11. Curtin, "Women and the Chinese Revolution."

12. Ibid.

extolled as virtues to be emulated, but on the other hand, the same characteristics are despised as indications of weakness in men, and are used as the justification for denying women certain tasks and positions considered appropriate for men only.

This ambivalence toward womenfolk has placed women in an anomalous situation. Often they are discriminated against and yet are well represented in prestige positions. The Philippine President now is a woman, and Philippine women have emerged in positions of authority and prestige in her government. Yet, criticism often pictures President Aquino as "too soft for the job," and "too much a housewife." Despite the presence of Mrs. Aquino and other women in positions of political power, there is still a widespread notion that the future generation of Filipinos would probably be better served if women were confined to their traditional domestic chores.

The ambivalence towards women in the Philippines can be gleaned further from the following. While women constitute 61 percent of the professionals compared to men who constitute only 39 percent, women continue to be a very small percentage of major office holders in the country as a whole. In business enterprises, there is a lingering feeling men should hold the important "representational" type of positions. Although this is often disregarded in actual practice, the feeling persists.

In addition, women constitute a large majority of those in housework, service occupations, and routine factory work while men are more often found in better paying occupations. Prostitution is regarded as the exploitation of women who, supposedly, are driven to it by a lack of other opportunities. However, when women have equal occupational opportunities, this is often combined with an expectation that they should continue the household tasks, thus bearing a double burden. Present trends indicate that social customs, institutional pressures and even labor legislation still tend toward sex labeling of occupations, and that a very large number of jobs are still reserved for either males or females. In domestic affairs, there are still a number of laws giving men more privileges in conjugal family matters. For instance, whereas a Filipino husband can dispose of any conjugal property without the consent of his wife, the wife cannot legally dispose of any conjugal properties unless expressly allowed by the husband.

WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL PHILIPPINE MUSLIM SOCIETY

If Filipino Christian women seem heavily weighted down by legal, social and traditional prescriptions, perhaps the Muslim Filipino woman has been in an even more desperate state. Not only is she regarded

with double-bladed affection, but she is also a dual minority. As a member of a national minority group, she is regarded by the men from the majority with suspicion, guarded kindness, and a bit of disdain. Christian women admire her ability to subordinate herself to the wishes of the men in her society, but at the same time consider her too slavish, backward, submissive and subservient to the men. Within her subculture, she is subjected to customary and traditional restrictions and may not do certain things without risking approbium.

Until very recently, the social world of the Filipino Muslim woman was extremely limited. Within the community and the family, she was allowed to play no significant role. From the moment of her birth to the time of her marriage, she was under the strict control of her parents who decided everything for her, including her education and marriage. She was inculcated with the belief that her proper place was at home. Since marriage was based mainly and largely on security and material considerations, love and romance were viewed as irrelevant preconditions for marital union and happiness.¹³ She was not allowed to acquire a high school or college education in the regular government-recognized schools because her parents feared that her education would diminish her respect for her parents and for her future husband. Since, traditionally, she could move up the social ladder only through marital alliance, there was no need to obtain a college education.

For quite some time, Philippine Muslim society viewed education as a goal which was at odds with customary expectations, and prevented its young, especially women, from going to school. Consequently, the traditional Filipino Muslim woman devoted much of her time during the prime years of her life to making herself attractive to the eligible male whose marriage with her had already been previously arranged by both their parents. During this period, she was kept in isolation in a place called *lamin* and was not seen by any male including her prospective husband until the day of the marriage ceremony. Custom and tradition dictated even what she could and could not wear, could say and could not say in the presence of others.

Like her Christian compatriots, the Filipino Muslim woman lived in a world of paradox. On the one hand, Filipino Muslim society heaped praises on her and considered Philippine Muslim society as

13. See Hadja Mofida Binolawan M. Tawano, "Rights of Women on Marriage According to Adat Laws," *Mindanao Art and Culture*, No. 2, 1979; Ma. Delia Coronel, ICM, "The Maranao Woman," *Mindanao Art and Culture*, No. 2, 1979; and Zenaida Pangan-daman, "Dietary Regulations: Food Facts and Fallacies," *Mindanao Art and Culture Special Issue on Maranao Women* (Marawi City: Mindanao State University, 1979).

matriarchal, yet an observer could not fail to notice the low role profile that women possessed in Philippine Muslim society. The menfolk supposedly respected and protected her, and yet she could be divorced at will.

THE FILIPINO MUSLIM WOMAN TODAY

The forces of change, however, could not be kept away from Philippine Muslim society forever. With the coming of the Americans, changes began to creep in, slowly at first but steadily. There is no doubt that one of the most significant factors in the emergence of the high role-visibility of the Filipino Muslim women was the rapid growth and expansion of the opportunities and facilities for educational advancement provided by both the *Madrasah* and the government-authorized schools, both public and private, which were established all over Mindanao during the American period.

In contrast, for instance, to the extremely limited number of *maktabs* (small, roving, unorganized, and unsystematic schools established by Muslim missionaries to teach children the basic tenets of Islam before the American era which persisted up to the early part of 1900s), the more organized, systematic and directed *Madrasah* took a foothold in Mindanao during the American period. The rapid growth and establishment of these *Madaris* (plural of *Madrasah*), was the Muslims' response to the Christian missionaries who came to Mindanao, and the establishment of public and private Christian schools which they regarded as a threat to their Islamic culture and tradition.

The rise of the *Madrasah* was rather phenomenal. In 1908, General Tasker Bliss first noted the existence of the *Madaris* in Mindanao although he never mentioned their number. In 1911, General Pershing reported eleven of these schools on the shores of Lake Lanao, with an average daily attendance of about eight hundred students.¹⁴

In the 1950s and 1960s more Mosques and *madaris* came into being as more Islamic missionaries from the Middle Eastern countries came to the country. Filipino Muslims responded to the mission work of the Middle Eastern missionaries with a renewal movement that swept over Mindanao in the 1960s up to the early part of the 1970s. Perhaps, the most dramatic years of the growth in the number of the *Madaris* took place from 1975 to 1985 when around 80 percent of the more than 2,000 *madaris* presently existing were established in Mindanao. These

14. Gowing and McAmis, *Muslim Filipinos*; and Hassoubah, *Teaching Arabic as a Second Language*.

years may be considered as the peak of the religious revival movement among the Muslims of Mindanao.

Paradoxically, these were also the years that disrupted somewhat the steady growth of the madrasah since many had to stop operating because of the eruption of what is now known as the Mindanao Conflict between Muslims and Christians. Nevertheless, these were the years when the growth of the madaris was most dramatically rapid. The pattern of growth of the madaris may be gleaned from Table 1.

Although marked by episodes of violent resistance from the Muslims at first, the public school system introduced by the Americans and the other government-authorized private schools, also played a significant part in the emergent role of Filipino Muslim women. Even during

Table 1. Number of Madaris^a Operating in Key Muslim Areas in Mindanao, 1950–1988.

Year	Cotabato ^b	Lanao ^c	Jolo, Sulu Zamboanga ^d	Total
1950–1955	5	30	27	62
1956–1960	8	48	39	95
1961–1965	19	52	45	116
1966–1970	46	65	50	161
1971–1975	96	132	144	372
1976–1980	178	500	280	958
1981–1985	195	758	460	1,413
1986–present	203	985	600	1,788 ^e

a. These figures have been extrapolated from various sources. Among these are Ahmad Mohammad H. Hassoubah, 1983; Manaros Boransing, Federico Magdalena, and Luis Lacar, 1987; Lloyd Van Vactor, 1978. All figures exclude small Madrasah with less than 20 students and all Madrasah operating during Saturdays and Sundays only. A fundamental difficulty in obtaining accurate count of the number of Madaris in Mindanao area is the absence of records about them which are centrally accessible and available to researchers.

b. Cotabato estimates are for the undivided province. There are now four Cotabato provinces, namely Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, North Cotabato and South Cotabato. Muslims are concentrated in Sultan Kudarat and Maguindanao. North and South Cotabato are dominantly inhabited now by Christian migrants from Luzon and the Visayas.

c. Both Lanao del Sur and del Norte. More than 98 percent of Madaris in Lanao are found in Lanao del Sur.

d. Includes the small island of Basilan.

e. Estimates of the present number of Madaris vary. Prof. Hassoubah pegs the number at around 2,000. Our own estimate comes close but not quite 2,000. If the small and weekend Madaris are included, however, the number is more than 2,000.

the years of resistance to these types of schools, there were known pockets of Muslim Filipino families who realized that keeping their children out of the public schools and other government-recognized educational institutions was self-defeating and only served to cut them off from the economic, social, and political life of mainstream Philippine life. These families sent their children to the public schools and the other government-recognized schools. Eventually, some of those sent became teachers, and as more and more Muslim teachers were trained to teach in the public schools, Muslim parents became increasingly cooperative in sending their children to these schools rather than to the Madrasah. As more and more non-Muslims came and showed their sensitivity and respect for the culture of the Muslims, many Muslims became more receptive of the new institutional changes that came. The traditional leaders, seeing that the slaves they had sent to the public schools in place of their children were, after graduation, employed by the government or in other jobs, while youngsters who did not go to school were disadvantaged, began encouraging their children to attend the public schools.

The other government-recognized schools (private Catholic and Protestant schools) also attracted Muslim students. In spite of the fact that these schools were suspected of converting their children, many parents still sent their children to these schools even when they were more expensive. The drawing power of the private schools may be seen from Table 2 which shows the Muslim enrollment in three private Catholic and Protestant Schools in Cotabato province from 1960 to 1988.

Two significantly related aspects of the changes occurring at this time need to be mentioned. First, the traditional Philippine Muslim taboo against acquiring education in the government and private schools, especially for women, appeared to be breaking down at the beginning of the 1960s. This can be gleaned by examining Tables 3 and 4 which list the number of Muslim women enrolled in the government schools in one Muslim province of Maguindanao. In 1951-52, there were only eighteen Muslim women enrolled in the Cotabato District (Maguindanao). (A District is composed of several schools.) By 1969, the figure for the number of Maguindanao Muslims in Cotabato City High School alone was 267 girls. This is significant since the 1969 figure comes from only one high school, whereas the figure for 1952 comes from several schools. For girls alone, this figure shows an increase of 1,383 percent from 1952 to 1969. On an annual average, this is about 80 percent increase every year.

Table 2: Muslim Students Enrolled in Three Private Christian Schools in North Cotabato, 1960-1988

Year	Southern Christian College		Notre Dame Midsayap		Union College Pikit ^a	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
1960-1962	89	15	53	7	306	69
1963-1965	153	38	112	26	720	135
1966-1969	265	59	256	62	749	233
1970 ^b	-	-	-	-	-	-
1971-1974	43	20	22	8	-	-
1975-1978	184	90	20	10	-	-
1979-1984 ^c	275	110	79	56	-	-
1985-1988	300	150	155	98	-	-

Source: Luis Q. Lacar, *Muslim-Christian Marriages in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1980).

a. This school was burned down at the height of the Mindanao Conflict in 1971 and never re-opened.

b. 1970 was the beginning of the armed conflict in Mindanao. No data are available for this year because all the Muslims stopped going to these schools for fear of their lives. Christian administrators of the Christian schools, however, protected all their Muslim students against attacks by fanatic groups of Christians. The decline in the enrollment of Muslim students can be obviously noted beginning 1971. However, by 1972 and 1973, enrollment of Muslim students in these Christian schools started to rise again.

c. Data from 1981 were provided by Dr. Marcelo P. Satentes, former Executive Vice President of Southern Christian College, and the registrars of the other schools.

Table 3: Maguindanao Muslims Enrolled in the Cotabato District and Cotabato City High School, 1951-1952 and 1969-1970.

1951-1952 Figures for Cotabato District ^a		1969-1970 Figures for Cotabato City High School ^b	
Males	165	Males	715
Females	18	Females	267

a. Figures from Chester L. Hunt, "Cotabato: Melting Pot of the Philippines," *Philippine Social Science and Humanities Review* 19, no. 1 (March 1954): 63.

b. From Luis Q. Lacar, *Muslim-Christian Marriages in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1980), pp. 16-17.

Table 4: Number of Students Enrolled in Schools and Colleges in Cotabato City, 1969-1970; and in Iligan City, 1988-1989

	Cotabato City: 1969-1970	Iligan City 1988-1989
Total No. Enrolled	982	6,750
Percent Females	27	54
Percent Males	73	46

Figures for 1970 are from Chester L. Hunt, *Philippine Social Science and Humanities Review* 19, no. 1 (March, 1954). Figures for 1970 are from Luis Q. Lacar, *Muslim Christian Marriages in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1981); and Luis Q. Lacar, "Directory of Muslim Professionals in the Philippines, *Research Report*, Coordination Center for Research and Development, 1988.

A second related aspect of the breaking down of the cultural barrier against education for women was the greater ease and openness with which Muslim women interacted with others in the schools, and for some the adoption of the style of dressing of the Christians with whom they came in contact. Although still very inhibited, compared with her Christian counterpart, association with Christians of the opposite sex was not entirely unknown and signified a radical breakaway from traditional expectations.

By the middle part of the 1960s, a significant number of Muslim women were pursuing professional and graduate degree courses that would only spell a further breaking away from cultural tradition. It was during these years when Muslim women came into a sharper focus with their ascendancy to prominent positions in both the government and the private sectors of the Philippines. The more prominent of these women became congresswomen, assemblywomen, governors, mayors, bureau heads and directresses, chiefs of office, deans, and presidents of schools and colleges. The large majority occupied positions which, although they did not have as much power and influence as men, were nevertheless very visible. In the 1980s women like Senator Santanina Rasul, Governor Tarhata Lucman, and Bai Matabai Piang became so visible that the place of the Filipino Muslim woman in the new Philippines could no longer be ignored or taken for granted.

The extent of the changes in the role and status of Muslim women in the Philippines may be seen through a comparative analysis of data on employment patterns from 1950 to 1988. Tables 5 and 6 show very

Table 5: Number of Muslims Employed in the Public and Private Sectors of the Philippines, 1950-1988

Year	Cotabato Davao		Lanao Prov. Mis. Or./Occ.		Jolo/Sulu Zamboanga		Total	Percent
	M	F	M	F	M	F		
1950-1955	75	3	35	20	8	18	159	25.78
1956-1960	50	8	60	20	40	30	208	27.88
1961-1965	295	65	293	56	275	45	1029	16.13
1966-1970	400	78	450	98	350	148	1524	21.26
1971-1975	800	109	705	150	360	145	2269	17.81 ^a
1976-1980	805	115	815	169	390	165	2459	12.04
1981-1985	808	150	819	172	405	191	2545	20.16
1986-1988	900	191	940	175	420	193	2819	19.83

Source: Luis Q. Lacar, "Directory of Muslim Professionals in the Philippines," *Research Report*, Coordination Center for Research and Development, Iligan Institute of Technology, Iligan City, Philippines, 1987.

a. The slight decline in the percentage of women employed starting with the year cohort 1971-1975 is most probably due to the outflow of Filipino workers (both Muslims and Christians) to the Middle Eastern countries and some predominantly Islamic states in Southeast Asia such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei where the financial rewards of working are known to be very lucrative. However, the proportion rose again slightly in 1976-1980 and levelled at around 20 percent from 1981 to the present.

Table 6: Pattern of Growth in the Employment of Muslim Women in the Public and Private Sectors of the Philippines, 1950-1988.

Year	Number Employed	Percent of Increase from previous year
1950-1955	41	-
1956-1960	58	29.91
1961-1965	166	65.51
1966-1970	324	48.77
1971-1975	404	19.80
1976-1980	449	10.02
1981-1985	513	42.30
1986-1988	559	8.28

Source: Extracted from Table 4, taken from Luis Q. Lacar, "Directory of Muslim Professionals in the Philippines," *Research Report* (Iligan City: Coordination Center for Research and Development, 1987).

clearly that in the major Muslim areas of Mindanao, radical and significant changes were occurring in the patterns of employment among Muslim women. For example, the benchmark years of 1950-55 indicate that the proportion of Muslim women employed in the public and private sectors of the country was only 10.34 percent of the male Muslim population employed (Table 5). In absolute numbers, this was only a total of 15 women. By 1956-60, the absolute number increased to 28 or a growth of 86.66 percent. The significance of this growth cannot be appreciated if seen only as a proportion of the male Muslims employed, since this would only amount to about 15 percent. However, if examined as a percentage of increase from the previous year, it amounts to an increment of 86.66 percent from the previous year, which is a very significant development (see Table 6). An even more significant change took place from 1961 to 1965 when the increase was 492.85 percent. This growth is the largest change that occurred. From 1970, the percentage of increase began to taper down from 71 percent to 8 percent in the 1986 cohort (Table 6).

The growth in the number of Muslim women employed in the productive economic sectors of the country has continued to the present time. However, there appears to be a downward trend starting in 1970 (Table 6). This downward shift, however, may be due to the change in the preferred place of employment from the Philippines to other countries, rather than a reversion to a former state of things. Beginning in 1974, the Philippine government started "exporting" its surplus labor force to other countries. This policy was followed by a massive outflow of workers, both Muslims and Christians, to other countries. Many Filipinos found lucrative employment in Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia and the dominantly Islamic countries of Southeast Asia like Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia.

It appears that the field of employment has also been shifting for Muslim women. It is notable that in the 1950s and 1960s professions such as Medicine, Dentistry, Law, Nursing, Medical technology, and Certified Public Accountant, were deserted fields as far as Muslim women in the Philippines were concerned. The bulk of Muslim women were employed, during these early years of their emergence, in the teaching field, both in the public and private schools and in the Madrasah.

By the early part of the 1960s, however, rapid changes in the field of employment began to take place. While teaching in the public schools and working as government clerks still appeared to be a favorite field for the majority, medicine, dentistry, and certified public accounting started to be filled up. (Table 7)

Table 7: Occupational Distribution of Muslim Women in the Philippines, 1950-1988

Field	50-55	56-60	61-65	66-70	71-75	76-80	81-85	86-88
Medicine	-	-	-	3	4	4	5	5
Dentistry	-	-	-	3	3	3	4	4
Nursing	-	-	-	4	4	8	8	8
Law	-	-	-	3	4	4	6	8
CPA	-	-	4	10	8	18	10	13
Med-Tech	-	-	2	8	8	22	15	18
Engineer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Public Sch Teacher	-	5	77	109	106	130	142	145
Private Sch Teacher	-	-	15	11	15	15	18	18
Madrasah Teacher	14	20	33	45	50	55	58	63
Govt. Clerk	1	3	32	75	165	165	200	225
Sales	-	-	3	10	18	-	20	20
Govt. Adm.	-	-	-	3	16	22	26	28
Private Adm.	-	-	-	-	3	3	3	4

Source: Luis Q. Lacar, "Directory of Muslim Professionals in the Philippines," *Research Report* (Iligan City: Coordination Center for Research And Development, 1987).

In 1970, nursing, midwifery and medical technology started to catch up. Teaching in public schools continues to be the most attractive occupation. It seems, however, that teaching in the Madaris did not attract as many Muslim women as would be expected, since the number of those teaching in the Madaris shows no appreciable increase at all and remains relatively settled at the same level every year (Table 7). Engineering is probably the lowest in its ability to attract Muslim women. The low attraction of the Madrasah is perhaps traceable to the rather low remunerations in these schools.¹⁵ However, it is difficult to understand the low attraction of engineering given the salary that it commands either in the Philippines or in other societies.

15. See Hassoubah, *Teaching Arabic*; Manaros Boransing, Federico Magdalena and Luis Q. Lacar, *The Madrasah Institution in the Philippines* (Japan: Toyota Foundation, 1987); Dominador Nunag, "The Madrasah Schools in Marawi City: Their Educational Objectives, Practices, and Institutional Societal Roles" (M.A. Thesis, University of the Philippines, 1970).

Engineering is also a field that has a very low attraction even among male Filipino Muslims.

A very significant development in the occupational distribution of Filipino Muslim women is the emergence of the administrator category in comparatively large proportions beginning in 1966 in both the government and private sectors. This category includes chiefs of offices, directresses of bureaus, deans of state colleges and universities, chairpersons of academic departments and administrators in industry and elsewhere. Even more notable is that these women were all married. As far as the study has been able to determine, these women are rated as very successful administrators and have been performing their roles in both employment and domestic sectors very well. It can be surmised that they are successful, both as housewives under the headship of their husbands, and as legitimate heads in their places of work. The ability of these women to shift from one role to another and to strike a balance between the role of housewife subordinate to a husband and a manager who is the head in the work setting is surprising given the double burden, role conflict, and role strain.

Events at present all seem to indicate that the trend of Filipino Muslim women occupying more highly visible roles will continue in the near future in increasing number, as the desire and opportunity to obtain higher education and training becomes more easily available and accessible to women who have the capacity and ability to take advantage of the opportunities. However, Muslim women also continue to be treated differently than men even when their education and training are the same. The responses of the Filipino male Muslims to this growing phenomenon among women is an area worth pursuing but beyond the limits of this article.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE EMERGING ROLE IN FILIPINO MUSLIM WOMEN

Change in any major field of human life always produces "echoes" in other areas. Given this reality, it seems important, therefore, to assess the "echoes" that arise out of the changes in the status of women in Philippine Muslim Society. Given moreover that change in its varied form usually carries with it destabilizing and alienating elements for those involved, it is doubly important to assess its impact. In the midst of rapid change, some individuals may discover that familiar ways are no longer useful and relevant and that traditional norms and values cannot be invoked as guides of behavior.

Invariably, the family unit is the first to feel the impact of change. Since change usually reaches the younger generation faster, genera-

tional conflict within the family becomes an inevitable reality. Usually the conflict is expressed in terms of the different conceptions of the two generations of what is possible, reasonable, and desirable.¹⁶ For the younger generation, the change can mean balancing themselves along a cultural and normative tightrope. In some instances such a balancing act has resulted in ambivalence of ethnic and personal identity.¹⁷ For some, it can lead to an outright break away from their cultural and traditional roots.¹⁸

Elsewhere, researchers on Filipino Muslims have discussed some of the destabilizing and alienating effects of change among the Filipino Muslim families. Among the more obvious effects which have been noted thus far concern the ambivalence in ethnic and personal identity among those directly going through the process of change.¹⁹ Educated children of Filipino Muslim migrants from the province to Luzon and the Visayas, for instance, tended to hide their ethnic identity from friends. Generational conflict between parents and children on courtship behavior are considerable between parents and educated children. In traditional Filipino Muslim society, individual choice of marriage mates had no place since parents decided the matter for the children. In the Muslim provinces today, this practice has remained strong even when children are highly educated. However, clamor for change among the younger generation is increasing and causing more strain in the relationships of parents and educated children.

Some parents who were pessimistic about the effect of education on their children's regard for parental authority now seem to find evidence of this in the actual behavior of their educated children and blame themselves for allowing this to happen. However, they have not been entirely oblivious to the economic returns which have been brought about by their educated children's employment. Nevertheless, many feel that it would be more satisfying if they had the children that they used to have.

This phenomenon, however, need not be viewed mainly as negative. One, can for instance, view the changes in the authority relationships between parent and children generations as an improvement, and one that is probably stronger than the traditional relationships

16. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

17. See for instance, Carter Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice," *Comparative Studies on Society and History* 29 (January 1987); and Luis Q. Lacar, "Maranao Muslim Migration and its Impact on Migrant Children," *Philippine Studies* 37 (1989).

18. Lacar, "Maranao Muslim Migration," pp. 3-14.

19. Carter Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice," *Comparative Studies on Society and History* 29 (January 1987); Lacar, "Maranao Muslim Migration."

since the present relationship is based on rational knowledge and understanding of roles, rather than on the coercive force of customs and traditions. In fact, the familial bonds among the new generation of Filipino Muslims are probably stronger and more enduring. It is expected that more changes will follow in the families established by the children of the educated Muslims themselves.

The practice of parental arrangement of the marriages of children will have to give way to other arrangements which are more attuned and suitable to the moods and temper of the young and educated. Once this happens, as is already happening due to the pressure of the younger generation, other changes in family life will inevitably follow.

The dual standard of morality still prevailing (in all Philippine ethno-religious groups) will increasingly be questioned by women themselves who will no longer accept the customary male attitude on this issue. The more educated they become, the louder and more frequent this question will be and the more difficult it will be to ignore it.

Although customary laws among the thirteen or so different Muslim groups in the Philippines concerning the place of women in society vary somewhat in terms of the degree of their rigidity and strictness, it appears that, in general, they are all agreed that a woman's place is in the home and that she must be subordinate to the male. Among Maranao Muslims (of Lanao province), however, customary laws grant women the right to be equal with men, but only in very specific cases where genealogical descent warrants. Maranao Muslim women, for instance, can be installed in titular positions equivalent to that of their men counterparts such as *Bai a Labi*, *Bai a Dalongancob*, etc. and once installed in these positions of titles, they are allowed to take part in policy and decisionmaking, settle disputes, enforce Muslim laws, and protect the rights of women. To be able to occupy titular positions that allow them to take part in policy and decisionmaking, however, they must show genealogical proof that they are descended from a royal blood line of the title they want to occupy.²⁰

Customary laws (*adat*) like these among Filipino Muslims, will in all likelihood, remain in place but will most probably be honored more in violation than in compliance as a result of the emergence of a generation of Muslim women who are highly trained and educated. It is inconceivable that the traditional ascriptive stratification procedure of the past will be able to withstand a stratification based on achievements based on the salient qualifications of the emerging generation of Muslim women. The emergence of their achieved status by virtue of their education, training, and sophistication cannot be

20. Tawano, "Rights of Women on Marriage."

suppressed by the coercive force of the adat for long. More and more, these women will be in positions of high status and role visibility and it will be impossible to ignore or prevent the changes that will naturally take place as a result of their new found roles.

Given the inertia of the traditional mode of thinking, occasional conflicts with men who have been used to the customary stratification system will arise as in fact they have already arisen. It is unlikely, however, that Muslim men will be able to cling to the customary ways for long. For better or for worse, they will have to make the necessary adjustments to the emerging phenomenon of high role-visibility among women.

Among male Muslims themselves, initial changes in the conception of their own role definitions are beginning to take place. While it is undeniable that among them a general feeling lingers that women would be more appropriately situated in the household, there is also a growing realization among many that it is no longer possible to confine their educated women within the domestic boundary. Moreover, as more and more Muslim families become more extensively affected by a consumerist society, the need to have extra earning power in the family will be a formidable reality to confront. An educated wife can most effectively fill this need.

The adat of Filipino Muslims on education for women needs deeper reexamination in light of the fact that the *Shariah* in this matter prescribes that the search for knowledge and education is compulsory for men and women. In fact the *Shariah* considers the obligation of education as more preeminent than marriage. Moreover, the *Shariah* does not prevent women from applying what they learn for their own benefit and society's.

Islamic law and tradition in Philippine Muslim society concerning the woman's role will have to be less ambiguous and more direct. While Islamic law in general on a women's role in the household and in the husband-wife network is not entirely inflexible and provides room for negotiated bargaining within the purview of the law, Philippine Muslim society seems to have allowed the customary laws (adat) to take precedence over the *Shariah*.

Interpretation of the Islamic laws and traditions in the Philippines, especially as they concern women, will most probably come under heavy questioning. Educated women will increasingly call for more "liberal" and "enlightened" reinterpretation of these laws.

On the whole, therefore, the changes that are emerging concerning the role of women in Philippine Muslim society augur well for Islam in the country in general. Since Islam has always been a dynamic religion that views the total spectrum of human existence as a unitary

phenomenon it can easily meet the challenge of the changes. The ferment brought about by the changes in the roles that women are playing as a result of education and training may perhaps provide the ground for a deeper look into many of the adat concerning women, and to reconcile these with the provisions of the Shariah.

The provisions on plural marriages and divorce will call for a re-interpretation. My guess is that even the men will join many women in looking at this new reality as women demand more justice and undivided marital loyalty from their husbands.

The customary prohibition of Muslim women marrying Christians will become a relic of tradition as more and more educated Muslim women cross the religious and cultural barriers in marital union with Christians. Already, a significant number of these marriages has taken place, even among the Maranao Muslims of Lanao who are known to be the most conservative of all Philippine Muslim groups.²¹

The possibilities for cross-cultural romance will increase considerably as the opportunities for primary types of relationship with members of the opposite sex from other religious groups will be greater in the places of work and in school. Many of the educated Muslim women will be placed in social positions and situations where social encounters with other cultural groups will be inevitable.

In the political arena, Filipino Muslim men will have to contend with the new reality of Philippine politics. The most formidable political opponents of men in the near future will come from among the Muslim women. Senator Santanina Rasul is only the first of many to come. As more and more Muslim women become educated and become aware of alternative structural arrangements of society, more of them will seek their proper places in the social spectrum of Philippine society which used to be the primary enclave of the male population.

Ultimately, the gender links of some Philippine Muslim institutions such as the *Sultanate* and the *Bai-a-Labi* will have to yield to other political conceptions based on merit and achievement and not on sex and/or descent.

The Madaris, if they are to play a more active and dynamic part in the shaping of Filipino Muslim values, will have to be completely overhauled. These institutions will have to abandon the overconcentration of their curricula on religious teachings, and begin to influence directly the economic and social development of its people through science and technology in which Islamic tradition is not lacking. Indeed,

21. Cadar, *Context and Style in the Vocal Music of Maranao*; Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice"; Luis Q. Lacar, *Muslim-Christian Marriages in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1980); Lacar, "Maranao Muslim Migration."

the history of Islam in terms of science and technology is very rich. At present, the Madaris in the Philippines is an educational dead-end because of its heavy emphasis on religious teaching. Because of curricular emphasis on religion and culture, and the total lack of science and technology, their graduates are prepared for neither higher education nor productive work. The parochial perspective of the present Madaris is not based on Islamic tenets on education and therefore should not be difficult to reform. What is needed is a fresher look at what it should be teaching the young, given the changes that are happening. The Madaris can and must become responsive to the needs of the time without being un-Islamic.

S U M M A R Y

The last two-and-a-half decades have witnessed major transformations in Philippine Muslim society especially in those aspects of social life related to women and their education. Traditionally, Muslim women in the Philippines occupied positions and roles that may be characterized as less salient and more subservient to men compared with the role of their Christian counterparts.

The lower role profile of Filipino Muslim women has often been justified by reference to the personal traditions and practices of the founder of the faith and the Koran. For their part, Muslim women did not seem to see any disjunctive note in this arrangement, nor did they find any reason to complain about what Western and Westernized women would readily view as sexual discrimination and exploitation. Causes for this seeming inability of the Muslim to see any discordance in the traditional social arrangement were the limited and/or lack of access to education of any kind in general, the limited ability to travel and establish contacts with alternative forms of social arrangements, and the absence and/or lack of access to communications media that depict other possible ways of structuring social relationships.

With the advent of modern communications media which enable people anywhere in the world to see other possible ways of structuring social networks, greater access to higher and better education, facility for travel and expanded contacts with other people and other ideas, many traditional social patterns in Philippine Muslim society have come under pressure for change. Some of the alternative patterns being adopted by Muslim women are incongruent with traditionally-valued ones which are slowly but surely becoming anachronistic within the context of a rapidly changing social environment.

As facilities and opportunities for universal secondary and tertiary education became more easily accessible to those who desired more

education than was previously possible, more women also sought entrance into colleges and universities. At present, a good many Muslim women have gone to college, acquired university education and come into contact with a much wider field of friends and associates. Their contacts have had tremendous impact on their attitudes and perspectives and have contributed to an atmosphere of openness for change.

Inevitably, these educated women ventured into employment possibilities that brought them even farther away from their traditional home backgrounds. In their work environment, social contacts widened and led to more changes in their attitudes and perspectives. Eventually their changed outlooks made them less accepting of things which were defined as appropriate for them by customs and traditions. For these women, the inertia of customs and traditions was easily overcome by the forces of change brought about by an expanded educational horizon. Some broke away from customs and traditions more radically, but for the majority, the new status meant a more careful balancing of the delicate equation of change and tradition.

The changes brought about by education have resulted in a tremendous increase in the participation of Muslim women in the labor force. Moreover, as Filipino Muslim families became increasingly affected by a consumerist society, the need for an additional earning member of the family was easily filled and justified by an educated woman.

While some of the changes do have destabilizing and alienating aspects, they need not, however, be viewed negatively. Many of the changes will probably strengthen the Filipino Muslim family to enable it to respond to the new circumstances.

More changes will spiral out of the changed status of the Filipino Muslim women in the next decade. In politics, they will become a force to reckon with. The Filipino Muslim family itself will experience tremendous changes. None of the changes will be easy to accept for the older generation. As long as the young and educated are able to adjust to the customary expectations of the older generation without being antagonistic to them, as many are successfully doing at present, the changes may even make the Filipino Muslim family in the Philippines a much stronger social institution.