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Maranao Muslim Migration and its Impact on Migrant Children

L U I S Q. L A C A R

C A R M E L I T A S. L A C A R

Rural to urban migration invariably removes individuals from the familiar ways of life they are accustomed to and places them in situations in which traditional norms and values are often rendered irrelevant or uninvokable. Moreover, kinship ties, as a consequence of the migration, may become so diffused and limited that these no longer provide the emotional and psychological support needed by the individual migrant in his new setting.¹

Combined with other problems usually associated with migration such as inability to obtain the job one had hoped to have or to acquire adequate housing, the feeling of dislocation among migrants can ramify into feelings of deep anxiety, alienation, and problems of identity.² Feelings of identity confusion and alienation among migrants are much more common among children of migrants who, in the new ambience, have to deal with two usually contrasting cultures: that of the parents and that of the new surrounding.³ William Goode reports that feelings of identity confusion and conflict with parental values among children of Polish migrants to the United States were rather common.⁴ The Indo-Chinese refugees to the U.S. are probably the most recent example of intergenerational conflict of value and identity confusion among migrants' children that has been documented.⁵

1. Emmanuel A. Gwan, "Types, Processes and Policy Implications of Various Migrations in Western Cameron," in *Dynamics of Migration* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1976).

2. E.M. Bussey, *The Flight from Rural Poverty—How Nations Cope* (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath, 1973).

3. Geoffrey Brown, "Issues in the Resettlement of Indo-Chinese Refugees," *Social Casework* 63 (March 1982).

4. William Goode, *The Family* (U.S.A.: Allyn Bacon, 1970).

5. Brown, "Issues in Resettlement."

Compounding the problem of cultural adjustment is the fact that migrants' children very often find the ways of the new cultural milieu more attractive than the parents' patterns. On the other hand, they also feel the pressure to uphold parental customs and traditions. For migrant children, therefore, adjusting to the new cultural context is made much more difficult by the fact of having to accommodate the cultural values of their parents while learning to adopt the patterns of behavior in the new setting.

MARANA O MUSLIM MIGRANTS

The case of the Filipino Maranao Muslims provides an interesting dimension in the study of migration in the Philippines.

The Maranaos are the most conservative among all the Philippine Muslim groups.⁶ They have also been described as extremely clanish and family centered.⁷ In the past, the conservatism, family-centeredness and strong kin orientation of the Maranao Muslims prevented many of them from venturing beyond the village. They tended to view any move to distant places as disruptive of family ties and relationships.⁸ The Maranaos, however, are not unique in this regard. Strong family bonds and extended family traditions have been known to discourage migration among other groups of people in the Philippines and in other societies in the world as well.⁹

It now appears, however, that Maranaos have started to migrate to other places in response to various "push" and "pull" factors. In Luzon and the Visayas where there are Muslim migrants, the Maranaos constitute the most numerous group. In 1984 alone, the estimated number of Maranao Muslims in Manila was between 30,000-35,000. Another 15,000 were known to reside in the Visayas. It is extremely difficult to find documents to support the movement of Maranao Muslims to Luzon and Visayas since, there was no systematic recording of population movements in the past nor studies of migration activities. It is probably accurate to say that the migration of Maranao

6. M.I. Matuan, "The Maranao Migrants in Metro Manila" (M.A. thesis, University of San Carlos, 1983).

7. Mamitua Saber and Abdullah T. Madale, *The Maranao* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1975).

8. See Saber and Madale, *The Maranao* and Matuan, "The Marano Migrants in Metro Manila." See also Labi Sarip, "A Profile of the Economic Activities of Maranao Women in Mulondo, Marantao and Marawi City, Lanao del Sur" (M.A. thesis, University of San Carlos, 1984).

9. See Gwan, "Dynamics of Migration"; see also *Understanding the Filipino Migrant* (Makati, Manila: Filipinas Foundation, 1976).

Muslims has grown only in the last fifteen years or so, based on an analysis of a random sample of 529 Muslim migrants in Luzon and the Visayas.¹⁰

While the "search for greener pastures," may be considered the primary factor in Maranao Muslim migration, it is equally true that many were driven out of Lanao by the precarious peace and order situation, prevailing in the province between 1972 and 1976, the period during which more than 80 percent of the respondents of this study migrated. This, again, does not make the Maranao migrants distinct from other migrants, since it is a documented phenomenon that uncongenial social environments and oppressive laws produce currents and streams of migration.¹¹

The process of settling in a new community demands adjustments by those who move into a place. Even where the culture of the new place is more or less similar to that of the migrant, some adjustments still need to be made. In the case of the Maranao Muslim migrants, the areas of adjustment to be made are considerable. There is the matter of differences in food practices among Muslims and Christians. Language constitutes one of the most formidable areas of difference and imposes the most serious obstacle in any social transactions between Maranao Muslim migrants and a Tagalog or a Visayan. Many other social practices also make heavy demands on the adjustment of the Maranao Muslim migrants.

Yet the fact that Muslim migrants to Luzon and the Visayas continue to grow in number indicates that they are adjusting rather well to their new ambience. In cities such as Legaspi, Cebu, Manila, Dumaguete, Iloilo, Ormoc, Tacloban, Cagayan, and others, there are an increasing number of Maranao Muslims who have established more or less permanent residence.¹² Many of these migrants who have established residence in these places have adapted to and/or adopted many of the cultural patterns of the new areas. Language is one culture pattern they seem to have adopted rather successfully. In Cebu, Manila, Iloilo, and Dumaguete, for instance, we found it difficult to detect the vestiges of the Maranao accent among the Maranaos when they converse with the people of these places. The phenomenon is more widespread among the younger Maranaos and occurs to a lesser extent among the older migrants.

10. Matuan, "The Maranao Migrants."

11. Gwan, *Dynamics of Migration*.

12. L. Q. Lacar, *Muslim-Christian Marriages in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publishing House, 1980) and L. Q. Lacar and Labi Sarip Riwarung, "Maranao Muslim Christian Inter-marriages." Research Project, Center for Muslim Policy Studies, CCRD, MSU-IIT, Iligan City.

Another area of change worth noting is the mode of dressing. Traditional apparel is no longer used publicly by the migrants and their children. Like the changes in the use of language, the change occurring in the area of clothing is more apparent among the younger generation. However, this change can also be noted even in the dominantly Muslim places in Mindanao such as Marawi, Cotabato, Jolo and Sulu. The change, however, is not as pervasive as it is among those who are migrants.

Certain other aspects of life among Maranaos, however, whether migrant or not, appear to be impervious to change. For instance, the strong tendency to endogamy, dietary habits, and religion tend to remain rather stable even among the young migrants.

Change in its varied forms entails some costs, both social and psychological, on the part of those affected by it. Some of these costs may be much greater in their impact on the older generation and less among the younger Maranaos. The difference in the impact of changed values and perspective between the older and younger generation in a migrant household or family can cause strains in the relationship of the members and compound the problems of adjustment to the new surroundings.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Given the potential straining force of change on the relationships of members of migrant families, especially their children, it seems appropriate to study this aspect of the Maranao Muslim migrants. This article, therefore, will explore the problems that Muslim merchant migrants have encountered and the social mechanisms they have adopted to cope with these problems. The study will focus largely on the merchant migrants' children's sense of ethnic identity. Not all Muslim migrants, of course, to Luzon and the Visayas are merchants or traders but this study highlights Muslim merchants who have migrated to Luzon and Visayas.¹³

The data for this paper come from a larger study on Muslim Merchant Migrants in Luzon and the Visayas, supported by the National Research Council of the Philippines.¹⁴ In this study 529 Maranao Muslim migrants to Luzon and the Visayas were interviewed using a structured interview schedule. Only these aspects of the research dealing with problems of ethnic identification are included

13. See Matuan, "The Maranao Migrants" for other types of Muslim migrants to Manila.

14. Lacar and Sarip, "Maranao Muslim Christian Inter-marriages."

in the present analysis. A random probability sample of 325 children of migrants were likewise interviewed. The questions asked focused on feelings and attitudes towards parents' ethnic origin and parents' relationship.

There appears to be no question that for the majority of the Muslim respondents of this study, economic progress is an undebatable reality. A look into their income profile in their places of origin and their income at the time of the interviews shows that the income difference is substantial.

For example, whereas over 40 percent of them said they had no income at all in their places of origin (Table 1), only 4.54 percent reported an income of ₱0-500 in their present places of residence. On the other hand, 30.43 percent reported having a present monthly income of between ₱1,500 and ₱2,000. Eight respondents reported a monthly income of ₱5,500 to ₱6,000 a month; 4 respondents reported a monthly income of ₱6,500 to ₱7,000; and another 4 reported an income of ₱8,500 to ₱10,000 a month (Table 2). Those who reported incomes of over ₱4,000 a month were those operating large business catering to Muslims and brass product dealers who travel as far as Singapore and Malaysia to buy and sell their wares. These figures on income indicate that 88.29 percent of the respondents have an average yearly income of ₱14,000 and the remaining 12 percent have an average yearly income of ₱42,000. The comparable income of Mus-

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Income in Places of Origin

Monthly Income	N	Percent
No income reported	216	40.83
50-150	6	1.13
151-250	69	13.04
251-350	29	5.48
351-450	23	4.35
451-550	29	5.48
551-650	31	5.86
651-750	33	6.24
751-850	26	4.91
851-950	23	4.35
951-1050	23	4.35
1051-1250	12	2.27
1251-1350	3	.57
Above 1351	6	1.13
	529	99.99

Table 2. Present Monthly Income

Income (monthly)	N	Percent
0-500	24	4.54
501-1000	115	21.74
1001-1500	87	16.45
1501-2000	161	30.43
2001-2500	28	5.29
2501-3000	51	9.64
3001-3500	0	--
35001-4000	0	--
4001-4500	28	5.29
4501-5000	19	3.51
5501-6000	8	1.51
Over 6000	8	1.51
	529	99.99

lims in the Philippines in 1970 shows that 50 percent of Muslim families earned less than ₱3,000 per year and the top 5 percent of Muslims earned only ₱15,000 a year. Compared to the national average family income among Muslims of ₱3,062 a year, the respondents of this study are well above the income scale.¹⁵ Given the sensitivity of reporting incomes by the respondents, the data on income change willingly reported are significant especially when they are compared to income in their places of origin.

There are also other objective indicators of economic and social progress notable among the Muslim migrant families. Chief among these is the proportion of children in school, possession of home appliances such as a refrigerator, a television set, a moderately-priced stereo receiver set and sala set, and a comfortable rented place for all members of the family. Except for migrants who have arrived within 6 months before the study, all had such home amenities as a refrigerator, television set, stereo set, sala set and a comfortable although rented place (Tables 3 and 4).

Without exception, all the elementary school-age children of the migrant families were in school. Only 1.5 percent of college-age children of migrants were not in school by choice. These young people did not consider college education as crucial in their ability to find money, and therefore, opted to stop schooling after high school. A

15. Tito Mijares and I.C. Belarmino, "Some Notes on the Sources of Income Disparities Among Filipino Families," *Journal of Philippine Statistics* 24 (1973).

Table 3. Migrants Possessing Home Amenities in Places of Origin

Amenities Owned	N	Percent
Refrigerator	1	.19
Television set	1	.19
Stereo	3	.57
Sala set	2	.38
Cassette	0	.00
Small portable radio	10	1.90
House*	5391	100.00

*While all claimed they owned their houses in their hometown, 92 percent said they were not comfortable.

Table 4. Migrants Possessing Home Amenities in Present Places of Migration

Amenities Owned	N	Percent
Refrigerator	215	40.64
Television set	411	77.69
Stereo set	121	22.87
Sala set	114	21.51
Cassette	98	18.52
Small portable radio	205	38.75
House		
Owner	10	1.89
Renter	519	98.10

little over 2 percent of children of high school age had stopped schooling for over a year at the time of the study. The school enrolment rate, of the migrants' children, therefore, can be considered high even on a national level.

Socially, a large majority of the respondents are able to transact business smoothly and live a relatively comfortable life. Their circle of friends, although dominantly Maranaos, extends beyond ethnicity. Most of them consider themselves "integrated," and while still identifying strongly with the Maranaos, they do not have any doubts about their being Filipinos. They are proud of their economic achievement and their present life. Many do not have any intentions of returning permanently to their hometown in Lanao. They think of their new place of residence as the best place for them and their children. While

some of them have attempted to blend as well as they could with the local culture, they have done this only in order to hasten transactions rather than to hide their ethnic identity.

THE COST OF MIGRATION FOR MUSLIM MIGRANT CHILDREN

Their economic and social progress notwithstanding, Muslim migrants in Luzon and the Visayas feel deeply haunted by what they consider the "cultural dislocation" of their children since practically none of them know and understand their parents' language (Maranao) and culture and are very "different in their attitudes and outlooks." Moreover, they sense that the children despise almost anything associated with the old hometown in Lanao and hide their ethnic identity.

Migrants' children interviewed revealed that while they respect their parents' ethnic origin and culture, they do not wish to be identified with them publicly because they fear that their Christian friends might reject them if they know that they are Maranao Muslims. Moreover they feel that the parental culture is not something to be proud of in view of the negative perceptions people have of it. Thus, migrant parents feel embarrassed in mentioning to their children things that they used to be proud of about their way of life. Consequently, many of them feel uncertain about whether they have really done the right thing in migrating. Yet, they also know that coming to the present place was the best thing they could have done for the good of the family. For many migrants the feeling that migration is the best thing that they have done in life and their remorse over the "cultural dislocation" of the children has been a constant cause of introspection.

On their part, children of migrants feel embarrassed to disclose their ethnic identity to others. Consequently, children try very hard to look and sound like a local boy or girl. Except when they feel sure that the person they are talking with can accept them as members of their own ethnic group, the children tend to deny their ethnic identity.

Parents on the other hand often wish that they could have all the good things they now possess without the accompanying loss of cultural orientation among their children. Parents sense that their children feel embarrassed when they speak to them in Maranao in public places instead of using the local language. Children confirm this by claiming that Maranao should only be used inside the house in order not to let others know their ethnic origin.

Another phenomenon about the children that disturbs a considerable proportion of the migrant parents is the courtship behavior that children have imbibed. In traditional Filipino Muslim society, individual choice of marriage mates had no place since parents decide the matter for the children. In the Muslim provinces today this practice has remained strong even when children are highly educated, although clamor for change among the young generation is increasingly being heard. Consistent with their upbringing, the parents want to have the major decision in the matter of the mate selection of their children. Children, however, seem to have learned the romantic ideals of courtship prevalent among the culture of the lowland Christians and tend to want freedom from parental interference on the matter of mate selection.

Boys, for instance, want to go visiting a prospective girl friend, take her out on dates, be alone with her, and give her gifts on occasion. The girls on the other hand, wish that prospective suitors would visit them, invite them out for dates away from the ever watchful eyes of their traditional parents. Parents on their part do everything possible to prevent such an eventuality from occurring. As a result, children and parents resent each other's attempts to impose their values on the other.

Courtship is an area in the family life of migrants that appears to be more fraught with strains than anything else since many of the children are at the stage in which interest in the opposite sex is very strong. Parents are finding that the tighter the control they want to impose, the less able they are to effect the control mechanism, and the more severe the strains between them and their children become.

Children expressed strong resentment against parents who want to make them the choice of potential mates for them and regard the practice as rather antiquated. Although a majority do not openly argue with parents on this matter, they nevertheless show their defiance of the parental wishes by their actual courtship behavior. Boys and girls go out on dates albeit clandestinely, usually in movie houses.

Parents on the other hand justify their attempt to have their say in the mate selection on the immaturity of the children to make this serious decision. They feel very strongly that marriage is too serious an affair to be left entirely to the decision of highly emotional young people. Most parents, however, appear resigned to the hopelessness of their position, given all the influences impinging upon the children.

How do Muslim migrants attempt to cope with this problem? A mechanism commonly resorted to by the migrants is to send their wives and children for frequent visits to the old hometown of their

origin. The implicit parental wish in resorting to this coping mechanism is that the children might learn to like the old ways and adopt them. On the average, children were sent to visit twice a year usually on important occasions. Although the migrants admit that this is an expensive solution, they consider it worth the money for two reasons. It is an opportunity for the children to establish contact with their folks at home and learn to love and appreciate their culture. It also gives them the opportunity to show other people in their town how much more progressive they have become as a result of their migration.

Used to their new environment and having become "strangers" in their own parents' culture, however, the children cannot stand prolonged visits in the parents' hometown and no sooner do they arrive than they demand to "go back home." Home of course means the chosen migration destination of the parents—Manila, Cebu or elsewhere in Luzon or the Visayas.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Maranao Muslim migrants to Luzon and the Visayas have cited economic opportunities and the peace and order situation in Lanao as the main reason for migrating to these places. Although the process of migration entailed difficulties for the migrants, these were not of an insurmountable nature. The economic objective of moving to Luzon and the Visayas appears to have been achieved by a large majority of the migrants as evidenced by a substantial increase in reported incomes and the possession of objects such as appliances and others. Socially, migrants can also be considered very successful and have adjusted very well to their new social ambience.

However, most feel a deep sense of loss in the "cultural disorientation" of their children and their lack of appreciation for things associated with their culture. Children themselves admit to feelings of confusion and guilt in not wanting to be publicly identified as Maranaos for fear of rejection by their new found Christian friends. Even among children whose circle of friends tended to be limited mostly to Maranaos, a great deal of effort was also exerted to hide their ethnic identity for fear of rejection.

Muslim migrant children are, therefore, cast in a situation of ambivalence with regard to their ethnic identity. On the one hand, they feel a very strong sense of obligation to respect their parental traditions and a desire to uphold them in practice. On the other hand, they find these parental patterns inappropriate and out of decadence with what they now have come to learn in the new environment. As a typical migrant child succinctly put it:

I find myself not knowing what to follow since I do not want to hurt my parents by outrightly rejecting their customs. However, practicing them here will make us look ridiculous and out of place.

Another Maranao migrant child indicated:

Even if we were back in Lanao it is probably difficult for me to practice my parents' culture already.

Consequently, the phenomenon by which a member of an ethnic group (usually a minority) attempts to hide his/her ethnic identity by looking and sounding like a native (usually the majority) is very common among the migrants' children. All these tend to occur among those migrants who have attained a comfortable degree of economic prosperity.

Intergenerational conflict has always been a familiar part of the adjustment process of migrant groups.¹⁶ The Muslim migrants in Luzon and the Visayas appear to be no exception. The effects of differential acculturation due to age differences seem to have a multiplier effect on the normal problems between parents and children. Whereas parents and children often tend to differ on the matter of courtship behavior, this is exacerbated among migrant families in view of the fact that children tend to view the courtship practices of the parents as antiquated and the new environment's as modern and attractive. Muslim migrant parents, however, are not about to give up. Many admit having to resort to threats of nonsupport and disowning children if they persist in doing what they want. Consequently, migrant children feel uncertain that they want to be Maranao Muslims. Quite a few admit not really knowing whether being a Maranao was at all desirable. Ethnicity of course, they realize, is not an option for them.

While it may be said that loss of cultural orientation is probably an evident consequence of migration, migrants did not foresee this. A majority of the migrants tried to "correct" this by sending their children for frequent visits to their hometown. However, in most cases, this did not seem to work as the children could not stand prolonged visits to the parents' hometown. Strains in the relationships of children and migrants have been noted because of the cleavage in orien-

16. Brown, "Issues in Resettlement"; Bussey, *The Flight from Rural Poverty*; J. Cassel, "Health Consequences of Population Density and Crowding," in *Rapid Population Growth: Consequences and Policy Implications* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1971), pp. 462-63.

tation. The severity of these strains may yet result in open conflicts among children and parents and pose threats to the migrant family's stability.

Migrants seem to want to have the "best of all worlds" by wishing to have all the economic benefits they now have without the accompanying cultural disorientation of the children. In all probability, they will be frustrated in this desire, for the phenomenon of "cultural dislocation" of children of migrants, will, in all likelihood, be a part of other migrants' life in the future.

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