Assalamu Alaikum. Peace be unto you. The word Islam literally means “peace” but its deepest meaning carries with it a complete submission to God’s will. A Muslim’s first confession of belief is that there is but one God, the Lord of creation, and Muhammad is His prophet.

No matter where they live, Muslims belong to the spiritual, worldwide, non-territorial Umma, the Islamic social community where their doctrines, customs and laws are maintained and preserved in the divinely prescribed ideology and faith.

Their homeland or the region they inhabit is dar al-Islam or the abode of Islam and it is their duty not to allow it to fall into dar al-Harb, the abode of war or the territory of non-believers.

The Islamization of the Philippines, in the context of dar al-Islam, was part of the Indo-Malaysian Islamization that lasted from the ninth to the 15th centuries. Today, island Southeast Asia has one of the heaviest concentrations of Muslims – approximately about 133 million human beings – and the Philippines is still part of this Islamized Malay world of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei which owes much to the Islamic civilization of Arabia and the Middle East.

The Muslims in the southern Philippines are found principally in the Sulu Archipelago, in the western and southern portions of Mindanao – around Lake Lanao and in the broad valley of the Pulangi River in Cotabato – and on the island of Palawan south of Puerto Princesa. Muslims claim they number five million as against a highly unreliable census figure of over two million.

Most engage in fishing, agriculture or trade while educated Muslim Filipinos are leaving their mark on the different professions: law, medicine, politics.

As recently as 1954, most Muslims did not consider themselves Filipinos but preferred to be identified under the names of their ethnic groupings. “I am a Tausug, you are a Samal, they are Maranao and Magindanao, and we are also Yakan, Palawani, Jama Mapun, Sangin, Malibuganon and yes, I am Badjao to you but Luwaan to the Tausug.”

In 1450 Sayad al-Hashim Abu Bakr, born of an Arabian Sultan in the seacoast town of Malacca in Malay peninsula, founded the Sultanate of Sulu and for nearly 500 years all the succeeding sultans claimed descent from him. At the height of its power, the Sultanate – loosely patterned after the Arabic model – ruled over the province of Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, Palawan, Zamboanga, Sabah and the Celebes.

The Sultanate of Magindanao was founded by Sharif Kabungguhan and all the tarsilas of Maranao sultans and datu traced their ancestry back to this Arab immigrant from Johore and Hadramaut of South Arabia.

The Magindanao Muslims had three preeminent sultanates while 43 sultanates have been identified among the Maranao. In 1915 the 27th Sultan, Jamal-ul Kiram II, surrendered all his claims...
to temporal authority in Sulu to the United States government. The end of the Moro wars against Spain in the south had also marked the decline of the sultanates.

The sultan was the sovereign of a Muslim state and the highest ecclesiastical and political authority. The powers of government were vested in the sultan and in the Rhuma Bechara, an assembly made up of datus who sat in council with the sultan. Thus it can be said in that the sultanate as a form of Islamic government existed in southern Philippines long before the coming of the Spaniards.

And, indeed, Sayad Abu Bakir, in establishing in 1450 the first sultanate of Sulu, set up the first centralized political bureaucracy in the country, the first state and the first congress, antedating the Malolos Congress by at least four centuries.

Unlike the Igorots and other unhispanized minorities we are not just a culture. Our Muslim civilization is the peer of Western civilization. We share a sense of Islamic brotherhood with millions in other countries halfway around the world and a sense of biological linkage to our ancestors. This gives us a powerful feeling of continuity, unity and identity.”

Islam, however, did not introduce a total alien type of social and political organization among the peoples of the southern Philippines. For the Islam that prevailed in Southeast Asia was a non-aggressive, flexible creed that enabled its adherents to retain their folkways. And when it reached the Philippine South, Islam blended with the existing local Hindu-Chinese-paganistic practices of the natives.

Thus the pre-islamic timuways evolved into the datus of the Muslim faith and the powerful and independent rajas of the ancient barangay became the sultans of Moro society. And the difference between the datu and the sultan is that the sultan, for all the Islamic trappings of his office and despite the fact that the Prophet’s blood was said to run in his veins, was essentially a datu among datus.

At this time that Sulu became an Islamic power, Manila and Cebu were but small and insignificant settlements whereas Buansa or what is now Jolo was already a thriving international port and the richest settlement in the Philippine Islands.

The concept of kingship or sultanate teaches that all lands in a given area belong to the community and either the sultan or the datu is the community’s trustee. He alone has the sole authority to decide who should use which parcel of the community’s land. Thus individuals only receive the right to use a portion of the land, not to own it. This notion of land as a perpetual communal heritage has been part of the Muslim customary law, the adat.

When the Americans at the turn of the century made their cadastral surveys and introduced the system of Torrens titles, they violated and cut into this hallowed heart of ancient Muslim lore and land became alienable property, a dar al-Harb, the territory of non-believers. Huge rubber and peanut plantations owned by individual Americans sprang up in Cotabato, Lanao, Cagaya de Sulu, and Siasi. Between 1913 and 1917 six agricultural colonies were found in Cotabao and one in Lanao.

It was the Commonwealth government that initiated the massive migration of Christian Filipinos to the south.

In 1953 Magsaysay became president of the Philippines and offered all surrendering Huks attractive homesteads on what Muslims considered their traditional and sacred land.
In 1968 an organized Muslim group warned that Mindanao adat had reserved the gold – the mines of Selatan and other areas – for the local people since these areas formed part of the ceremonial bantingan dowry of ancient Muslim kingdoms. The Bureau of Mines would not recognize ancient kingdoms, much less their bantingan, and forthwith invited private prospectors to bid for 484,000 hectares of dowry land.

In 1970 the Mindanao shooting war – the Christian Ilagas against the Muslim Barracudas – started in Cotabato and Lanao. A secessionist movement seeking a Bangsa Moro, a sovereign Muslim state, was initiated principally by the Tausug.

Jolo was burned on February 8, 1974 by governmental troops and only a memory was left after its burning.

Coastal and Inland Dwellings – Badjao

There is a legend among the Badjao of Tawi-Tawi and Sibutu that their ancestors once lived in villages of house-boats at Johore. A strong wind arose one day and the leader of the village in great fear, stuck a pole into the sea floor and tied his boat to it, with the rest of the villagers tying their boats to that of their leader. But the sea floor turned out to be the nose of a giant sting ray which pulled all their boats far into the open to the Sulu archipelago.

In the Genealogy of Sulu, a traditional history of the Tausug, the Badjao were mentioned as coming from Johore and driven by the tempest to Brunei and Mindanao. Najeeb Saleeby, in his book The History of Sulu (1908), says that the Badjao or Samal of Johomore migrated to the southern Philippines in the early 14th century, before the first Muslim pioneers.

But legend, genealogy and historical reports notwithstanding, contemporary anthropologist such as H. Arlo Nimmo believe that there was no such exodus from Johore in the 14th century because they would have left pockets of their members along their routes of migration: there are no Badjao found on the southern and northern Borneo coasts or in Java and Sumatra.

As explained by Nimmo, the boat-dwelling habit, which is a practical adaptation to reef living and fishing, must have evolved independently among certain Samal groups such as the Badjao of Sulu, and it is this habit, rather than migrating boat-dwellers, that has spread throughout Malaysia.

Before the MNLF secessionist movement out in Sulu, two major Badjao groups were the Tawi-Tawi, Sibutu and Semporna (Sabah) group or southern Badjao and the Siasi, Jolo, Basilan and Zamboanga group or northern Badjao. According to Nimmo, the southern Badjao viewed themselves as a single bangsa (they used this term before the MNLF did) with a population conservatively estimated at 6,000.

There were some 1,500 Badjao in six different villages in Tawi-Tawi, namely, Luuk Tulai, Bandulan, Tungkalang, Lamiun, Tungbangkao and Lioboran. In Sibutu, 3,500 Badjao were found in the villages of Sitangkal, Tungehat, Tandowak, and Omapoi while the two Semporna villages, Bangau-Bangau and Labuanghadji, added approximately 1,000 to the entire Badjao bangsa.

Of the three groups, the Tawi-Tawi Badjao were found to be the most conservative: before the Bangsa Moro uprising, about two-thirds of them still used boats as permanent living quarters, and some of their villages consisted of flotillas with no houses. The Sibutu Badjao, as
the Semporna Badjao, were predominantly house-dwellers who used the boat as living quarters only during fishing trips.

Tungkalang, on the southernmost end of Sanga-Sanga island, was the largest Badjao village in Tawi-Tawi. It had a flotilla of 80 houseboats of different builds and sizes and 17 pile houses poorly constructed in shallow water and on long exposed sandbar. The population of the village was about 400 but this varied significantly from day to day and during certain phases of the moon, when Badjao went on fishing trips of a week’s or 10 days’ duration.

There are many houseboats in Tungkalang, among them the lipa, djenging and dapang. The lipa has no outriggers while the djenging and dapang have. Over both the lipa and djenging, boats and houses are built to shelter the Badjao from sun and rain – their structures, however, are different. The lipa house structure is loose and detachable: long poles are attached here and there to frame the shape over which a nipa roof is rolled, while over the djenging the house structure is walled in on all sides by wooden boards, nailed permanently, with window openings and doors and galvanized sheet for the roof. The size of the djenging seems to depend on family status: a poor family that can afford only a smaller boat uses, for the roof and wailing, nipa and matted coconut leaves, patched up here and there with thick sackcloth or cardboard, pieces of wood, bamboo slats and rusty galvanized sheets – a floating Sulu barong-barong. The dapang is a boat of varied sizes and lengths, with outriggers, and is used for fishing or short trips. Other boats are simple dugouts, used for transport between house-boats and oftentimes in the care of the young.

We stayed in the houseboat of Jamiluddin for several days, either squatting or lying down under the low roof of the boat all hours of the day. To stretch a leg, we had to crawl out of the small space of a boatroom and stand on the ledge-lank where the prow begins. The furnishings in Jamiluddin’s boat are just about the same in all the other boats: a sail, a lamp for fishin, one suitcase, a water jar, a stove, several pots and three plates, two bolos, a small chest, pillows and mats. The flooring is made of planks loosely pieced together and unnailed, so that things can be hidden underneath, like extra stoves and other pots. The rest of the flooring is made of bamboo slats. The roof is of galvanized iron but the sides are of nipa and rice straw. Above the roof and stuck between two holes with branching fingers are his fishing spears; he also owns a harpoon gun. The roof at its highest point is about three fee, and that is just enough for a person to squat without his head touching it.

At night you sleep crosswise on the length of the boat and your body hurts the first time because the flooring is uneven: your head and legs follow the upward slope of the bamboo slats while your lower back rump presses on the wooden planks.

You cannot stretch your legs as straight as you would want to, for the suitcase, the baol, and the pile of nets crowd the nipa walls; at best you take an oblique position or simply tuck your legs in as if you were cold. When you wake up in the morning, you find your face, arms and legs sticky with moisture. At noon, lying down, you feel the heat of the sun coming down from the roof; it is a warm kind of heat in which you can hardly breathe. And the sun reflections on the water dance on the ledges of the roof and hold you in a blind trance.

The Badjao subsist on cassava and fish for their whole life. They either buy these cassava roots or reap them from the fields inland, from the sides of mountains, or clearings in the woods. They have rice only on festive occasions or as a form of dessert, they do not eat meat.

Maysahani, a boat builder and fisherman, built is house over the water using such tools as two native patuk axes, hammer, plane, chisel and a drill; he did not even have a saw. The walls of his house were made of wood planks cut into boards from trees gathered in the inland woods. Posts are tree trunks; the roof is made of nipa and matted coconut leaves; the front doors swing from rotating wooden hinges.

What did we see in a Badjao house? The stairs, with three rungs above the water, leads a porch-like landing of irregularly-spaced boards, and to a one-room, two-door structure that is a combination sala and sleeping room without beds. The stairs are also where the woman of the house sometimes does her washing.
by simply squatting on the last rung and soaking the clothes in sea water and slamming them against the stair post to dry; in like manner she washes plates and cooking pots. The stairs are fenced like a small verandah at the top and on the landing one sees poles that serve as washlines together with dried tree trunks, stumps and firewood.

The cramped living room has two entrance doors with two small windows shaped out of the center wall and overlooking the landing; one side has another window and the other side has a door that leads to the kitchen. The sala has two wooden benches, a water jar in one corner, a toolbox on the center side, and three mirrors on separate walls; across one roofbeam hangs a pile of fishing nets.

The mirrors are placed in such a slanting way that one finds great difficulty in seeing his image in any one of them. Actually, they hang there only to signify the number of children in the house, and mirrors are meant to drive away evil spirits. Nationalistic scenes are crudely painted on them: the flag and eagle symbols of the Republic of the Philippines, the Leyte landing of MacArthur and his famous lines of “I Shall Return”, and the portrait of Jose Rizal as patriot and hero. These mirrors, we are told, were brought in the town of Bongao.

The sleeping room is practically empty. A shelf protrudes from one side and holds a suitcase; a mat spreads out on the floor; and between two beams on the exposed roof, a long plank carries a white duffel bag.

The kitchen furnishings are two stoves, one built on three rocks over a circular metal disk; a water jar and a big kerosene can, a coconut grater. In one corner, a flat-bottomed basket covers papaya fruits, cassava roots, and several coconuts; a branch of chili pepper leaves sticks out from the wall. Several pots around the stoves. The kitchen door at the end exits onto a long plank that spans the flooring of the next houses, however, stand apart from one another.

The Badjao, water people though they are, do go on and stay on land – when they die and are buried. In Tawi-Tawi, the traditional burial grounds of the southern Badjao are Bilatan Boon and Bunabunaan. As their native religion is a form of ancestor worship, the Badjao make frequent cemetery visits to ask favors from the spirits of their deceased ancestors and relatives. They carve gravemarkers into birds and sea horses and serpents to transport these spirits into another life. They adorn their grave-plots with canopies and colored paper parasols and buntings. Their panglima or headman and imam or religious leader stick into this sacred ground little banners of red, blue, yellow and green colors and chant prayers over the dead.

Because these spirits are still part of the family, a part of their life, the Badjao come to comfort them and make them as happy as the living. They offer their deceased ancestors food and packs of cigarettes and betel nuts and sprinkle on ever corner of their graves sweet – smelling tonic from tiny bottles that are manufactured by the Chinese in another part of the Philippine world: Caloocan, Rizal.

Coastal and Inland Dwellings – Samal

In the Sulu Archipelago, the Samal mix on various islands with the Tausug who are the dominant group and whose concentration is in the Jolo island cluster. Generally the Tausug outnumber other groups in the northern half of Sulu and the Samal increase in number in the southern half nearest Borneo.

Such a situation has led Stone (1974) to make the observation that differences in housing between the
Tausug and Samal are not clearly marked as between the Badjao and other groups. “In the market centers – Jolo, Siasi, and Bonggao – the Philippine plaza, perhaps a school, shops and at times, houses of the elite. Moving away from the plaza one finds houses belonging to Christians and Chinese-mestizo elite. Construction is similar, usually manufactured board and either galvanized tin or shingle roofing, generally unpainted. Construction quality deteriorates the farther away from the plaza the house is located.”

At the farthest point, Stone continues, “house construction is generally a variation of the Southeast Asian stilt houses with woven bamboo siding, bamboo flooring, and bamboo or palm frond roofing. Generally speaking, in Jolo, the Tausug who are permanent residents will live farther away from the water than the Chinese shopkeepers and Christians living about the plaza. The outlying districts of Siasi are also more homogenous in make-up. “Bongao is similar to Siasi in housing arrangement, and has also surrounding homogenous districts. The Samal in Bongao are seemingly more affluent than in the north and live in houses similar in construction to the Tausug, with manufactured siding although many times, the flooring will be bamboo strings and roofing will be front material.”

Stone also points out that in Siasi, the Tausug live on one side of the quay, the Samal on the other, with the Chinese shopkeepers and Christians living about the plaza. The outlying districts of Siasi are also much more homogenous in make-up. “Bongao is similar to Siasi in housing arrangement, and has also surrounding homogenous districts. The Samal in Bongao are seemingly more affluent than in the north and live in houses similar in construction to the Tausug, with manufactured siding although many times, the flooring will be bamboo strings and roofing will be front material.”

Orosa in 1923 identifies the Samal Lipid who lived near the seashore in the islands of the Samales Group, Parang, Siasi, Laminusa, Sibaud, Musu, Manubul, Sipababag, Pakia, South Ubian as made “of strong materials and fairly well built with a kind of bridge often extending from the house to a landing place built in the water.”

Geoghegan (in Lebar 1975) describes Samal of eastern Sulu and Basilan as living in small, compact communities of 100 to 500 people, often constituting a ward within a larger non-Samal village or town. Small households are generally affiliated with a nearby mosque and its leader. Houses consists of one or more small rectangular rooms and an attached kitchen, all on the same level and raised above the ground on wooden pilings. “Ideally,” writes Geoghegan, “a house is located partially over water in such a manner as to allow the ground beneath it to be flooded only at high tide.”

The Samal of western Sulu, however, customarily build their houses completely over tidal mud flats or reefs. The Samal cluster their houses together and connect them by labyrinthine catwalks of timber and split bamboo (Gowing 1979).

In Jundam’s field report, the Samal area to be found scattered all over the southern islands of Mindanao, southern Palawan, Basilan, Davao, Zamboanga, and the Sulu archipelago. In north Borneo, the Samal are reported to inhabit certain parts of Kuta-Kinabalu, Sampurna, Kalimantan, Samarinda, and Celebes. It is believed that 60 percent of the population of Sampurna are Samal.

Within Tawi-Tawi province alone, Samal communities include Simunul, Balimbing, Tawi-Tawi, Sibutu, and Ublan. Aside from the Tausug, Badjao and Pulion-Mapun, non-islamized people living within Tawi-Tawi communities include Ilocano, Hiligaynon, Cebuanao and Chabacano.

Apart from fishing and farming, logging and hunting, the Samal are engaged in seaweed farming, kumpit building, buras painting and pottery, drying and preserving food and marine products, mat weaving and pearl diving. A good number are in transportation, communications, restaurants and refreshment parlors, carpentry and other crafts. They also work in government and private institutions.
Coastal and Inland Dwellings – Subanun

Charles Frake in his study of the Subanun of Mindanao (1980) gives a sociological explanation of their traditional dwelling. The Subanun house – a rectangular, thatched pole dwelling – “has among its physical aspects, three characteristics of social importance. First, it is small, as floor space averages about 12 square meters and rarely exceeds 20. this small size reflects single family occupancy but it has the consequence of limiting the number of persons that can assemble together.

“With the exception of all few religious ceremonies, all Subanun social functions take place indoors in a dwelling house; there are no outdoor areas or other buildings for such purposes. Although an all-night drinking party, a legal case, a wedding or a religious ceremony may pack people until there is literally standing room only, attendance at social gatherings can exceed 40 or 50 persons only with difficulty.”

Frake describes the interior of a Subanun house as consisting of only one room and one heart. The sleeping area, the living area, the dining area and the cooking area “find architectural expression only in slightly different floor levels”. There is little privacy in working, cooking, eating or conservation. Privacy comes only with darkness. The Subanun house, Frake concludes, “has no value as permanent real estate”.

The Subanun are non-religious shifting agriculturists in the large mountainous interior of Zamboanga peninsula

Mandaya - Coastal and Inland Dwellings

The Mandaya of Davao build their dwellings high in the branches of trees and often on the edges of cliffs which can be reached only from one direction. The tree houses are of two kinds – the first is a crude one simply resting on the limbs of trees and conforming size and shape to the nature of the supporting branches. This type sometimes has horizontal sides and sloping roofs. The roof usually slopes directly from one ridgepole to the edge of the platform, thus doing away with the need for side walls. The more typical Mandaya house is built on top of a tree that has been cut 15 or 20 feet above the ground with the stumps serving as foundation. Many more smaller poles are placed not only to support the flooring but also to extend upward to form the wall and the roof. An upper flooring made of beaten bark rests on crossbeams lashed by rattan to the uprights. Above the flooring are horizontal poles forming the framework for attaching walls of nipa palms.

In some houses two or tree foundation poles extend above the floor to support the ridge pole. In other houses the Mandaya would have kingposts resting on the beams which in turn are supported by corner poles. From the ridge, a number of smaller rods extend over the side walls and on them rests the roofing of nipa palm. Several inches of space often intervene between the roof and the side walls.
The whole tree house is so firmly lashed together by rattan that it can withstand the severest of storms, although it moves and creaks with every gust of wind: In such a case the house is secured further by anchoring it with rattan lines nearby trees.

Yakan - Coastal and Inland Dwellings

What makes the Yakan, the Tausug and the Maranao different from the Tagalog and the Cebuano is simply Islam and the system of sultans and datus.

For outside of their mosques which tower above the rural landscape, there is nothing significantly Islamic about the settlement patterns and housing of Muslims in southern Philippines. For instance, the torogan, the royal house of sultans and datus, no longer functions as one in Maranao country – an indication that what was once a symbol of Muslim ruling power is only an old glory of the past decades.

By tradition, the Yakan live in houses scattered among their fields, just like the interior-dwelling Tausug of Sulu, and just like many Tagalog and Visayan do. But, in the rebel war in Basilan in the 1970s, government forces made the Yakan come together in “protected” villages much against their habit and preference.

The Yakan house, also elevated on piles with the stilts two or three meters in height, is one or more rooms connected to a kitchen by an open or covered porch made of split bamboo poles. The roof is conical and steep, usually made of thatch for protection against heavy rain. For walls, the Yakan use either sawali or other ill omen while odd numbers, to the, mean life. The Rites of Pilgrimage says that “God has 99, or a 100 minus one, excellent names and he who learns them by heart will be given access to Paradise because God is One and He likes odd numbers.”

And the door of the house must face the east to embrace the morning sun and take in its promise of live and all of God’s new blessings.

When visiting a Yakan house you go up on a bamboo ladder or notched pole onto the porch and into the living room where, if you will not come upon some woman weaving cloth with one end of the loom fastened to the wall and the other end-cord wound around her waist, you will see a long wooden or bamboo box for storing palay and used as a bench for visitors to sit on, chests for keeping clothes, brass metal containers, brass food trays, bronze boxes for betel and, of course, the mats. The Yakan cultivate kapok which they stuff into pillows and mattresses that they roll out at night or also offer to visitors to sit on at parties and gatherings.
Tausug - Coastal and Inland Dwellings

The Tausug, as found in a barrio in Parang, Jolo, before the secessionist conflagration, had a settlement pattern that is dispersed. There were 28 houses and 17 were scattered throughout the barrio. Eleven houses, however, were clustered in groups of two or three houses built a few yards from one another. The Tausug called their traditional house bay sinug, bay for house and sinug from Sug, meaning Jolo or Sulu.

In contrast to these dispersed interior homesteads, concentrated fishing settlements were found along the coasts, and here each community of Tausug shore-dwellers would have from 20 to 100 or more houses; and clusters of several houses were typical.

The Samal, the other ethnic group in Sulu, segregate themselves from the Tausug in small, compact communities of 100 to 500 people. Being a coastal and seafaring people. They build their houses in clusters over tidal mud flats or reefs or, more specifically, on ground that is flooded only at high tide. Consisting of one or more small rectangular rooms and an attached kitchen all on the same level, Smal houses are raised on wooden pilings and connected to one another by labyrinthine cat-walks of timber and split bamboo. Building a house among the Tausug involves consultations with families, some seers or mangingita, the barrio headman or the local imam who chooses the luckiest site for the prospective builder. First choice is a very flat, dry, level piece of land while the land that slopes gently towards the west – Mecca lies to the west – is the next choice.

The Tausug also have no desire for land that slopes slightly to the north or one that slants to the south. They believe that in death the spirit of the deceased passes out of the house and travels northward – thus, any association with death makes a site undesirable. A house built facing south becomes vulnerable to all the strong winds and rains coming from that direction.

If the builder wishes his houses to be strong and to last, he has to build them not only on a choice site but also on a line of strength of the land – a small rise in the soil, a peculiar growth of grass, the presence of rocks. To the Tausug, land is not a pure and passive matter, but is dynamic, it has strength. The lines of strength are analogous to the body’s muscles. The imam’s tasks is to determine the direction or the flow of such strength lest the “muscles of the land” work against the substructure and weaken the house.

To insure good fortune for the house and for every member of the family, the Tausug deposit at the bottom of the first post hole some items of value: a small piece of gold, a patch of expensive cloth, or a handful of palay.

After the flooring is finished, the Tausug perform what is known as the ceremonial gantung. Gantung is actually a small earthenware pot tied to the center post under the flooring with a vine or cord. The other end of the cord is secured to something substantial and possessing natural strength, such as a nearby tree or a large stone.

The Tausug see the cord connecting the gantung to a rock or tree as the umbilical cord giving strength and sustenance to the center post or navel of the house. In a way, house-building among the Tausug can almost be construed as corresponding to the birth of a human being.
Every child is born with a spirit-twin. This is considered a source of bad luck among the Tausug. In order to keep the spirit-twin from troubling the child, the Tausug build a small bay-bay house and hang this from the rafter. Here the spirit lives and is fed a small amount of rice and egg every Friday at sundown. The Tausug burn a few grains of incense in a small dish and place this inside the little house.

Once their dwelling is completed, the Tausug perform a second gantung ceremony. This time they fill up one bottle with unhusked rice and another with fresh water and, after sealing them both, hang them from the top of the center king post just under the roofing. The unhusked rice will bring prosperity for the family and the water will insure that the house be cool and confer luck and good fortune on its occupants.

For posts, the Tausug use either heavy timber bought in the town of Jolo or roughly-hewn wood cut from small trees and plain bamboo. Once these posts are erected, the Tausug then put into place large wooden beams or hanglad to secure and stabilize the houseposts and provide support for the flooring. This floor area makes up the bilik or sleeping space, which is the only room in the house proper supported by the nine basic posts.

**TAUSUG BODY AS POSTS**

Building a Tausug house is like creating a human being: the nine main posts are named after parts of the human body. Indeed the erection of the posts follows a sequence that corresponds to the supposed genesis of the human body:

- **First post:** the center post or navel
- **Second post:** the southeast corner post or hip
- **Third post:** the northwest corner post or shoulder
- **Fourth post:** the southwest corner or second hip
- **Fifth post:** the northwest corner or second shoulder
- **Sixth and seventh posts:** the middle posts on the west and east sides of the center post or the ribs.
- **Eight post:** the north and post or neck
- **Ninth post:** the last, directly south of the center or the groin.

The two other areas to be laid out on separate posts are the porch or salas and the kitchen or kusina. The flooring, supported by thin wooden beams, is made of strong bamboo strips fitted closely together.

In the past, when nails were not available, the durable hijuk vine from the sugar palm tree tied the structural parts together. Nowadays, however, most of the beams and girders come together through notches cut either on the side of the wooden post or on top of the bamboo post.

However, when a bamboo beam is attached to a wooden post, a wooden support is nailed or bolted on to the post. And if a wooden beam is joined to a bamboo beam, the Tausug builder cuts a hole through the bamboo tube and inserts the wooden beam into place.

All the eight peripheral houseposts go beyond the flooring to hold up the roof, with the beams connecting their tops on all sides. The neck, groin and navel posts extend upward to support the ridge beam which, together with the rafters that slope down from it to the beams, gives the final shape to the roof.
The Tausug use *sani*, *nipa* or *piaud* in palm-leaf roofing. If the oof shingles are thickly made and the palm properly prepared, the *sani* or sago palm roof is said to last much longer than the *nipa* roof which has a life expectancy of at most two years. Alternating layers of woven coconut palms and leaves from the *marang* fruit tree make up the *piaud* roof and is good for only a year.

The sago palm leaves are tied to the bamboo purlins which are secured and spaced three centimeters apart on the rafters.

Aside from this conventional style of roofing, the Tausug also build the sungan roof and the *libut* roof. Although the *sungan* roof slopes on four sides, only two sides meet to form the apex of the roof. The north and south ends of the roof thus provide a small opening for air to circulate more freely within the house. During inclement weather, however, the Tausug cover this hole with strips of bamboo or cloth to protect the interior from the strong rain and onrushing wind.

The *libut* roof slopes on all four sides and has a square shape. Over a square hole in the middle rises a small second roof about 31 centimeters above the hole. Such an opening like that or the *sungan* roof, allows a freer circulation of air in the house.

The sungan roof is about as popular as the conventional roof style. Noteworthy is the elaborately carved wood design – the *tadjuk pasung* – placed at the rooftop on either or both ends of the house. The *tadjuk pasung* may be a stylized *manuk-manuk* bird with swirling leaf-like *okir* designs or a *naga* dragon design.

The *libut* roof can hardly be seen. At the center under the roof is a carved wooden marker which the owner designates as the *pusal* or cowlick. The cowlick is closely related to the Tausug concept of royalty and royal blood lines.

The Tausug not only do not put partitions in their main *bilik* or room; they also do not build a ceiling, leaving the rafters and roof exposed just like that. What they hang instead, high over their bedding area, is the large, rectangular *luhul-luhul* cloth like a net closing up that section of the roof to catch a falling shreds of palm, small insects, and dirt and dust.

For walls, the Tausug use, depending on what they can afford, plywood, split bamboo, or woven coconut palms, the bamboo is cut into lengths of six or eight feet long and the insides of two pieces are place vertically facing one another in a kind of double-ply walling that – besides being smooth both outside and inside the house – gives stronger protection against wind and rain.

Split bamboo walls have small and simple rectangular windows but the Tausug do not put any window on walls made of coconut palm or woven split bamboo. Those who use plywood construct windows with wooden gratings. In the past, however, the Tausug had only narrow slits on their walls that served more as peepholes than openings for room ventilation. Two reasons were given for this: one is that the occupants – particularly the unmarried women – should not be exposed or seen from the outside, and the other is that since there was little activity in the *bilik* during the day, there was no need to make it light and airy.

But even if walls of plywood, bamboo or palm leaf completely enclose their *bilik*, the Tausug manage to have some air circulate through the house by placing between the wall and the roof, perforated wooded jalajala panels with decorative carvings. Such panels may also support banisters and railings. Under eaves and railings are small slats of wood that form geometric designs.

Any extended roofless platform outside the *bilik* becomes the porch or salas which the Tausug build either in front or at the sides or all around. If extended a full two or 3.8 meters in front, the porch serves as a welcoming area for visitors. Side porches become passageways to the kitchen, or they may be walled and
converted into sleeping quarters. In some houses the roof extends downward to shade the porch area where a ladder is also placed. Sometimes the porch has railings of bamboo and wood.

On the front porch is a long high bench comfortable enough for resting on especially during warm weather. Here older people gather to smoke or chew their tobacco and buyo.

If the roofless platform extends next to the kitchen at the back, it is called pantan, and the members of the family sit around here in the late afternoon while waiting for supper. At the pantan they may also leave fruits, vegetables, fishing nets, paddles and all other work implements that they use.

The kitchen is a small and filmy one-room house built 31.5 centimeters or so lower than the house proper. When no porch leads to the kitchen, bamboo poles or wooden boards from a door opening serve as a link to it. The kitchen stove – a table-like structure of bamboo and wood – occupies an area of approximately 62 centimeters by 157.5 centimeters and has side-walls to prevent cinders from falling to the bamboo floor. Pots and pans are supported over the fire by three large stones or a small three-legged iron stand.

One final note is the opening on the floor that the Tausug put either in a corner or near the wall of their house. Here they urinate or spit, and if there house is built over water, here the mother teaches her baby early toilet habits. Even in houses with provision for a comfort room, this lungag or hole is still present because the Tausug use this opening in bathing the body of a love one at the time of death.

**Maranao - Coastal and Inland Dwellings**

The Maranao arrange their houses in a line pattern along a liver, road or lake shore. Each hamlet is made up of three to 30 multi-family dwellings raised on pilings 31.5 to 220.5 centimeters above the ground. In the hilly, dry-rice areas hamlets are smaller and their houses cluster in an irregular pattern near a water source.

The Maranao house is raised on pilings from .31 to 2.21 meters above the ground. The roof, walls, flooring, doors and windows are made of bamboo material lashed together with rattan. Depending on its size, the house usually has nine to 12 posts and the main room, without partitions, measure about 7.86 to 18.9 meters.

For the roof, which is steep and shaped like the carabao’s horns, the Maranao usually use thick cogon grass and lash this to a split bamboo frame with rattan. But if they have enough bamboo, they use them for roofing instead, placing one set of halved bamboo face up and covering all the spaces in between with the other halves in sequential patterns. Some use wood shingles as roof, but this is not a traditional practice. Most of the houses have no ceiling.

Windows are located at the front – to watch neighbors pass by – and on the right side – to check on the carabao inside its corral below the house, especially at night. To open the windows, one has to push their covers to the side.

The porch, fenced to prevent children from falling off it, is in front of the house while the kitchen, built a half meter lower, is at the back. The area under the house is walled with split bamboo usually woven in crisscross patterns. Here the women weave mats during the daytime when it is hot. The porch ladder has bamboo ladder leads to the kitchen door at the left side.
Like many ordinary houses in the south, the old Maranao house is simply one big partitionless room and you create bed spaces by using several carved chests, the woven split rattan sapiyay or the mosquito screen as dividers or headboards. Bundles of rice stalks are placed under woven mats to serve as beds. A long pillow stuffed with dried la’ing or banana leaves is placed at the head and a long mat at the foot of the bed.

To catch falling dust from the roof, a tartilib or canopy is hung above the bed which can also be covered with curtains decorated with appliqué. Some use kapok but others use the cottony flowers of masaw seeds for their pillows and mattresses. The bed is sometimes fenced for the protection of little children.

If there is baby, his cradle is hung from a roof beam on a piece of rope attached to a steel spring. In times past, the Maranao devised a bamboo frame that functioned like a coiled spring to which the four corners of the malong were tied with pieces of strong rope hanging from the frame. The cradle is not swung back and forth, instead the baby is rocked to sleep with an up-and-down motion, while the parents rest in bed.

There are shelves along the wall. The Maranao use small, low, round brass trays as tables. Brass stands and brass tray cuspidors are well arranged in the room. In the kitchen are stone stoves, pots and pans, water containers, the plaited bamboo tapaan on which fish or meat is smoked. Under the house are farming and fishing equipment, the plow and harrow, the mortar and pestle, and a big vessel for storing rice.

The torogan, the ancestral house of the upper-class Maranao, as Ba’l a labi Tawano reminisces, is now only a precious reminder of bygone days when carving was an art exclusive to sultans and young daughters were jewels to be hidden in towers and secret rooms.

In 1980 the torogan of Datu Pimbarat at Amito, Marantao, Marawi City was still standing badly in need of repair, and looking not even a skeleton of its former glory. Built between 1886 and 1887 by the people of the community and the slaves of the datu, the house still showed its beautifully decorated panolongs and the multi-colored okir carvings on the frontal walls and sildings. Datu Ramber of Bacayawan, Lanao del Sur made all the carvings.

The roof the torogan was first made of cogon grass, but during the American regime the son of Datu Pimbarat changed it to G.I. sheets. Although every torogan is simply one wide open place without rooms, the younger datu built a gibbon or bedroom for one remaining daughter when his three others married and later moved out of the torogan.

The gibbon, roughly five by 10 meters, had one entrance at the front and an exit at the back near the kitchen. Though it was not a permanent place for the daughter and her ladies – it served as a hiding place when there were many people in the house – the whole room was decorated with chests and brass urns, and a canopy, embroidered sequins in okir design, hung above the mattress, bed and pillows with Maranao libot or appliqué.

Datu Pimbarat’s grandfather had another wife who did not live with him in the torogan but in Bobo, Piagapo, Lanao del Sur, where he had met her while supervising his slaves at work.

He developed Bobo into a community and formed a ndatoan there and people paid tribute to him. The
grandfather had 47 slaves – who lived with him in the torogan – to work in the field, fish in the lake or do oddjobs in and around the torogan.

In housebuilding, bunga is used for posts, barimbingan for flooring, and gisuk for walls, to gather the woods all cooperate and assemble in the site at the sounding of the gongs. Work usually starts on a Saturday, after the early morning prayer, and the woods are cut and floated on the lake.

The center post or tapuwilih is put up first and then the four big tukud or corner posts. Coins of any amount are planted with the center post for good luck and insurance towards a better financial condition. All the posts stand on stones so that when there is an earthquake they rock with the stones and do not break. Around the posts tapuwilih paliyas, dunngaw or sapor are planted as a symbol of survival.

To the Maranao, the torogan is a symbol of rank, status and power. It is built for the sultan or the datu whose sovereignty in the sultanate covers the pegawidan or royalty, the pegawid or the governed, and the oripen bisaya or his slaves. His rule over the ndatoan being such, he builds the torogan not only as a communal house for himself and his closest relatives but as a multi-purpose building for the community. This is where he holds his conferences with his followers, sakop, settles family disputes, gathers the clan on the death of a loved kin and celebrates weddings and special festivities such as the coronation of a datu or a bai a labi, a lady sultan.

Aside from their mosques, the Maranao have the traditional lawig small house and the mala-a-walai large house but the torogan clearly stands out among them because the end floor beams in front and at the sides of the torogan protrude and flare upward into sculptured wings of wood with elaborate designs on them. These end-beams are called panolong or boat-prows and the wings carry fern-like, snake motifs ornately incised into the wood. According to one informant, the Maranao believe that the naga or sacred snakes should greet the rising sun.

The floor beams are supported by as many as 25 thick posts, some of which are actual trunks of big trees or large and rounded balusters that are not buried into the ground but remain free standing on large stones.

The Maranao house has a high and steep roof similar to that of the Malacca house or the Batak and Minangkabau houses in Sumatra. The carabao horn decoration on the roof the rumah adat house in Batak is identical to the Maranao diongal decoration found atop of the truss of the torogan.

The wooden uprights behind each panolong, the floor panels and wall sidings of the windows are also decorated with okir carvings painted in different colors. Windows are narrow horizontal slits stretching some two meters long and 15.4 centimeters wide between the panolong. Three round geometric designs are painted on the upper wall panels.

Inside the torogan the center beam known as the tinai a walai or “intestine of the house” holds up the king posts of the roof and stretches from one end of the house to the other. This beam is heavily carved and completely polychromed. What serves as the ceiling of the torogan is a cloth that hangs from the rafters and absorbs the heat from the roof.

As a multi-family dwelling, the torogan has no permanent partitions. The several families occupying it simply divide the entire floor into sleeping areas, each area provided with mats, quilts, pads, pillows, and cloth partitions. This sleeping area becomes by day an all-purpose living area, where the families eat or the women weave cloth for garments or the men create designs on wax molds for their brasswork. In some houses, intricately carved wooden chests are used as dividers placed side by side with the thick native-style mattress spread widely and covered with either a dampas mat or a woven cloth. This is also seen in the torogan. The sultan’s panggao or ceremonial elevated bed – 3.15 meters long by 2.67 meters die and 57 centimeters from the floor – is at the place of honor and away from the entrance of the house, with the other families protectively surrounding him. Over the bed a richly woven canopy hangs from the ceiling in a carved
frame. The bed’s wooden frame and legs are finely carved in okir designs. The slaves sleep either near the kitchen or under the torogan.

Aside from the gibon built near the sleeping area of the sultan, one sometimes finds a lamin or tower constructed atop the torogan-to hide the sultan’s daughter during conferences, celebrations and gatherings. This is one way of protecting her modesty, virtue and virginity and chastity – by not exposing her in public. In fact, there are cases when the sultan’s daughter is locked up in the lamin from the time of puberty until she gets married. But the presence of a lamin is also one way to announce the presence of a royal lady in the community. The mythical bird, sarimanok, perches on top of the roof.

The walls of the torogan are decorated with the lalansay or a screen embroidered with sequins and beads. Sometimes the elevated brass tray is also hung along the walls together with other brass vessels arranged beneath it. Since there is no living room set or other furniture, guests are received and fed where the beds are.

LIFE IN A LAMIN

Before the advent of western and/ or modern influences, a Maranao girl belonging to a noble family was very closely watched by her parents and other close relatives so as not to expose her to the public. This practice comes from the traditional high regard for the virtues of modesty and virginity, and also to preserve the integrity, nobility and royalty of the family concerned. This practice is also the Maranao’s way of showing their love, affection, and respect for the sultan’s daughter, though nowadays the practice is no longer extant due to foreign influences.

The Lamin (lady’s dormitory tower) is constructed atop the torogan to hide the princess and her ladies. Its entrance is always located near the sultan’s bed. The presence of a lamin is one way of announcing the presence of a royal lady in the community. Being a symbol of the royal status of the Sultan or the datu’s daughter and her family, the lamin is designs carved on wall sidings and sometimes pananaroons (love verses) are also carved on wood and placed in such a way as to be seen by visitors. Aside from these wood carvings, cloth decorations called mamandiyang (intricately embroidered with sequins in okir designs) are hung on the walls, to add to the beautification of the lamin.

Inside the lamin is a well-decorated bed. The bed consists of a lapa (big mattress) and pillows all decorated with libot (Maranao appliqué). Two or more chests are placed to serve as headboards of the bed. They are provided with stands so as to be higher than the mattress and the pillows. Between the chests and the pillows hangs the cloth called somandig, which is also beautifully embroidered with sequins and sometimes made of libot (Maranao appliqué). A kolambro (canopy) embroidered with beads and sequins hangs above the bed.

A lamin is not permanent place for a liyamin (the lady) and her manga ragas (ladies in waiting). It is in most cases a place where the liyamin hides herself during times when the sultan or datu calls for conferences, meetings, and other important gatherings like weddings and death celebrations in the torogan. Aside from a lamin there is also constructed within the torogan a room called gibon. The gibon is a more or less permanent place for the liyamin and the mga ragas. It is usually built near the sleeping area of the sultan and his lady. Like the lamin, a gibon is also decorated with Maranao okir and other richly embroidered cloth. The only difference between the two is that a lamin is a structure built to stand out from the torogan while a gibon is a

Room within a torogan. In most cases a lamin is decorated with a sarimanok on top of the roof.
Like customary law which, in a Malay village, keeps the people’s customs and traditions, the Maranao torogan gathers all the elements that make up the okir or what is popularly known as Muslim Filipino art.

David Baradas, anthropologist, claims that the torogan is the only structure permitted to make use of the okir motif. However, since no sanction prohibits the use of this motif on other objects in the culture, the Maranao artisans have taken the opportunity of carving all the available permutations of the okir into their musical instruments and everyday objects.

Baradas has traced evidences of an indigenous development of the okir in some houses in Molundo, Pagalongan, and Bubong – all in the basak area of the lake region of Lanao. These houses have nothing but geometric motifs and patterns all over and differ markedly from the torogan both in lines and in construction. And so he contends that these structures with these particular motifs are the forerunners of the torogan.

Strangely enough the quasi-geometric variety of okir that Baradas presents as pre-torogan or non-Maranao-ish is strongly reminiscent of the highly individualistic okir designs of the Badjao, the boat people considered as a Muslim minority group though not yet thoroughly islamized.