

## **FOREWORD**

At the southern-most tip of the Republic of the Philippines is located one of the unique cultural communities, the SAMA of Tawi-Tawi. Having been relatively isolated from their Westernized neighbors, as well as from Middle Eastern oriented Muslim groups, the Sama have retained most of their indigenous customs and belief systems. In spite of trade contacts and intermarriage with other cultural community groups, as well as the intrusion of a western type of education, the Sama still cling, in many respects, to tradition. Their inscrutability coupled with their high sense of pride, cooperation, and friendliness are but responses to their archipelagic environment.

As a unique Islamized cultural community, divided by land but united by the sea, the social norms and values of the Sama, as a people, are a vital information for scholars to collect and analyze, to be shared with other Filipinos. This report coming out of the writer's latest encounter with the Tawi-Tawi natives includes countless fresh data, which have not appeared in previous publications or studies on the Sama. Some information may be unknown not only to the non-Sama but also to the acculturated or modernized Sama.

This preliminary field report on the Sama is part of the Asian Center Museum Field Report Series. It intends to fill the information gap occurring between the Sama and the non-Sama Filipinos. It is our hope that the present study has fulfilled this objective, and would serve to encourage other social scientists and students to contribute and expand the study of Sama culture.

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*Head*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The rigors of field research are many, but despite the many difficulties encountered, e.g., security, language barrier, lack of drinking water and transportation problems, the fieldworkers sailed swiftly to the waters of Tawi-Tawi.

As a whole, this research has two major aims in gathering fresh data about the Sama: to present some of the basic highlights of Sama culture and society, and to analyze some of the focal points of similarities between the Sama and other cultural communities, both the Islamized and non-Islamized natives of the Philippines, to enhance cultural understanding.

Some errors in reporting may be unavoidable in this preliminary field report series. We hope that other knowledgeable scholars and readers will send in their comments, corrections, and suggestions so that the future edition of this study would be more refined. We are presenting this preliminary report so that the field data can be made available to scholars prior to the publication of a more comprehensive one.