

FOREWORD

This Field Report is the result of firsthand research among the Yakan of Basilan island in Southern Philippines. It is part of the continuing field studies of the Asian Center Museum Laboratory, Asian Center, University of the Philippines on *Philippine Ethnic Cultures*. The field work was carried out in several occasions from 1970 to 1980. Its publication in preliminary form is intended to fill the gap between field research and the publication of the final monograph which will take some time.

Studies on Yakan culture are not many. Most of those available were done by foreign scholars. The present report is based on actual fieldwork carried out by Mashur Bin-Ghalib Jundam, himself a Muslim, and a native of Sulu. Jundam speaks the Yakan language and is familiar with Yakan community life since 1950. A good command of the language and intimate relations with a people's lifeways are two fundamental requirements of fieldwork. It is through these two channels of communication that better rapport is established and deeper understanding of the people's culture is acquired beyond the customary friendly relations.

The Yakan are part of a national cultural community. The uniqueness of their local lifeways can best be appreciated in the context of the larger society. There is unity of cultural orientation beneath the veneer of diversity which seems to characterize the different ethnic groups in the country. This Report has empirically documented this observation.

That is why there is an urgent need for more data to highlight this fact. Irrespective of religious orientation, we Filipinos are one people. The structure of our kinship system is similar. The emphasis on familial interests over that of personal interests is pervasive. Our value orientation is the same in spite of different environmental requirements for adaptation and survival.

It is hoped that this Field Report, however preliminary and inadequate for the meantime, can contribute to the current efforts of forging common understanding among us, Filipinos.

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Head

INTRODUCTION

The Yakans are an ethnic group in Southwestern Philippines. During the 1950's when the writer used to frequent the Yakan *Kauman* (communities) he was fascinated with the manner by which Yakan men grew their hair long. This was part of a courtship practice. He was informed later that when a Yakan wished to get married, he would visit the girl's house and remove his *pis* (shawl) as he approached the girl. If the Yakan girl consented to remove his lice, that action indicated that she was willing to marry him.

During the writer's 1970 fieldwork at Buhi-Libbung, Tumahubong, Lamitan, and Panandakan in 1980, he noted that the Yakans had changed. Very few men wore their hair long. Their acceptance of some aspects of modernity is manifested in the vivid interest of the young Yakan generation in acquiring a western-type of education. This is perhaps, due to constant contact with Chabacano and Visayan-speaking neighbors. Through a genuine and sincere developmental effort the Yakans, with their collective interest for change, may be mobilized to become active participants in nation building.

However, inspite of their accommodation to modernity, the Yakans still cling to their unique cultural traditions.