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**LIVING IN THE CITY AS SAMA-BAJAU:  
THE CASE OF KALUMAN'S FAMILY**

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## Living in the City as Sama-Bajau: the Case of Kaluman's Family

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### Acknowledgment

This manuscript is a direct self-translation of Chapter Six, originally entitled “Biraiya’s family: prayers of a mother and daughters peddling secondhand clothes,” from my Japanese book, *An Ethnography of Poverty: Socioeconomic Life of Five Sama Families in Davao City, Philippines*, published by the University of Tokyo Press in 2006. I am very grateful to the University of Tokyo Press for permitting this translation to be included in Harvard-Yenching Institute working paper series.

### Abstract

This manuscript is a direct self-translation of Chapter Eight, originally entitled “A Kapirin family: the life of a fisherman’s household and protection of ‘Tuhan’,” from my Japanese book, *An Ethnography of Poverty: Socioeconomic Life of Five Sama Families in Davao City, Philippines*, published by the University of Tokyo Press in 2006. A few parts have been modified, however, to fit in the given space with careful effort to retain the original contents. The basic unit of analysis is the household. Considering the term that the informants used in daily life, however, the term “family” (*pamilya*) was chosen for the titles of the chapters, with five cases included in the original Japanese version. In this particular case, the Biraiya household contained three families, including Biraiya’s own family consisting of her husband and unmarried daughters, and two other families consisting of her married daughters and their families.

There are two communities of the Sama-Bajau in Isla Bella (pseudonym), Davao City, which I refer to frequently in my narrative: *Hong Kong* and *Japan Pikas*. In order to avoid any confusion with Hong Kong, the city-state in the People’s Republic of China, I write its name in italics. Kaluman’s family lived in *Hong Kong* during my research from 1998 to 2000.

A survey on subjective evaluations on social inequality among Sama-Bajau residents in Isla Bella that the author conducted in 1999 revealed that there were five livelihood groups, which could be ranked according to socio-economic and other criteria that the Sama-Bajau raters claimed. The composite score of the community status of the Kapirin group was 0.6.999, which placed them 94<sup>th</sup> from the top of the 184 households in our survey. This middle ranking, however, does not mean that their standard of living was

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considered decent by their Sama Bajau neighbors. Rather, they were viewed to be “poor” as “ordinary Bajau” should be. This kinship group, or “*kampung*” in their own vocabulary, consisted of twenty-seven households. Those households consisted mostly of relatives who lived physically close to one another in the same corner of the neighborhood.

Based on such results, we call the livelihood group that Kaluman’s family belongs to “*Bubu*” (fish trap) and “*palangre*” (long-line) fishing group. Males of an income-producing age engaged in fishing, although this was not profitable enough for them to support their households. This lack of income resulted in females having to work in the “*ukay-ukay*” (secondhand clothes) business. Some females and children occasionally did begging as well. These kinship groups were generally careful and selective in regard to contact with outsiders. They had less information about the availability of government assistance and other aid agencies than the kinship groups in higher community statuses had. Although they expressed willingness to keep their way of life, in which fishing activities and their indigenous beliefs played important roles, it was rather uncertain how long they could maintain them, considering their low incomes and assets. It remained unclear exactly where they had come from, yet most of the members of these kinship groups claimed to be land-based Sama, or in other words, not the “Bajau” (*Sama Dilaut*). The language most often used in this group was the Sinama language, regardless of age and gender.

### **1. Born and grew up as a son of a fisherman**

The household head was named Kaluman. His estimated age was thirty-two. He was a fisherman. Unfortunately, my research assistant and I never had a chance to accompany him when he made fishing trips and stayed at sea for many nights. We had never seen him fishing. However, he was always a fisherman even when he was on land, staying in *Hong Kong*<sup>1</sup>. We often saw him sitting with his fellow fishermen on the open roofed platform of the house. They were making and mending their fishing gear together. Just like his fishing mates, Kaluman had a toned and tanned body. For practical reasons, he only wore navy underpants when he was in *Hong Kong*.

Kaluman was not a talkative person. Yet, he was friendly. When I aimed my camera at him, he always turned to me and flashed a smile with his white teeth showing. I remember his wide forehead with hairlines on both corners slightly receding, his well-shaped large ears extending

sideways, his shining eyes framed with deep double edged lines, and his lips somewhat sticking out. His looks were clearly inherited by his three sons and one daughter. Sometimes, I found it even uncanny to see Kaluman taking care of his children because of the strong resemblance they bore to each other.

Kaluman's parents were from Siasi Island. According to Kaluman, Siasi Island back then was "surrounded with shallow waters. The place was rich in seaweeds, too. Their fishing grounds were so close that they could see the houses and people walking on land while they were fishing at sea." His parents, however, were forced to leave the island when the security started deteriorating. In his own words, Kaluman explained, "(his parents left there) because the Tausug<sup>2</sup> began to attack them." They headed for Sangali in Zamboanga City in the Province of Zamboanga del Sur.

In Sangali, Kaluman's father resumed fishing, using "*palangre*" (long-line) and "*pasol*" (hook and line). Although his mother often went gathering shellfish and sea urchins on the shore, she never accompanied her husband's fishing expeditions. His mother would stay home, weaving mats, taking care of her children and doing household chores. Occasionally, his parents became peddlers to sell fruits such as "*lansones*<sup>3</sup>." So long as Kalumang could recall, none of his parents and relatives had ever lived in boats in the past.

Kaluman's parents both identified themselves as Sama Laminusa. Asked, Kaluman also identified himself as Sama Laminusa. However, he would rather consider his place of origin Sangali simply because he was born and grew up there.

From the early days of his childhood, Kaluman always used to fish. Accompanying his father for fishing operations was an essential part of own and his younger brothers' lives. Kaluman learned how to fish under his father's guidance. He quickly acquired swimming and diving skills. But those skills were only the beginning. To become a good fisherman, one must learn how to make and repair fishing gear, how to drive a fishing boat, how to read the moon, wind and tide, how to install and collect fishing traps and lines, and how to collaborate with one's fellow fishermen. Of course, one needs to have knowledge of various types of fish and their characteristics as well. It is also indispensable to know how to distribute the catch with one's fishing mates, and how to sell one's own share in the market if one wishes. Fishing involves many skills and knowledge.

When he was young, Kaluman ventured a lot. Sometimes, he operated blast fishing with his

fellow fishermen<sup>4</sup>. At other times, they took “*bangka*” (a small boat) without an engine<sup>5</sup> to cross the seas, “going solely with the current and wind, with no particular destinations in our mind.” There were also times when they took a passenger ferry to visit Cebu, Mindoro, Cagayan de Oro City and other port cities. Although he had never been to Metro Manila, Kaluman had visited many places. Wherever he went, though, he was always a fisherman.

Kaluman met Manya, his future wife, in the early 1980s. They came to like each other. With their parents’ consent, they got married. Manya claimed to be Sama from Sangali, not Sama Laminusa like Kaluman<sup>6</sup>. So long as she could recall, none of her family and relatives ever lived in boats in the past. In other words, she considered herself a land-based Sama.

Kaluman told us about his old days before his marriage:

(Kaluman, recorded on October 25 and December 1, 1999. Originally in Cebuano and translated into English by the author)

*Manya was a beautiful woman. She did not go out and walk around often; she would rather stay at home, weaving mats. When I passed by her house, she looked at me, and I looked back at her. Then, she smiled at me. When such a thing happened, I promised myself. “When I come back here next time, you will not be there any more (because I will marry you and take you away from home to somewhere else),” you know. When the tide was just as low as it is now [urging us to look at the low tide in the research site], those women [Manya and other women] would come out to collect shellfish on the shore. Then, I would follow them.....She [Manya] would share with me the shellfish she had gathered. Actually, I would also collect shellfish by myself, and share them with her as well. We would eat together. In those days, we often had “baon” [food taken for outing] together. You know, like pan-roasted cassava [grinning].*

When he married Manya, Kaluman became an independent fisherman with his own fishing boat and fishing gear. He bought them with the money given to him as part of the wedding gifts by his relatives.

Around the years 1983 and 1984, however, Kaluman and his family were forced to leave Sangali when the Sama-Bajau fishermen came to be attacked by Tausug pirates at sea. Once, one of Kaluman’s uncles was found dead with his fishing boat. Given the situation, his death was attributed to the pirate attack. Kaluman told us that he could still remember the burial of his uncle. Kaluman’s family, like many other Sama-Bajau back then in Sangali, chose to transfer to Margosatubig, a municipality located in the province of Zamboanga del Sur and facing

Dumanquilas Bay.

The fishing ground in Margosatubig was “bat-on” (rocky). Far from the shore where Kaluman and his family settled, though, it was a good fishing ground. Kaluman explained to us, saying “since fish there can swim around to look for food, they grow big.” To fit the characteristics of his new fishing ground, he adopted “*bubu*” (fish-trap) as the fishing technique aside from “*palangre*” and “*panaq*” (spear fishing). “*Bubu*” was new to him, but it was not necessarily new to other fellow Sama-Bajau fishermen. Indeed, he learned it from his father-in-law.

However, there was a problem of red tide in the shallow waters in Margosatubig. Indeed, it affected Kaluman’s fishing ground. He recalled, saying “*I saw pieces of rotten coral fish (“isda sa bato”) floating.*” Furthermore, peace and security deteriorated, too.

Kaluman told us about his experience back then:

(Kaluman, recorded on August 27, 1999)

*The troublesome were Tausug. That’s why we escaped all the way here [to Hong Kong, Davao City]. It was before I got married, once I was almost killed at sea. They took away the whole box of my catch. Had I refused their demands, I could have been shot to death. Seriously. I exchanged my life for all the fish I had. [Suddenly he smiled with joy] You know, if I ever died, I’d be so very sad [because he would be never able to see his loving wife].”*

Then, Kaluman and his family moved from Margosatubig to Tibanban, a barangay located on the west coast of the province of Davao Oriental. Their expectations were to settle there and to operate “*palangre*” and “*bubu*” fishing to make a living. Nonetheless, when they got there and spent some time, they found it rather difficult to do what they wanted to do, and they economically hardened up, which eventually drove them to move on to Isla Bella in Davao City around the years 1988 to 1989. Since then, they have been living in *Hong Kong*.

Kaluman told us about his life in Davao City:

(Kaluman, recorded on August 27, 1999)

*It is so much better here [in Davao City than in Tibanban]. There is so much food. So much food in Bankerohan [Public Market].....But there are more fish over there [in Tibanban]. So, this month, I will return there for fishing. [We asked him if he had any relatives in Tibanban] Yes, they are Visayan. [Surprised, we asked him if he had Visayan relatives] Yes, I have Visayan*

*relatives. What I mean is, as we always go fishing together, we feel so close to one another as if we were real relatives. .... You know, when I do not have my own fishing boat, I go fishing with other fishermen like that.*

Manya also told us about her life in Tibanban:

(Manya, recorded on August 27, 1999)

*“Palengke” [public markets] there [in Tibanban] are much smaller [than those in Davao City]. So, there was less food there.*

Manya was a tall and modest woman. Even though her husband, Kaluman, did not always give her sufficient money to manage their household, or even though she was deeply concerned with the poor health of one of her elder brothers, Manya would express her anxiety only slightly and she would never expose her feelings to the people around her. Moreover, she had the strength to behave even kinder to others when she was suffering herself.

Manya recalled that most of the females of her mother’s generation stayed at home. At the same time, though, she understood that the situation had changed. Actually, it was the income that women like herself earned that supported their daily economic life in the city. However, she never wanted her husband to quit fishing.

When she went out as a “*ukay-ukay*” (secondhand clothing) vendor, Manya was always careful to look neat and clean. She would make her hair into a bun at her nape and tie it with a fluffy red scrunchy, and she would put on a washed-out but clean colorfully patterned blouse and long gathered pants with an elastic waistband. Then she would sling across her shoulders a large-sized sky blue cloth bag with about twenty pieces of used clothes in it. She would put on her flip-flops, step down the ladder from her house to the ground, straighten her back, slowly cross the center of *Hong Kong* out to the shore, from where she would head for the public market outside Isla Bella.

Out of the members of the five kinship groups we studied intensively back then, it was Kaluman and Manya who took us the most time to build what an anthropologist would call rapport with. Initially, they looked cautious. They looked modest, but at the same time, they looked dignified, too. It was very confusing for us, for we could not really tell whether they were approachable or not. And the truth was that they were both. Like the rest of the kinship groups with the lower community statuses, Kaluman and Manya were not quite aggressive about asking outsiders for

help. They would not come up to us and directly say, “We are poor. You’ve got to help us.” It had been about two months since we first met them when they served us a meal, which we interpreted as a sign that they accepted our interests in learning their way of life. At first, though, they often challenged us, not jokingly but rather seriously, asking us “You don’t like Bajau’s food, do you? You don’t like it because you think our food is dirty?”

Even after our spending much time with Kaluman, he remained very serious with us. He often failed to catch our jokes and tried to give us straight and honest answers. Without hiding his fear about our recording device (at the time, we used a tape recorder), he would make Manya answer our questions. Nevertheless, toward the end of our first long-term fieldwork, he became more relaxed and kindly began to teach his fishing techniques and fishing grounds to us, whom he judged knew absolutely nothing about fishing.

## **2. How do they “not” give up fishing in Davao City?<sup>7</sup>**

### **2.1 Fishing (“*bubu*” and “*palangre*”) and selling secondhand clothes (“*ukay-ukay*”)**

He claimed to be the bread earner of the household as a “fisherman who mainly uses ‘*bubu*.’” Studying the household income closely, however, we found Manya and her younger sister named Balmarya selling secondhand clothing. Their earnings were higher and more regular. At that time, despite the low productivity, Kaluman did not seem to be interested in quitting his fishing and shifting to other activities in the non-fishing sector in the urban economy.

Kaluman told us about his preference for fishing:

(Kaluman, recorded on October 25, 1999)

[Pointing at other Sama-Bajau who gave up fishing] *They say, it [fishing] is tiring, and it is better to sell [pearls and shells] instead. But I may as well tell you that selling business could be more tiring [than fishing]. Fishing is so much better. Sometimes we can catch fresh “isda sa bato” [coral fish]. More than anything, fishing itself offers us so much pleasure..... [to us who contributed a small amount of money to the construction of his fishing boat] I will have one of my sons deliver fish to your house when we have catch. I know you can buy fish from the public market. But our fish tastes so much better, for it is real fresh without being iced.*”

Although Kaluman had various types of fishing gear, they could be divided into two, namely “*bubu*” and “*palangre*.”



“*Bubu*” fishing uses large-sized bamboo baskets. The typical one I saw in the late 1990s measured approximately 1.5 meters by 1.2 meters and 60 centimeters in height with its mesh in square and 4 to 5 centimeters<sup>8</sup>. This bamboo basket had a cone-shaped attachment that served as a trap: once a fish comes through its opening about 50 centimeters in diameter and swims into the body of the basket, it would be hard for the fish to escape since the part connected to the body of the basket was much narrower than its opening. A weight would be attached onto each of the four corners of the basket, and then the basket would be placed on “*pasil*” (rocky fishing ground with clear water near the shoreline) at 10 to 15 “*dupa*” (fathoms) deep. The number of baskets placed would vary, from the minimum of two to three to the maximum of twenty at one time. The fishing team would leave the fishing grounds. They would return every one to two weeks to check the baskets. If there were fish inside, they would retrieve the basket and collect the catch. This type of the fishing gear does not require bait. Once placed on the fishing ground, it does not require regular repair, either. The baskets would be left on the fishing ground until they became old and broken. They could be used for about six months on average.

The fishing grounds included Talikod Island across Davao City, Patma Plata in Samal Island, Lupong in the province of Davao Oriental, and Tibanban. With many rocky places along the shore, those waters were suitable for “*bubu*” fishing. Kaluman added, “They are safe, too. Unlike Isla Bella, there are no “*bubu*” robbers there.” To travel to those fishing grounds, Kaluman and his fishing mates used a “*pambof*” (pump boat) , its keel about 21-24 feet, with bamboo outriggers and an engine of 16 horse power. It would take them roughly thirty minutes (four liters of gasoline<sup>9</sup> to get to Talikod Island, and about two hours to Davao Oriental.

Trees and rocks on the shore helped Kaluman and his fishing mates remember the location of the “*bubu*” placed. They would also use gallon containers as buoys to mark the location. The “*bubu*” was placed not too deep, but deep enough not to be seen from the surface of the water. When they returned to the fishing ground, one of them would dive into the water to check the “*bubu*.” If he found fish in it, he would tie a nylon rope to the “*bubu*,” and let the other two fishermen on the boat pull it up to get the “*bubu*” out of the water. After the catch was collected, the “*bubu*” would be placed back in the water. This collection operation would normally happen early in the morning. When they went fishing in Lupong, they would leave *Hong Kong* around three o’clock before dawn, start their fishing activities in Lupong from around six o’clock in the morning, and return to *Hong Kong* around three o’clock in the afternoon. Very often, though, they would not return home immediately, and rather stay at sea, sleeping in their boats.

The catch from their “*bubu*” fishing would include various types of coral fish from “*lapu-lapu*”

(groupers) to “*mul-mul*” (parrot fish). Sometimes, they also had “*nukus*” (squid), too. On rare occasions, “*lumod*” (dolphins) were caught, but Kaprin and his kin would not eat them<sup>10</sup>. Kaluman and his fishing mates would sell the catch to fish vendors in the public market nearby<sup>11</sup>. If he had groupers of the best quality, the price could be as high as 200 pesos per kilo. The kind at the lowest price was typically parrot fish, which could generate only 20 pesos per kilo.

Kaprin’s income from his “*bubu*” fishing would be determined by the variety and quantity of his catch. In a word, it was rather unpredictable how much he could earn from each operation. He answered me that he could perhaps earn a net income of 30 to 50 pesos a day if he went fishing with two fishing mates and harvested a weekly average of five kilos of a variety of fish from each one of the “*bubu*” they placed. His net income here means the amount after operating costs such as debts to fish buyers and expenditures on gasoline were deducted, and the remaining amount was divided equally among the three who participated in the fishing operation. He estimated the maximum earnings from one operation when they could luckily collect catch from all the “*bubu*,” or the situation which Kaluman would call “*jackpot*,” would be 1,500 pesos. Then, the net profits would be 1,000 pesos for the three of them. Then the approximate net income for each one of them would be 300 pesos. Kaluman said the “*bubu*” fishing could be more profitable than “*palangre*” fishing if they were lucky.

“*Palangre*” fishing is a type of long-line fishing in which a mainline (about 100 to 200 fathoms in length), which is rigged at intervals (one “*dagaw*”<sup>12</sup> each in width) with short lines (one “*dagaw*” also in length), is placed with weights and buoys in a fishing ground for one to two hours before harvesting the catch. Each of the short lines has a hook (usually #16, sometimes, though #14) and bait on it. The bait can be sardines or shrimp.

“*Palangre*” is not suitable for the rocky fishing ground, where the nylon lines can easily get caught in the rocks. It works better in sandy or muddy fishing grounds. For example, even though Kaluman and his fishing mates went to Tibanban and operated both “*bubu*” and “*palangre*,” it does not mean that they used the two fishing methods in one place. It means, instead, they knew there were two different types of fishing grounds there, and therefore, they needed to apply different fishing techniques according to the characteristics of each one of them. The fishing grounds for their “*palangre*” operations could vary 15 fathoms to 100 fathoms at depth, but they were either sandy or muddy.

In the “*palangre*” operations, Kaluman’s fishing team was composed of two to three persons in

a fishing boat. One would be the driver of the fishing boat, and the rest, operators of the fishing gear. They would go fishing on their own. Normally, the fishing mates were related to one another as a father and sons, brothers, and brothers-in-law. The operators of the “*palangre*,” just like those of the “*bubu*,” should be divers. Since diving involved risks, they said it was crucial that they should collaborate perfectly in the operation. That was one of the reasons why they preferred to team up with their family and relatives, who supposedly shared the knowledge of the fishing techniques and the fishing grounds. Besides, they were free to choose their fishing mates from among themselves. Although they often needed to finance their operating capital from fish buyers of other ethnic groups, they enjoyed a certain autonomy to plan their fishing expeditions by using their own fishing boats and gear.

The catch from their “*palangre*” fishing included various types of fish. Typical harvest could be “*tangigi*” (Spanish mackerel) and “*talakitok*” (good-sized carangid fish). Sometimes, it had “*iho*” (shark) or “*pagi*” (ray).

Now let us turn to the costs of fishing activities. According to Kaluman, one would need a fishing boat with an engine and fishing gear to start up as an independent fisherman. It would cost approximately 20,000 to 30,000 pesos for the materials of the boat, its building, an engine and the registration of the boat. As to fishing gear, making a large “*bubu*” would cost approximately 500 pesos, and a set of “*palangre*,” 1000 pesos. Furthermore, one would need to visit the Barangay to obtain the operation permit for their fishing activities<sup>13</sup> .

All in all, the initial cost of the fishing operations proved to be much higher than that of the pearl business and that of secondhand clothing business among the Sama-Bajau in Isla Bella. Kaluman added that one would also need to have his boat and engine registered at the office of the Coast Guard in Davao City.<sup>14</sup> The construction of the boat was normally contracted to Sama-Bajau boat builders, who were often relatives and/or neighbors of the boat owner. Since it cost a large amount of money to prepare them, fishing boats and fishing gear were often borrowed from one another among the close relatives. To operate a fishing expedition, of course, one would also need the operating capital, which would range from 200 to 300 pesos per operation to purchase gasoline, kerosene, matches, bait, ice, etc.

Although Kaluman was a good fisherman, his fishing expeditions were not yielding sufficient income to support his household. One might attribute this low productivity to the irregularity of the catch to the nature-based characteristic of fishing activities. Such an analysis could be partly true, but there were other difficulties that Kaluman faced back then.

First, Kaprin had no boat when we started observation in May, 1999. He remained “boat-less” until September, 1999. Behind this situation was an episode in 1998 where his three brothers, Walong, Angel<sup>15</sup>, and Moksorin, and his nephew, Sohirin (Mokroin’s son) were arrested on suspicion of stealing an engine<sup>16</sup>, and they were detained in the city jail. To bail them out, they decided to sell Sohirin’s boat, which Kaluman was using in those days. Once Kaluman had lost the boat, he had to give up fishing. He could have gone with other fishermen who owned boats, but then, he would lose his autonomy: he would not be able to decide where and how to fish. The absence of his own boat also made it difficult for him to borrow money from fish buyers<sup>17</sup> to cover the operation cost of his fishing activities.

Even after he quit fishing by using his own boat, Kaluman occasionally tried to borrow a boat from Angel, or to accompany other relatives when they went fishing in Tibanban. Nonetheless, he was never able to earn enough to impress Manya who patiently waited for him at home. Sometimes, Kaluman and Manila quarreled about money to buy food. Indeed, from May, 1999 to September, 1999, Kaluman’s earnings from his fishing activities were so small that we could not keep track of them. During that time, although he spent some time on making “*bubu*,” he participated in “*palangre*” more often when he accompanied other fishermen. According to him, “*palangre*” could generate three to ten kilos of catch per operation if they were lucky. He added, though, “*palangre*’ is more exhausting than ‘*bubu*’.” Technically, “*bubu*” is categorized as passive fishing, while “*palangre*” is considered active fishing. Aside from the physical strain, it would cost more to prepare and repair the gear, and purchase bait for “*palangre*.” After deducting all the costs, the net profit per operation could reach only 100 pesos<sup>18</sup>. That meant the net profit per head, if shared by three fishermen, would be only 30 pesos. Kaluman found it not worth using the fishing method too often. In fact, once he secured a new boat, he came to operate “*palangre*” less than twice a month.

Kaluman had his new fishing boat built from the end of August, 1999, to September, 1999. The boat’s keel was 21 feet long. It had single outriggers and a 16 horsepower engine. The materials cost 4,000 pesos, while the purchase of the used engine cost 13,000 pesos. Kaluman hired boat builders from his kin for 2,000 pesos plus free meals. Although he did not have to spend much on fishing gear because he still kept some usable equipment, he needed operating capital for gasoline, etc. to resume his fishing activities. He started spending an average of 200 pesos per operation when he started his fishing expeditions again.

Using his new boat, Kaluman started going fishing with his father, Albiya Moin<sup>19</sup>, and his eldest

son Moksolin <sup>20</sup>(estimated age eleven years old) in October, 1999<sup>21</sup>. His earnings from fishing improved, and he came to give his wife roughly 300 pesos per operation, or roughly 600 pesos per month. He made about two fishing trips every month, and one trip lasted one to two weeks. His fishing was making a visible contribution to his household. Yet, such an increase was not sufficient to stop his wife and his sister-in-law from working outside to support the household. They would not reduce their working hours, either. In short, the pattern of the division of labor remained the same.

With the limited earnings from Kaluman's fishing, the household needed other sources of income to survive daily life. Female members worked as "ukay-ukay" vendors, and each one of them earned roughly fifty pesos a day. They did not beg, but their regular customers who were vendors at public markets often allowed them to buy vegetables and fruits at much discounted prices, or sometimes, even gave them for free.

Manya told us:

(Manya, recorded on August 27, 1999)

*I sell used clothes so that I can buy food. If I work as "ukay-ykay" vendor, I can buy food even when [Kaluman's] "palangre" catches no fish. Sometimes we have catch, and at other times, we have no catch.....But, used clothes can sell one piece, two pieces, three pieces [every day].....*

Balmarya, the youngest sister of Manya, had a strong sense of responsibility for her contribution to the household. When Manya was too busy to continue her used clothes business, taking care of their sick brother, Moksolin, or looking after her small children when they were running a fever, Balmarya always worked harder: She would wake up early, peddle the clothes in Bankerohan Market from 5:00 am to 7:00 am, buy groceries, return home to cook the first meal of the day, rest shortly, by 1:30 pm, off to the public market again, peddle the clothes till around 4:00 pm, and buy groceries, and finally return home to prepare the second meal for the household members. She was so slightly built that she looked like a little girl. She was never married. Looking at her younger sister working so hard, once Manya said with a bitter smile, "It's like Balmarya is married: She is married to us."

In their "ukay-ukay" business, Manya and Balmarya were both careful to keep the stock at their hand at the level of 200 pesos at the original prices. They sold a few pieces every day and then they immediately bought a few pieces to keep their business running next day. They purchased the clothes from Cebuano retailers in downtown. Sometimes, they ordered repairs and

renovations of the used clothes from a Cebuano woman who owned a sewing machine and lived in Isla Bella. The cost of such orders varied according to the number of items. However, Manya and Balmarya never spent more than fifty pesos. While they knew the improvement of the quality of the clothes (value added) could lead to more sales, they were also quite aware of their budget constraints. Unlike Balaiya's group in Chapter Two, they could hardly afford to dye their clothes.

In this household, no children did begging. Nonetheless, Christmas season was an exception. Like other Sama-Bajau in *Hong Kong*, Kaluman's children would go "seasonal" begging called "mamasuko." Although both Kaluman and Manya would not allow their younger children to do such outings, they permitted their older children who grew up to be "ulitawo" and "dalaga"<sup>22</sup> to do so. During our observation, as early as October, we started to see their eldest son Moksolin, who was just turning to be "ulitawo," starting to do this seasonal begging together with two to three of his friends in the neighborhood. They would do "mamasko" in nearby places like Uyangoren Street, and sometimes, they would venture to far places like Lanang and visit houses in the subdivisions for small change in exchange for a little singing and dancing performance.

The average monthly income (cash only) of this household during our observation was 1,814.3 pesos, or 210.4 pesos per head. This is about one fourth of the income of Balaiya's household (Chapter 2), and about the same level of those of Papa Melcito's household (Chapter 3) as well as Majariya's one (Chapter 5). It makes these three households from the lower community statues have the same level of economic standard of living. However, if we take a closer look at the consumption and expenditures of these three households, they were quite different and they could be ranked accordingly. Such a difference in consumption and expenditures mostly came from the difference in how these three households were able or unable to secure supplementary budget (resources) from outside their households. We will look into the case of Kaluman's household later in this chapter.

## **2.2 Men going to the sea and women working in the market**

In this household, the only two who showed higher spatial mobility beyond the city limit were Kaluman and his eldest son Moksolin. Kaluman spent two to four weeks a month on fishing expeditions in the province of Davao Oriental, and Moksolin sometimes accompanied him. Once at sea, they would not return home till the expedition ended. They would occasionally get to the shore to eat and sleep. The rest of the household members, females and young children, always stayed at home in *Hong Kong*. It was very clear to all of the household members that this

house in Isla Bella was home to every member, including the two fishing a bit far away. In this sense, this household was sedentary and settled in Davao City.

Members of Kaluman's household seldom visited their previous places of residence such as Margosatubig. They said, however, they still had communication with their relatives in those places. Indeed, we saw some of their relatives from those places who visited Kaluman's family once in a while. In fact some of them eventually decided to settle in *Hong Kong* as new migrants. This phenomenon of so-called "chain-migration" was also seen among other Sama Bajau residents, especially among those in the lowest community status (Makabista's kinship group in Chapter Five of the original Japanese book, which will be translated into English soon).

For example, a family of Manya's relatives' visited Kaluman's household in September, 1999. The seven of them told us that the predicament drove them out of Margosatubig. They said, "*we had to give up fishing due to the pirate raid.*" While they were in *Hong Kong*, Kaluman's household let them stay under their roof. Yet, Kaluman and Manya would not provide their relatives with other necessities such as food; two households in the same house were managed separately. None of the seven members of their relatives were fluent in the Cebuano language. Moreover, the female members had neither the skills nor capital to start up a "*ukay-ukay*" business. Soon after they arrived, the mother and children began to go begging every day.

### **2.3 Selling secondhand clothes to purchase fish**

Except when Kaluman was away fishing, the members of the household had meals together. In the morning, they would have boiled water with white sugar to warm their bodies. Usually, they prepared the hot water in a metal basin, from which the household members took sips in turn. At first, my research assistant and I mistook it for a bowl of water to wash our hands and dipped our fingers in the basin.

In a preliminary interview, Kaluman and Manya claimed that they had three meals a day. In real observation, however, they usually had two meals a day. The frequency of food intake varied according to how much dispensable income they earned day to day. Like Papa Melcito's kinship group in the previous chapter, they would have the first meal around 10 AM and the second one between 5 PM and 7 PM. The mealtimes were associated with the female household members' working hours. They normally ate after Manya and Balmarya returned home from their "*ukay-ukay*" business (and their occasional and passive begging for food in the public market)

with groceries that they bought with the money they earned.

A typical meal in this household consisted of cassava and/or rice with fish<sup>23</sup>. The fish could be dried. Kaluman preferred cassava as his staple, saying “Cassava keeps us going longer than rice. So, it’s the best food especially when we go fishing.” Occasionally, they would add “*gabi*” (taro) and other root crops.

When their budget was limited, they prioritized cassava and/or rice as their staple, and fish and spices became secondary. They said, “Cassava will taste better with coconut milk,” yet the budget constraints seldom allowed them to buy spices other than a modest amount of chili, salt and cooking oil<sup>24</sup>. Only when they had spare money, they would add “*kamatis*” (native tomatoes) and “*sibuyas bombay*” (native red onion) to spice up their food. Most of the time fish was made into soup, but sometimes they enjoyed charcoal-grilled fish as well.

They also ate vegetables and fruits, which were often offered to them at discounted prices or even for free by vendors in the public markets. Balmarya often came home with a sack of overripe mangoes with brown spots and small green mangoes, murmuring “It’s so heavy, I’m afraid it is going to hurt my back!” Once we also saw Manya come home with many “*bayabas*” (guava), which she claimed she bought at very low prices<sup>25</sup>. She gave the fruits to her children for snacks.

On rare occasions, they also ate sea cucumbers, which they either bought from their Sama neighbors or Kaluman dove and collected by himself.

Most of the time it was Manya and Balmarya who took care of preparing food. They usually bought ingredients from Bankerohan Public Market on their way home from their “*ukay-ukay*” business. They would cook together in the kitchen built in at the end of their house. Sometimes, Kaluman came in to help when his wife was too tired from peddling.

Food would be served in brown glass plates and metal bowls, which would be directly placed on the floor. One plate or bowl of the food would be shared by two to three household members. The household members would sit on the floor and eat the food with their right hands. When they had soup, they would bring the bowl up to their mouths and take sips. The fish was typically made into clear soup locally called “*tinula*.” They seldom prepared “*sawsawan*” (dipping sauce often made of soy sauce and fresh chili) to eat the food with. They always had water in a pitcher without ice in it.



The level of food consumption in this household varied day to day. The following is their average expenditures for food for a day. It may be somewhat overestimated due to the nature of our monthly record by interview, though it was combined by participant observation to verify the data. To start with, let us see their average expenditures on staple food for a day. When we started the monthly household survey in May, 1999, the household spent 15 pesos on cassava (a cellophane package containing roughly 1.5 kg) and 18 pesos on rice (2 kg) a day. However, they started spending double, 30 pesos on cassava and 36 pesos on rice, in June, 1999, and these expenditure patterns lasted until the end of our observation in December, 1999. Initially, the increase of the staple food consumption was related to their having taken in Manya's sick brother Muksidil and his family under their wings in June, 1999. However, even after Muksidil's family left, the staple food consumption remained the same level without going back to the previous level. This could be interpreted that their staple food intake per head was too low even before the guest household joined theirs, and it needed a boost. However, Kaluman was "*estambay*," or practically unemployed in May, 1999. To enhance the financial capacity temporarily, they resorted to a pawnshop for 2,000 pesos in June, 1999, in order to take care of the guest family as well as their own. During the stay of the guest family, the staple food intake per head further dipped, but after the family left in July, 1999, it improved to the level higher than that in May, 1999.

Aside from cassava and rice, it was important for them to secure fish as their main side dish. Throughout our observation, Kaluman's household spent an average of 30 pesos on fish a day. They would look for inexpensive kinds of fresh fish in the market. If they could not afford any fresh ones, they would go for dried fish at lower prices instead. They would seldom eat the fish Kaluman caught as a fisherman, especially the high-grade fish such as "*lapu-lapu*" (groupers). "*We will sell our catch first so that we can collect the operating capital for the fishing activities. After that, if we still have some cash left in our hand, then we will buy inexpensive fish for our meals.*" (Manya) Compared with fish, vegetables and fruits were rather secondary in this household. They reported that they would spend an average of 10 pesos a day each on vegetables and fruits, but our observation proved that they did so only when they could afford it.

In this household, only Kaluman enjoyed alcoholic beverages such as "*tuba*" (coconut wine) and beer. He would not drink at home; he would only drink when he was away from home. From May to July in 1999, he spent an average of 20 pesos on those drinks. That period partly overlapped the period of crisis during which Manya's sick brother Muksidil and his family were staying with his household. Once the crisis was over, although the staple consumption did not

recover to the previous level, Kaluman's personal consumption of those drinks jumped to an average of 140 pesos after August 1999. He told us that he had learned to drink from his Cebuano neighbors when he and his family were living in Tibanban. While enjoying drinking, he would not gamble, saying "gambling is not good [in terms of ethics]."

Throughout the period of our observation, the number of household members temporarily increased from eight (Kaluman's nuclear family) to fourteen in June, 1999. Otherwise, it remained the original eight for the rest of the period. Kaluman, sometimes with his eldest son Moksolin, often left home for fishing operations for two to four weeks. The longest absence from home for fishing (four weeks) was observed in October, the month considered the beginning of the season when the direction of the wind changed from *Habagat* (southwest wind) to *Amihan* (northeast wind). While they were at sea, the size of the remaining household was reduced to six to seven.

The level of nutritional intake per head in this household both in quality and quantity was objectively unstable, given that they often failed to secure side dishes. Nonetheless, the household members seldom complained about the hunger. Two adult female members, Manya and Balmarya, struggled every morning and afternoon to secure food at least enough to feed the four children whose estimated ages varied from three to ten at that time. They adored and cared for the children, trying to give them priority in food distribution. Indeed, aside from the two meals they usually had a day, the children were given snacks (most of the time, cheap sweets) whenever they asked.

The children clearly did not seem to be malnourished. They were not particularly thin, either. However, they usually had snotty noses with milky or yellow-green mucus dripping. They often suffered from a persistent cough. Their youngest child Chaberita (estimated age, three years old) suffered the most: she sometimes choked on food; and at other times, her sleep got interrupted due to a severe cough. Although Manya was worried about her daughter's condition, she could hardly afford to visit a health institution for consultation. Besides, adult members of the household often suffered from cold-like symptoms. In other words, having ontological and respiratory discomforts was rather common in their daily life.

The adult members of the household seldom complained about hunger. Yet, during June 1999, the period when per head income of the household dropped due to taking in sick Muksidil and his family under their wings, we sometimes heard them murmuring, "I feel dizzy," "I have a headache," "I feel so tired for some reason" etc. It was like a second crisis caused by Muksidil's

illness. Balmarya became ill as well : she complained about a sore throat, and tried to treat it with anti-inflammatory tablets she bought from a pharmacy; and because she temporarily had to stop her secondhand clothing peddling, her income both in cash and in kind dropped to zero, which eventually affected the total income of the household negatively. Such a vicious circle showed the vulnerability of this household to shocks due to unexpected events outside their control.

Most of the members of the group had skin diseases caused by bedbugs, lice, and ringworm. Although the adult members often worried about the cases of babies, whose heads and bodies were often covered with rashes and scabs, and in many cases, who needed better hygiene, they seldom complained about their skin conditions. Indeed, we often observed them scratching themselves while sleeping.

When a member fell ill, elderly ones including Amdaniya (Manya's mother) from the group would serve as traditional healers: they would diagnose and advise on how to heal. The sick person and his/her family would also purchase inexpensive medicines, and they would also go to public hospitals for further help and consultation. However, they would often fail to follow the treatment that the doctor advised mainly due to the cost of purchasing the prescribed medicines. Aside from the financial constraints, they also found that it was necessary to communicate in the Cebuano language at the health institutions. In fact, they hesitated to visit health institutions for consultation and would not visit them until the last moment when their illnesses got serious and/or prolonged<sup>26</sup>.

During our observation, medical expenses were recorded in May, June, July, and December, 1999 in Kaluman's household. They spent an average of 260.0 pesos per month. In May, June, and December, they bought a small amount of medication from a pharmacy, two to five antipyretic tablets and deworming tablets at each time. It was only once in July that they visited a health institution: they took Muksidil, who had been sick for quite some time by then, to Davao Medical Center (a public general hospital) for consultation and diagnosis. It was free. Then, they went to a clinic to get prescribed medication, Amoxicillin (antibiotics), which they had to pay for by themselves. Muksidil needed to take a tablet (it cost then about five pesos if it is generic) three times a day. Although they could not calculate exactly how much they spent on taking care of Muksidil that month, they estimated the total cost should reach 2,000 pesos all in all including the medication, transport (many members accompanied him to the hospital), and food (aside from eating out when they went to the hospital, they tried to secure more nutritious, and eventually more expensive food for him). As this drastic increase in medical expenses

caused a cash shortage in their household, they borrowed 2,000 pesos from a pawnshop in the same month in order to finance their livelihood activities and basic consumption.

Their health concerns also included an issue of birth control. This was particular to female members. We often heard Manya, Patma (Manya's younger sister) and Nidaniya (Muksidil's wife) talking about their reluctance to have more children<sup>27</sup>. They said, "It is better to have a two-year gap between children in a family," "We do not have any more children because we cannot feed them if we have too many," etc. On the other hand, they were not really willing to visit the community health center where they could have free consultation on reproductive health<sup>28</sup>. Initially, we thought that they had no information on such government services; they did have the information, yet they would not access the place for some reason. They said, instead, "We can only pray to God (*Tuhan*) so that we would never get pregnant again." Especially, Patma<sup>29</sup>, said to us, "Bajau women should have many children so that we could go to heaven when we die." Her sister Manya, for example, got married at estimated age twelve, and gave birth to eight babies, only four of whom survived<sup>30</sup>.

#### **2.4 Houses with white banners on top and fishing boats in front**

Kaluman's family was living in one of the stilt houses built over the shore. This corner of *Hong Kong* was particularly close to the coast line. It would become inaccessible on foot from the shore at high tide. Then it would temporarily become a water village: all the ladders to climb into the houses disappear under water; and instead, fishing boats appear to float on water as its parking platform made of bamboo are submerged. For a while, the physical landscape changes: everything there seems integrated into a picture framed in "*dagat*" (sea).

At full tide, the common space of *Hong Kong* would transform itself into a small sea, too. People would cross the common space in small boats. Skillfully using oars, naked children would go around by rafts, which were actually containers made of Styrofoam wrapped with sack and more commonly called "ice-case" among the residents in the area. Even at high tide, the main walk starting from the entrance on the landside of *Hong Kong* would remain above the water even at high tide. It passed the houses of Group Three (Papa Melcito's group) and then those of Group Two (Bilaiya's group), but did not reach the houses of Kaluman's group because it simply was not built long enough to cover their neighborhood. Such physical connection reflects the social connection among the groups to a certain degree.

Indeed, the houses of Kaluman's group were not only located the closest to the coastline in

*Hong Kong* but they also had visible features. Most of them were thatched houses with *nippa* used both for the roofs and walls. Many of them had fishing boats parked in front, and fishing gear they were crafting on the balcony. At least, two of them built side by side had white banners flying on top. Put all those characteristics together, the sight of this group as a whole appears quite different from the other groups of the Sama-Bajau in Isla Bella.

Kaluman's house was located on the first row from the public space. At low tide, we would walk through the public space to approach his house, climb the ladder up onto the balcony of the house, and then take the front door to enter the inside. The wall on the right side had windows, below which were placed various home appliances such as cooking pots and plates, and toys. Indeed, there were many things on the floor: a ladle with a long hand inserted in a gap between the *nippa* leaves of the wall; gallon containers for water, either colored white or orange; and small-sized recycled glass bottles of Tanduay (a brand of rum produced in the Philippines by LT Group. Inc.) to keep kerosene oil. There was also a pair of loafers made of black-artificial leather that Kaluman would wear when he went to "town" (*kareya*), a hand-made drum ("combo") that Moksolin would play when he went caroling during Christmas, and also a broad-brimmed straw hat, which perhaps a member of the household would wear to work under the sun.

If we looked up at the ceiling, we could see the built-in shelves where fishing gear such as nylon strings for long-line fishing was stored. Under the shelves lied Kaluman's treasure: an engine for his fishing boat. The engine was red and shone brightly, which implied someone had recently oiled it for maintenance. Kaluman cherished it deeply. One time when I was making sketches from inside of his house, he strongly suggested that I should draw the engine, the fishing boat, and fishing traps ("*bubu*") together, saying "Draw all of them to make it complete!" Then I approached the front window, and looked out through it: Over the clothesline wire, I could see the fishing boat painted in white with green and orange as accent colors parked right in front of the house.

The wall on the left side had no windows, below which there were colorful mats that Manya had hand-woven. Some of them were piled, while others, spread with pillows. One of the mats was perhaps relatively newly made because the strips of the color violet, combined with non-dyed strips, still shone bright. Around that corner, piles of various clothes of the household members were scattered: blouses, skirts, shorts, polo-shirts, jeans, bras, etc. Some of them seemed just taken off and left, and others, kept there to be put on again rather soon (called "recycle"). Daily used items of those clothes were hung from the wire set close to the ceiling.

The house made of *nippa* was normally airy. They did not wash their clothes everyday; indeed, they would wear the same outfit for a couple of days, but they seldom smelled sweaty.

At the back of the house was a cooking area (about 6 – 7 square meters). It was an open space with a *nippa* wall and bamboo-striped floor. Both sides of the area were widely open for ventilation as well as for communication with their neighbors. There were two hearths before the wall, and they spent about 10 pesos a day for the firewood to cook. Around the hearths were arranged cooking pots of various sizes, all of which were well-used and had become sooty. Next to them were gallon containers of water.

As we have mentioned earlier, Kaluman's house was not connected to the main walk of *Hong Kong*. But it was connected rather well with other houses of his relatives, mostly from Manya's side, in the neighborhood. They had a common water space where members of this group, especially female ones, would meet every day and chat while washing clothing or bathing. This water place had no water faucet, though; each one of them needed to purchase water from Cecile's store, a *sari-sari* store owned by a Cebuano neighbor close to the shore. Kaluman's household would purchase about 10 pesos (equivalent of 40 gallons) worth of water from the store for drinking, bathing, washing clothes, and other purposes.

The meaning of the word "bathing" (*amandi* in Sinama, and *maligo* in Cebuano) varies depending on the context in which it is used. To many children, it often simply means to take a dip in the seawater or even to swim around. Yet, when the word is used in relation to personal hygiene, it means to use fresh water to wash oneself. In the case of Kaluman's group, it was common to see the members bathing by pouring water directly from the gallon container on the balcony of the house during the daytime. Compared to the three groups in higher social status, they used soap less often when bathing: they spent about 10 pesos per week on soap.

As we have already mentioned in other chapters, there were no walled toilets, either public or private, in *Hong Kong* at that time. Thus, members of Kaluman's group would also locate a proper place when they needed to relieve themselves. Females often used *malong* (a traditional tube skirt) to cover themselves when they sat on the balcony outside or a corner inside their house for that particular purpose. People would also pretend indifference to each other when necessary.

In contrast to the availability of toilets, many of the houses of this group had electricity. Of course, not every one of them had a formal contract with Davao Light (and Power Company),

Inc., a Davao-based Filipino electricity company owned by Abolitiz & Co.). Yet, Kaluman's household had one. They had a meter provided by the company. They provided electricity with other eleven households within the group by illegal wiring. Although we unfortunately did not check exactly how Kaluman's household collected fees from the eleven households, we knew that they paid more or less 60 pesos every month for energizing a florescent light they used at night while spending 50 centavos for a kerosene lamp every day.

It should be noted here that what we call Kaluman's house was actually owned by Amdaniya, who was Manya's mother and Kaluman's mother-in-law. Although the *nippa* house had gone through a major repair just before we started our monthly household survey, its repair was becoming a concern again for the household members: the thatched roof had developed tiny gaps, from which rainwater would leak; and they had to use a blue Tarpaulin sheet so that they would not be bothered when it rained.

## **2.5 Children and the sea**

In 1999, the eldest son and the second son of Kaluman's household were of school age. But neither of them had ever attended school. By that time, Moksolin (the eldest son) had joined his father's fishing operations as a driver of the fishing boat. Although Sukarno (the second son, estimated age, 8 ) and Ebinisil (the third son, estimated age, 6) had not yet participated in fishing activities at sea, we often saw them very closely observing their father and other male members of their group making fishing gear such as *bubu* in the open space of *Hong Kong*, and sometimes we saw them trying to help the adult members with the job. They seemed half playing and half working, both seriously.

None of the adult members including Kaluman and Manya of this group had experienced formal education. They were in the condition that we may call "illiterate." Kaluman and Manya would imagine that had they known how to read and write, it could be helpful. But they also said that school education would cause financial burden. Since it was likely that their children would do the same work as their parents when they grow up, they could not see much point in sending their children to school. From their perspectives, it would be good enough if their sons became fishermen and their daughters did some kind of small business such as *ukay-ukay*. What was important is that they would help one another as the Sama in everyday life<sup>31</sup>.

Manya told us:

(Manya, recorded on October 8, 1999)

*I do not want [Moksolin and the other children of hers] to fight [with others]. I just hope they will be always healthy, and they will live a long life. If they always fight, God will get angry at them. ....I have told them not to make friends with kids who are quick to pick up a fight. You know, we are not the type of people who fight back even when we are attacked.*

Their children often played together. Aside from siblings, cousins were their usual playmates. They would go out to the public space of *Hong Kong* to play around. They did various activities. At low tide, they would play with a ball, or would simply chase one another, or play games such as “*taksi*” (something like alley, but they would use real coins instead of marbles, and so in a sense, it seemed like a form of gambling ). At high tide, they would take a dip in the seawater, and they would also watch the fishing boats come and go. As they spent much time outdoors, their skin became darker and their hair, browner with a golden tint. They also liked to play with toys that adult members, typically their fathers, made from discarded materials. A typical such toy would be a well-crafted miniature fishing boat which might have tiny outriggers, an engine, propellers, and a brightly painted body.

The children would also play indoors. We often saw Kaluman’s children playing cards, something like poker without real betting. Although they were careful enough to spread a mat to place the cards on so that the cards would not fall through the gaps in the floor made of bamboo-strips, every time they played, one card after another would be lost into the seawater under the floor. Sometimes, we also saw them playing with a plastic toy phone that had an illustration of “Pikachu” (fictional creatures licensed by the Pokémon Company, a Japanese corporation); they enjoyed pressing its buttons to play music built into it. Chaberita, their only daughter, liked to play with dolls, too.

The children’s daily plays included imitating some acts of the religious rites the adult members occasionally performed in those days. One such example is what they called “*mboq-mboq*.” This game looked like a miniature version of “*mag-mboq*” (a religious rite to worship an ancestor’s spirit) : they would prepare a discarded tin can, remove one side of it, make many small holes in the other side, and then attach a wire handle; and then they would place a small amount of charcoal inside the can to burn it outside the house. It was explained as a copy of a scene in which the “*djin*” (a spiritual medium who often served as a religious leader as well) says a prayer over the smoke of charcoal burnt in a small bowl.

One day we brought in crayons and paper, mainly because I wanted to sketch their house. Yet,



the children quickly approached us, borrowed the kit, and started joyfully drawing, although rather clumsily because they were not used to using the stationary. While trying not to interrupt their concentration, we were able to see over their shoulders what they were drawing: animation characters from their favorite cartoons. Kaluman's household had no TV set, but the children had chances to watch or peek at TV owned by their neighbors in *Hong Kong*. Sometimes, they got so absorbed into the story that they forgot to return home. Manya complained, saying, "Then I need to bother myself to go out and call them back home for meals."

Even though the children would watch TV, it does not mean that they were able to understand the Tagalog and English languages that were often used in the TV programs. Actually, most of the time, we heard them solely using the Sinama language for communication at home. They did not quite understand the Cebuano language when we spoke to them in it. This was true especially in the case of small children who had not yet been exposed much to non-Sama outsiders. This made it hard for us to understand exactly what the children were saying, yet we could still tell that they seemed quite free to express their emotions, needs, and wants; they would energetically laugh, cry, nag, etc. Manya, Kaluman, and other adult members of the household always cherished the children. When we were with the children, they behaved well; they seldom asked us for anything, though they often failed to keep silent and started giggling after observing us for a while, full of curiosity.

### **3. "Bajau" but not "Palau"**

#### **3.1 Trusting God, praying together**

The scope of what Manya and Kaluman called as their "kampong" within *Hong Kong* was the widest among the five groups we studied, counting twenty-seven households in total. They preferred intra-group marriage mainly because of the following two reasons: 1) They could expect mutual help more easily; and 2) In order to maintain and enhance such a system of mutual assistance, it should be better to have a larger number of households within their own *kampong*.

However, mutual assistance among the households within this group at least at the material level was not always practiced as widely as they explained to us. For example, inter-household income redistribution was limited to close relatives such as siblings and their families. Such examples included the case of Muksidil (Manya's elder brother) and his family being taken under the wing of Kaluman's household during the crisis of Muksidil's sickness. Even then,

Kaluman's household did not completely absorb Muksidil's household. While the former offered the living space and shared staple food with the latter, the two households continued their effort to earn money separately and cook separately as much as possible under the same roof.

During the crisis, Muksidil's wife Nidaniya went begging everyday. At that time, she appeared to be what the general population in the wider society in Davao City would associate with an image of the "Bajau" as beggars: she was very thin; she had bony cheeks, chipped front teeth, and disarrayed hair; and with two small children (Lano, estimated age two, and Nila, estimated age three) of hers, she would beg at fruit stands in Pociano Street. At that time, her eldest daughter Nidan was trying to start an "ukay-ukay" business on her own, following her aunties Manya and Balmarya. After Masarai's death, which actually happened after the period of our observation, we saw out of a taxi's window their second daughter Mamila begging by herself in the same place where her mother used to beg. Like her mother, she would not utter words but rather quietly reach out her hand for small change to customers at the fruit stands and passers-by around the corner.

There were also other members of this group who did begging in daily life. Most of them were elders, females, and children. The households they belonged to often had problems with fishing operations that males engaged in, which eventually led to a decrease in household income. Some of them had lost their own fishing boats, and others had stopped going fishing due to the illness of the male members. For example, Masarani, a younger brother of Kaluman's, lost his fishing boat more than a year ago, and since then, his family had been experiencing economic hardship. His wife Patma (Manya's younger sister) had no choice but to resort to begging in Uyanguren Street and Ponciano Street. Looking like nothing but skin and bone, she said to us, "My head aches, and so, I cannot walk long." Yet, she continued to go begging, taking her small children along<sup>32</sup>.

On the other hand, Kaluman himself acquired a new fishing boat during our observation. From August to September, 1999, his household spent a total of 19,000 pesos for the construction of the boat, of which 2000 pesos in cash was borrowed from Sohirin, a nephew of Kaluman's, and 13,000 pesos was recorded as credit for a second-hand engine from a fellow Sama-Bajau (the terms and method for payment were not clearly stated)<sup>33</sup>. The source of the rest of 2000 pesos could not be traced back, but Kaluman said, "I did not borrow any money from Bisaya (Cebuano). All the individuals I transacted with were Sama."

Although there was a certain limitation to mutual assistance in economic terms, they had much mutual emotional support within the group. This support system was more visible among closer relatives. For example, Amdaniya (Manya's mother), who was considered both a "*djin*" and "*panday*" (traditional midwife), often extended her support to sick members and pregnant women related to her either by blood or marriage of her children. There were also times when other elderly members, both males and females, were invited to perform religious rites in their house, according to the needs of the members of the household.

The house where Kaluman's family was living had a typical structure (with a room-less space, thatched roof and walls, and no windows on one side of the walls) to perform indigenous religious rites. This style was also explained to us as being a reflection of Amdaniya's preferred structure. They had a white banner flying on the top of the roof as a sign of seeking God's assistance and protection. Among their groups, only Kaluman's family and the family of Asahi, another "*djin*," had such banners.

Nidaniya told us:

(Nidaniya, recorded on October 27, 1999)

*The Saitan [evil spirits] would come at night. They do not come during the day. [They would come] only at night. So, we do not go out at night. [In order to prevent the "saitan" from bringing harm to them] We perform "pag-tulak" (a religious rite to drive away the saitan) .....[Manya interrupted by saying "God lives in the coconut."] God exists in "sulgaq" (heaven), on a high place (pointing to the sky). Because my husband Muksidil is sick, we keep praying to God under the white banner ("panji").*

Manya and Balmarya told us:

(Manya and Balmarya, recorded on October 14, 1999)

*[When they have a sick person,] Asahi [one of their "djin"s] would come to our house and do this [She showed us how to whisper into the ear of the sick person]. [Not in Arabic] in Sinama, briefly. ....Our mother [Amdaniya] insists that a sick person should be treated in our house.....It is no problem to use wood [such as coconut lumber and plywood], but the walls must be nippa. ....We pray in our house [not in a church where Group Three would gather to pray] because this is the place our mother prays ("simbahan<sup>34</sup>").*

Most of their religious rites were privately observed by their own household members. At most,

they were joined by blood-related close relatives. However, when they held relatively large scale social rites such as “*magpasalamat*” (a thanksgiving rite performed after a sick person recovers) , more people including distant relatives would participate and have a communal meal as members of their “*kampong*.” During the period of our observation, Kaluman’s household held “*pag-mboq*” and “*pakan sumangat*” in May, 1999. The former was held within their own family. They spent only 100 pesos for bananas as offerings. The latter was performed for a particular ancestor who was believed to be causing the illness of Muksidil. All of Muksidil’s siblings gathered for this religious rite, and they spent a total of about 1000 pesos.

Manya and Balmarya told us:

(Manya and Balmarya, recorded on October 14, 1999)

[When Muksidil was sick] *our mother kept praying. He was really dying.....* [But somehow in the end] Kaluman’s prayer helped [Muksidil] recover.....*Muksidil became sick because the father of our mother caused Muksidil trouble.* [The dead father who appeared in Muksidil’s dream was] *asking him to repair our mother’s house*<sup>35</sup> [the house where they were living]. [The house was broken, and so] *when it rained, we could not even eat. Once the house got repaired, Muksidil healed as well.*

Nidaniya told us:

(Nidaniya, recorded on August 27, 1999)

*When we have a sick person, we will pray to God. Especially when the person is dying, first we will perform [pakan] “sumangat,” and if the person heals, we will then weigh him on a balance [“pag-timbang”]. We promised God that we would perform pag-timbang when [my husband] Muksidil healed. Because we prayed to God, Muksidil came to be able to walk again..... We took him to the hospital [Davao Medical Center], too. We spent much money, but they found nothing wrong with him.....[Muksidil became sick] because of my “ungagan*<sup>36</sup>*” (father-in-law). He appeared in Muksidil’s dream and bothered him. So, we prayed to God. We will pray to God again from now. Look. We have got a sack of [young] coconuts.....Kaluman got them for his fish over there [She pointed towards the direction of Japan Pikas] .....*[They reason why we are hoping to hold “*pag-timbang*” when Muksidil physically recovers is that] *Kaluman promised God so.....The rite has not been performed for quite some time by now. When my illness was healed last time, we did not do it. We did not have the money to buy rice then.....It would cost us at least 500 pesos because we need to buy rice,*

“*panyalam*<sup>37</sup>” (sweet rice cake), *bananas, and sugar*. [For the balance] *we use a bamboo pole*. [Hanging the bamboo pole horizontally to the ground from the tree branch or a corner of the roof] *we will circle around it. Like this* [She demonstrated how to do it: the sick person sits on a cloth seat hung from the center of the pole; rice, coconuts and other offerings<sup>38</sup> are tied to one end of the pole; the “*djin*” pushes the other end of the pole to turn it around; and other participants will follow him]. [In the case of Muksidil] *the “djin” because when a male is weighed on a balance, the rite should be led by a male “djin.” Our “djins” are elders. Young ones cannot be “djin,” but they will succeed the old ones later anyway. The old ones are closer to “mboq” (ancestor’s spirit), because they will die soon. When somebody with a spiritual power is about to die, he or she could give such power as a “djin” [to somebody else] . For example, when Muksidil’s father died, he gave his spiritual power to his brother [Asahi].*  
 .....[The souls of the dead will not go up to the sky but they] *will go to Babak [ the name of a place in Samal Island, where their graveyard is located] . We make “balay-balay”<sup>39</sup>*  
 [something like a small house] *for the dead, and place a “sundok” (stone) . The grave looks like a small boat, you know. The size is about one meter long.*

However, the rite that they performed to thank God for the recovery of Muksidil was not “*pag-timbang*,” but “*pag-hinang ni Tuhan*.”

Manya and Balmarya told us:

(Manya and Balmarya, recorded on October 14, 1999)

[*Mboq*] *dwell there* [Facing to the common space of *Hong Kong* from the inside of their house, they pointed at the wall on the right side that had no windows]. *Praying to the “mboq” means that we will become better persons. Sometimes, “mboq” make us sick. Then, it is “Tuhan” (God) that will heal us. But we pray to “mboq” [not directly to God]. [Those religious rites to which they invite many guests are] “pag-timbang” and “pag-hinan ni Tuhan.” It has been quite some time since we performed them last. The meanings [of the two rites] are the same. The last time [when she saw “pag-timbang”] was long time ago, perhaps in Zamboanga. It was before our marriage.....Here [in Hong Kong] we no longer perform “pag-timbang.” I wish we could have done it for Muksidil, though..... It would cost us more money to perform it [than “pag-hinan ni Tuhan”] because we need to buy more things such as bananas, ripe coconuts [“lubi”], young coconuts [“botong”] , [unhusked] rice.....Our “djin” is Asahi [their eldest brother], for he has succeeded spiritual power from the father of our mother. ....I do not think we ever performed “pag-hinang ni Tuhan” when we were in Sangali, but [here in Hong Kong] we were able to perform it thanks to Asahi [who knows how to do it] .*

One time, we had a chance to observe “*pag-hinang ni Tuhan*” celebrated by Kaluman’s household. The rite was performed from the evening of August 30 to the dawn of August 31, 1999. Sama-Bajau’s religious rites in the research site would not follow a particular calendar (e.g. farming calendar for farmers) . Sometimes we could expect a certain rite to be held, yet we could not really know exactly when it would be held until the very last moment. Indeed, it was only one day before the rite that we were informed of their plan. As they invited us to join the rite, they also asked us to contribute 500 pesos to help with the expenses.

Aside from the members of Kaluman’s household, many people participated in the rite. There were Muksidil’s family, four siblings of Manya’s and their families and relatives, and more. Although most of them were from the neighborhood of *Hong Kong*, some of the faces were not familiar to us. Their house became so full that one could hardly find room to make way. Under the pale bluish white light of the only florescent tube they had, Balkaya (the eldest sister of Manya) was preparing offerings with help of Balmarya (her younger sister): They put cooked rice on a large-sized silver colored plate, and molded the rice into a cone-shape; then, they layered cooked cassava and bananas around the rice; and they also prepared fresh water in a large pitcher, and a small bowl with charcoal to burn in it. The offerings were placed on a hand-woven mat placed in front of the wall without windows (practically in the center of the house).

At dawn of the next day, young “*djins*” including Asahi gathered around the offerings, and then an elder male, who was called a “grandfather” of Manya and her siblings, was called in. This elder person led the rite, praying in the Sinama language over the smoke of the charcoal in the bowl, and the young ones followed him. The rite was completed with a communal meal by sharing and eating the offerings among the participants. Some parts of the offerings were also delivered to the houses of the guests who could not come for some reason. We could not count exactly how many households received such gifts, but it was not understandable why they needed to buy such a large amount of rice, coconuts, cassava, sugar, and bananas. After the rite, Kaluman said their household contributed 1,000 pesos, which indeed included our 500-peso donation.

The other religious rites that we observed among this group during the period of our survey in 1999 included “*pag-mboq sulakaq*” (commemoration of ancestors in which young coconuts are used as a main item of the offerings). The rite was decided to be performed when Asahi (Manya’s eldest brother) dreamed of a particular relative who had been dead. He suggested that

they should offer food and prayers in order to reconcile with the spirit of the dead and ask for health. Although the members of Kaluman's household did not directly participate in the rite held in Asahi's house, some of the offerings were delivered to Kaluman's house. Then, Amdaniya guided us to eat them together as a communal meal.

After the celebration of "*pag-hinan ni Tuhan*," Muksidil, who completely regained his health, resumed joining the fishing activities. He looked full of joy. One day in December, 1999, however, he died a sudden death at sea. On that night he and his mates were fishing in Tibanban. He dove into the water in order to collect the long line, and somehow, the line entangled his foot and would not let him go. The darkness prevented his mates from seeing him under the water. When they felt something wrong and dove into the water, they found that he had drowned. Manya was in tears when she shared this news with us. Beside Manya, her daughter Chaberita tried to show us how much suffering his uncle must have experienced at the final moment, choking her neck with her little hands and agonizing. This tragedy did not change their trust in God, though; they would keep flying a white banner on top of their roof.

As we have seen so far, the religious practices in the kampong that Kaluman's household belonged to were quite visible, and we were able to clearly identify who the religious leaders were when religious rites were observed. However, once it comes to economic and political aspects, who leads what activity became vague. In other words, there was no particular person who integrated this group as a social organization to present it politically to the wider society. Fishing was a common livelihood in this group, but there was no large-scale operation that all the households took part in; they operated independently as small groups. Yet, when they happened to meet during the fishing activities, they would not mind cooking together on the shore. On the whole, this group tended to close itself to outsiders: even when government agencies and/or NGOs offered assistance, they would not accept it easily unless the intentions of such outsiders were clear to them. In this sense, the kampong as they defined seemingly functioned as a means of collective protection against unknown outsiders, rather than as a means to negotiate with such.

### **3.2 Differences among the poor "Bajau" in *Hong Kong***

Kaluman's group did not have economic relations with other groups in *Hong Kong*. As far as social and religious rites are concerned, they participated in weddings held in *Hong Kong*, where they eventually had chances to meet Sama-Bajau neighbors.

Manya also remembered that the entire community of the Sama-Bajau in *Hong Kong* held “*pag-patulak*” together some time in 1996. They decided to perform this particular rite because many fellow Sama-Bajau fell ill at that time. Manya explained to us, “in order to drive away the ‘*saitan*’ dwelling in the rock, we offered a lot of food, cigarettes, betel nuts, and other things arranged in a miniature boat.” Every household contributed about 10 pesos for the offerings. The rite itself was led by an elderly man from Majarya’s group (Group Five in this book). Bairayng’s group (Group Two, mostly *Sama Deyaq*) also joined the rite. However, Manya recalled that few from Pastor Joseph’s neighborhood (most of them had embraced the Christian faith by that time) came.

Manya and Nidaniya told us:

(Manya and Nidaniya, recorded on October 24, 1999)

[When we hold relatively large-scaled religious rites] *we would invite everybody in our neighborhood. Even Majarya’s group [Group Five], too. Majarya’s group has not joined [Christian] churches yet. They still pray to “mboq.” But we would not call them [Papa Melcito’s group, Group Three]. They are different because they go to Christian church. We doubt that Melcito still has spiritual power. We hear that he goes to church now, right?*

Since many of the members of both Kaluman’s and Majarya’s groups once lived in Sangi and Margosatubig before they migrated to *Hong Kong*, they shared a sense of closeness to one another to a certain degree. Nonetheless, we sometimes heard the former claiming the inferiority of the latter, if not overtly.

Kalinin told us:

(Kaluman, recorded on December 1, 1999)

*Let’s say, if our houses are here [built over the shore], theirs [the houses of Group Five] are over there [he pointed to the sea]. [When they were still in Sangali] they were living in houses, I mean, which were actually boats. Besides, they only operated “panaq” [spear fishing] then. They did not know how to use “bubu” [fish traps], or fishing lines, either. They were only doing spear fishing, only in shallow waters. Well, sometimes, they dove deep also, as deep as fifteen “dupas” [fathoms] or 20 “dupas” [fathoms].....Even their females, even Majarya, were doing spear fishing in those days.....Yet, it seems like that they have given up catching fish recently, and they have started pearl vending business, instead. They say there are no more fish, and they have quit fishing. (We asked Kaluman, “do you also think that there are no more fish?”) There*



*are still fish. It may be true, though, there are less fish now. But what matters here is not the amount of the fish available but their laziness.*

Manya and Balmarya told us:

(Manya and Balmarya, recorded on September 28, 1999)

*Those people there [members of Majarya's group, Group Five] are always like that [going begging]. They have got used to begging here [in Davao City]. You know, they used to do spear fishing before..... [The fishing method the group in question knows how to use is] only spear fishing. They do not know how to use fish traps. But you know, "bubu" fishing is not always more productive than "panaq" fishing. Even "palangre" [long-line fishing] could be less productive than "panaq" fishing. Look at Kaluman. Last time, he was able to bring us lapu-lapu fish [groupers], but this time he came home empty handed. Fish catch is so unpredictable.*

Other negative characteristics about Group Five that Kaluman, Manya and other members of their group described included "tiny" things we could not really see until they mentioned them: the group even lacked a small raft to cross the waters at high tide, not because they could not afford the materials but because they were too lazy; and the group generally lived in houses made of cheap materials (using coconut leaves instead of "nippa" for roofs, for example). While Kaluman's says, "the Bajau (in *Hong Kong*) are equally poor, we are all same," and other members of his group mostly agreed with his point of view, they insisted to us that they should be considered different from Group Five.

### **3.3 Going fishing with help of "suki" (regular customers)**

Kaluman's household regularly recorded expenditures on food, light, fuel and water expenses, and medical expenses during the period of our observation in 1999. While their monthly average expenditures reached nearly 5,000 pesos, their average estimated cash income per month did not reach even a half of it. To make both ends meet, they needed to borrow cash and/or buy goods on credit.

When they did not have enough cash to buy rice (their staple), kerosene, and other basic goods, they would ask Cecil's store, a sari-sari store run by a Cebuano, to get them such necessities on credit. The store was located slightly outside the area of *Hong Kong*, but it was actually closer to Kaluman's house than Asis's store (run by a Tausug) located within *Hong Kong*. Manya

explained to us that they would not have to pay interest, and that there was no clearly stated payback period, either. She added, though, that it should be better to pay back as soon as possible so that one could be allowed to continue to buy the goods on credit.

Manya told us:

(Manya, recorded on August 27, 1999)

*Even if the Tausug [living in Hong Kong] allowed us to borrow money, we would rather not borrow, because we are afraid. [Back in Sangali] we never borrowed money from them, either. If we failed to pay back the debts, our men [husbands and/or sons] might be taken away for good [implying that they might be killed in compensation for the unpaid debts]. [Over here in Hong Kong] we seldom borrow from Asis's store [owned by a Taugus] . We would not pawn "malong" [a traditional tube skirt] there, either. If we failed to redeem it, the "malong" would never be returned to us. Such a pity.....[When they need a relatively small amount of money for gasoline for fishing operations or food on credit] we would rather go to the store over there [Cecile's store owned by a Cebuano].*

As far as Kaluman's fishing operations are concerned, he had some "suki" (regular customers) in Davao City. All of them were Christian fish vendors, who had booths in fish sections of Agdao Public Market and Salmonan Public Market, both close to Isla Bella. Kaluman would borrow 200 to 300 pesos from them so that he could purchase gasoline for fishing trips as well as materials for making new fishing gear. For example, in December, 1999, Kaluman borrowed 500 pesos to make "bubu." In return, Kaluman would allow those creditors to exclusively buy his fish at the prices they set. His debts would be deducted from the total price of his fish.

Kaluman also had two Christian "suki" in Tibanban, his main fishing ground. These two people were fish buyers. Kaluman called them "financer." The social relationship between Kaluman and those fish buyers were limited to economic transactions particularly in the fishing business. In other words, they were not in so-called patron-client relationship that could include a wider social and political relationship. It is undeniable, however, that the existence of those fish buyers as his regular customers made it possible for Kaluman to continue his fishing activities. Especially, after he got a new fishing boat, the transactions with his "suki" became more frequent. Kaluman's group was the only group in Hong Kong that had non-Sama "suki" capitalists or fish buyers who would link him to the market.

Kaluman's fishing catch would fluctuate, and so would his income from fishing. Sometimes, he

could hardly earn any cash after his debts were deducted from the total price of his catch. The money he borrowed was mostly spent according to his needs without consulting much with his wife or other members of his family. Thus, the rest of the family could not expect to use any of his money for their basic needs.

Manya always had difficulty making ends meet while her husband was away. She had to struggle even harder when they took Muksidil's family under their wings in June, 1999. At the time, she ran out of secondhand clothes to sell, which made it doubly difficult for her to secure enough food for her own family. This predicament forced the female members, namely Manya, Balmarya, and Amdaniya, to pawn all the jewelry that they visibly possessed<sup>40</sup> for 2,000 pesos in cash. They would never be able to redeem these items.

Mamia and Balmarya would purchase stocks of second-hand clothing with cash. They had very few particular retailers or wholesalers they regularly transacted with; rather, they would find such traders on the spot everyday. In a sense, their business took a form of a bundle of short-term transactions in the market. Nonetheless, Manya had a female Visayan retailer to resort to once she ran out of money. Then, this Visayan retailer who had a "ukay-ukay" booth in Bankerohan Market would consign Manya to sell second-hand clothing. Although we had seen Sama-Bajau males selling shells and pearls on a commission basis, a Sama-Bajau selling "ukay-ukay" on consignment was rather rare at that time.

Compared with the two groups in the higher community status, Kaluman's group showed many fewer transactions with the local government during the period of our observation in 1999. This situation was relatively new, though. Actually, there used to be an "Official Badjao Leader" appointed by Barangay Captain in the corner where Kaluman's group resided. This leader was a land-based Sama (*Sama Deyaq*) who identified himself to us simply as "Sama" rather than "Badjao." He also showed us an ID card to prove that he used to be a member of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Then he claimed being responsible for "securing the peace and order" for the "Badjao," especially those who belonged to Group Four and Group Five in our book.

This leader, however, lost his authority when police from Sta. Ana Police Station raided his house with a warrant on an early Christmas morning. Even in 1998, the year before we started our monthly household survey, he was suspected of pirating activities. Indeed, the police discovered many engines for fishing boats with counterfeited register numbers and other items. After this incident, he could never recover his "official" connections with the Barangay as a

political intermediary for the Sama-Bajau in this particular neighborhood. Besides, as some of Kaluman's close relatives (Sohirin and others) were eventually involved in the case, Kaluman's group came to distance itself from the former leader.

Throughout the period of our observation in 1999, Kaluman's group received little assistance from the government at any level. At the same time, they did not take any initiatives to approach the government to ask for help no matter what crisis they had to endure, either. Instead, they would rather search for any individuals who seemed "kind enough" and thus whom they could trust to transact with as their partners for credit and/or any kind of assistance. As a matter of fact, my research assistant and I came to be counted as such individuals in the course of our research as well: they would call us "kampong"; and we were expected to be there to contribute to the construction of their fishing boat, their medical costs, and other necessities.

When Kaluman's group failed to find such "kind" individuals, they, especially females, elders, and children, would have to resort to begging. This fact indicates the socioeconomic vulnerability of this group.

### **3.4 How much could they differentiate themselves from the "Sama Palau"?**

Kaluman and Manya denied being identified as "Sama Palau" (Sama of the house), saying that they had never had any ancestors who dwelled in a houseboat without having a land house so long as they could recall. In terms of the previous places of residence, this group could be called "Sama Sangali" or "Sama Margos (Margosatubig for short)" just like Group Five in this book. But most of the members of Kaluman's group insisted that they should be considered as different from Group Five, most of whom used to live in houseboats<sup>41</sup>.

Nidaniya told us:

(Nidaniya, recorded on August 27, 1999)

[We have] *never lived in a houseboat*. [Those who used to live in houseboats were] *Majarya's group [Group Five] did, though. Their group would approach foreign freight ships visiting a port. For begging. You know, they would dive for coins thrown [into the sea from those ships] and get them.*

Manya told us:

(Manya, recorded on August 27 and November 19, 1999)

[Majarya's group, or Group Five] *sometimes lived in a houseboat, and at other times lived in a [land] house.....I often saw them living in houseboats with roofs in Sangali. ....But we have never lived in a boat.....I am afraid of strong winds and tidal waves. I have lived only in a [land] house.....Besides, how can we get our food if we were only floating in the sea all the time? We are different from Majarya and her fellow ones. Although it is true that we lived in the same neighborhood in Sangali, we were not close enough to talk with them..... Of course, Majyaria and her fellow females would accompany their husbands for fishing, because their fishing boats themselves were their houses. And that's what makes them "Sama Palau."*

In terms that Kaluman's group was called "Bajau" as much as the rest of the Sama-Bajau in Isla Bella was in Davao City, Kaluman's group shared a common consciousness as "Bajau." Unlike other groups, however, this group showed little tendency to use the "Bajau" label in order to gain any assistance from non-Sama-Bajau populations in the surrounding society. In other words, they seldom manipulated their self-identification to others.

While they would not mind calling themselves "Bajau" in the eyes of non-Sama-Bajau populations outside their own community, they would rather identify themselves simply as "Sama" towards Muslim populations in Davao City. Ever since we met them, they had always told us that they were neither Muslim nor Christian, and that they had their own indigenous beliefs. Indeed, such emphasis on their own faith distinguished Kaluman's group from other groups in Isla Bella at that time.

During our observation, Kaluman and most of the male members of his group were still fishermen. So long as fishing contributed to their household incomes, even if not substantially any more, they would not have any reason to present the image of the "poor Bajau asking for pity" towards non-Sama-Bajau populations outside their community. In other words, "being the Bajau in the eyes of others" was not yet used as a strategy by this group to survive in the urban market society of Davao City. At the same time, though, it is not deniable that some of the households in this group, especially those that had lost their fishing boats, were experiencing economic hardships, and some members of such households became beggars on a rather regular basis. In this sense, it was quite uncertain how far they could insist on their "not being Bajau" like Majarya's group just because the former did not have memories of living in the household in the past, and the latter did.

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<sup>1</sup> There are two communities in Isla Bella that I refer to frequently in my narrative: *Hong Kong* and

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*Japan Pikas*. In order to avoid any confusion with Hong Kong, the city-state in the People's Republic of China, I write the names of these two communities in italics.

<sup>2</sup> The Tausug were also called "Joloano" and "Sug" by the Sama Bajau in the research site. To avoid confusion, however, I use "Tausug" in this chapter except for the context in which the original term should be retained.

<sup>3</sup> *Lansium domesticum*. It has round-shaped, two to three centimeter in diameter, semi-transparent juicy and sweet fruits in whitish yellow skins.

<sup>4</sup> Kaluman told us that he had quit blast fishing since he got married because he did not want to be arrested for his illegal fishing activities.

<sup>5</sup> It was only after Kaluman settled in Davao City that he started using a fishing boat with an engine.

<sup>6</sup> Kaluman and Manya told me that although the Simana languages they used had different accents and vocabulary, it was fairly easy for them to communicate with each other. In their household, the Sinama that Manya and her maternal relatives used was dominantly used for mutual communication.

<sup>7</sup> For the details of our monthly survey on this household, see Appendix Three.

<sup>8</sup> The bubu in the research site in those days came in various sizes. They could be larger or smaller than the one the author describes here.

<sup>9</sup> As of June 7, 1999, one liter of gasoline cost fourteen pesos.

<sup>10</sup> Kaluman told us, in a rather surprised manner, that Majarya's kinship group would eat dolphins, but we were not able to validate the information.

<sup>11</sup> For the prices for other fish, see Appendix Three.

<sup>12</sup> A length between the thumb and the index finger when one's palm is stretched out. Some people uses their middle finger instead of their index finger.

<sup>13</sup> It took him quite some time to have his boat registered at the local government after he secured one. Besides, he had no official permit to operate subsistence fishing.

<sup>14</sup> On February 4 in 2002, we interviewed Engineer Tommy Abuela at Marine Industry Authority under the Department of Transportation and Communication in Davao City. We learned from him that small boats less than three gross tons should be registered at Coast Guard. For the registration, seven different documents including official receipts of the purchase of the engine and a photo of the boat were requested. Once registered, the Coast Guard would issue four documents including the registration number of the boat and operation permit. The documents should be basically prepared in the English language, which made it harder for the Sama-Bajau in the research site to go through the registration procedures. To encourage the poor to register their boats, though, the office would conduct a "campaign" with the registration fees reduced to 250 pesos (regular fees was 550 pesos) from time to time. Indeed, when we took the interview, such campaign was going on

<sup>15</sup> Angel was one of the few members of this kinship group who had accepted Christianity, Southern Baptist in particular, back then. He commuted to a church outside Isla Bella to attend worship services. One of his brothers-in-law served as a Sama pastor in the church.

<sup>16</sup> The raid by police, which resulted in the confiscation of the engine, will be described in the 3.3 of this chapter. The rumor about this event spread to other kinship groups in the research site. For example, Papa Melcito (in Group Three) said to us, "Perhaps, they bought the engine without knowing that it was a stolen one."

<sup>17</sup> When Kaluman still had his own boat, he had a "*suki*" (regular customer) who was a Cebuano owner of a fish shop at Salmonan Market (a market located at the mouth of Isla Bella). This fish buyer would provide him with operating capital for his fishing activities, and Kaluman would pay back the debt by his catch. However, this relationship was automatically dissolved once Kaluman lost the boat.

<sup>18</sup> Some Cebuano fishermen who used the same fishing technique told us that they could earn 200 to 1,000 pesos per operation. Kaluman's answer could be underestimated even if it indicated the amount after deducting all the cost including the credit from fish buyers.

<sup>19</sup> The distribution of the net profits from each catch was usually computed by dividing the total amount by the number of crew plus one for the boat owner. In this case, Kaluman who was the owner of the boat as well as one of the crew should receive two thirds, while Amel Moniya, one third, given Kaluman's son did not count due to his young age. However, Kaluman sometimes

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agreed to give Amel Moniya a half of the total amount due to the father-and-son relationship.

<sup>20</sup> Although Moksolin mainly served as a driver for their fishing boat, sometimes he also dove into the water as a “*pana*” operator.

<sup>21</sup> Northeast wind (“*amihan*”) blows from October to December. According to Kaluman, “*palangre*” could be operated both in “*amihan*” and “*habagat*” (the southwest wind that blows from June to September). They could expect a larger catch during the time between the new moon to the quarter moon so long as they read the currents properly. If the currents are too fast, it becomes harder to operate or collect the fishing gear. If the wind is too strong, they would cancel their fishing trips to avoid predictable accidents at sea.

<sup>22</sup> “*Ulitawo*” and “*dalaga*” in this context refer to teenage boys and girls at early adolescence. These Cebuano terms also mean young males and females at “marriageable age.” In the case of girls, the first period serves as a typical marker for one to enter the life stage of “*dalaga*.”

<sup>23</sup> The fish we often observed them eating include “*molmol*” (parrotfish), “*pirit*” (mackerel tuna), “*tamban*” (sardines) and “*tulingan*” (a kind of mackerel). They preferred cooking fresh fish to cooking dried ones, for the latter tastes salty. However, because of its lower price, they sometimes resorted to buying dried fish as a substitute for fresh fish.

<sup>24</sup> Occasionally, they used “*Ajinomoto*” as well.

<sup>25</sup> Given the budget constraints, they tended to prioritize securing staple food (cassava) over fish and other stuff that they needed for side dishes.

<sup>26</sup> Aside from the financial and psychological costs, they tended to keep a sick person in their house where they believe ancestor spirits (*mboq*) dwell in the walls and help to restore the order in exchange for their demanded rites.

<sup>27</sup> Ada (The Wife of Gwapo, Group One in the original Japanese book) who had had safely given birth to ten children at home reported having had a tubal ligation to prevent undesired pregnancy.

<sup>28</sup> At that time, free services available at the community health center included birth control pills and IUDs.

<sup>29</sup> We later learned that Patma had been contacting Christian missionaries from a Baptist Church located in Davao City for some time by the time of our observation and interview. Her narratives here might have reflected the new religious language she had been acquiring from those evangelists.

<sup>30</sup> Since we did not gather statistical data on child mortality rate among the general population in our research site, we should not generalize Manya’s experience. However, it was not uncommon to meet mothers who told us they had lost their babies literally as babies. Some of them related their babies’ deaths to tetanus [to cut the umbilical cord from the placenta in case of home birth, traditional midwives would use a bamboo knife which is supposedly sterilized by boiled water], while others, to diarrhea and measles.

<sup>31</sup> Kaluman and Manya told us that they would not mind their children’s marrying someone from non-Sama-Bajau ethnic group(s) so long as he or she was kind and understood the significance of mutual help among them.

<sup>32</sup> After the period of our observation ended, Patma was arrested on charges of “child abuse” during her daily begging activities in down town. She was detained in a city jail for a while.

<sup>33</sup> Aside from the total amount recorded here, we donated 2,000 pesos as Kaluman and Manya pushed us to do so rather seriously.

<sup>34</sup> “*Simbahan*” is a Cebuano word meaning a place to pray, or simply a church.

<sup>35</sup> According to Kaluman, this particular ancestor asked for “repair of the house and food.” This is most probably why the household held “*pakan sumangat*” in May 1999.

<sup>36</sup> It refers to Amadaniya’s father in this particular context.

<sup>37</sup> Manya and other female members of this household reported not knowing how to make this type of rice cake. When they held “*pag-hinan ni Tuhan*” for Muksidil, they asked female Sama neighbors to make it for them. They provided the ingredients and paid 100 pesos for the cooking.

<sup>38</sup> Since we never had a chance to observe the rite, we do not know exactly what “other offerings” meant in Nidaniya’s narrative. According to Bottingnolo (1995), wood and water also could be put on the pole for “*pag-timbang*.”

<sup>39</sup> She used the Cebuano term here. In Sinama, it is called “*lumaq-lumaq*.”

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<sup>40</sup> It was common among the Sama-Bajau in *Hong Kong* that they would not wear any jewelry or gold-plated wrist watches when they went outside for their businesses, either selling something or begging. Instead, they would leave such items to those who remain in the community. Given the situation, it was rather difficult to learn how much jewelry they had from our daily observation. Weddings and other relatively formal social events where females would fully dress up with gold jewelry would offer us great opportunities to estimate how much jewelry they could possibly own.

<sup>41</sup> Some of the households that we interviewed in Kaluman's group reported having dwelled in houseboats in the past. We also heard from several members of the group that Amdaniya (Manya's mother) must have experienced living in houseboats.