

Living in the City as the Sama-Bajau: A Case Study of Guwapo's Family¹

AOYAMA Waka *

Summary

Cluster One, pearl and shell vendors group: This report concerns the study of a cluster of the Sinama speaking population, commonly called the “Bajau,” located in Isla Bella, Davao City, Mindanao, the Philippines. Within the “Bajau community” in Isla Bella, Sama-Bajau families were generally absorbed into larger leader-centered groups, households (*lumaq*) and clusters (*kamong*), which together wove the organizational context for many of social undertakings. There were five clusters in our research site from 1997 to 1999 with different social statuses within the community, of which Cluster One was ranked the highest in social standing. This cluster was composed of six households, all related to each other. They lived separated from the rest of the Sama-Bajau, in an area called “*China Pikas*,” mixed with other ethnic groups. Males of an income-producing age from this cluster engaged in selling pearls and shells at resort hotels, while females were homemakers and/or self-employed in non-fishing sectors. This chapter deals with a case study of a single household from the cluster, including its social relations with other households of the cluster. Members of this household, land-based Sama originally from Zamboanga City,

1) This manuscript is a direct self-translation of Chapter Five, originally entitled “Guapo’s family: business, faith and education,” 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. For the same reason, all the footnotes and two sections except for their headlines were omitted. 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 the five cases. In this particular case, Guwapo’s household contained a single nuclear family. I would like to express my gratitude to my colleagues of Harvard-Yenching Institute Dissertation Writing Workshop, and my mentor and discussant, Professor Theodore C. Bestor (Reischchaur Professor of Social Anthropology at Harvard University), for their support and comments on this chapter. I am also indebted to my editors, Ting Tiongco and James Hallowell, for their patience and guidance with my self-translation project.

* Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, the University of Tokyo, 7-3-1 Hongo, Bunkyo, Tokyo, 113-0033 Japan.
E-mail: waka@ioc.tu-tokyo.ac.jp

preserved cultural aspects of Sama heritage in daily life through practices of social and religious events. In business, however, they strategically manipulated the image of their being “Bajau” to potential customers in Davao City who had no way of discerning them from the sea-based Sama. Such identity manipulation helped them thrive in business, resulting in a relatively higher economic standard of living in the urban settlement. They showed more skill and diligence as pearl and shell vendors than those in the other clusters. Parents also recognized the importance of formal education for their children. As inter-ethnic marriages were rather common, increased contacts with non-Sama populations brought changes in their perspectives of life in the urban settlement. While Sinama was still the common language, their children spoke Cebuano, Filipino (Tagalog) and English as well. In general, they were content with who they were; they seldom presented their identities towards others in self-deprecating manners.

I Growing up as a vendor’s son

The household head was called Guwapo. It was not his real name, as is often the case in the Philippines. Guwapo is the Filipino diminutive of “mestiso,” a Spanish word for half-breed, a product of two or more races, especially fair-skinned ones. Guwapo’s skin, although rather tanned, remained pinkish and was an indication of the fair skin he must have been born with. Aware of this, he would say to new acquaintances, “You see, my father was American,” just to see how they would react to his joke. He was a neat person with his head shaven and mustache clipped. He carried himself well and his posture gave the impression that he was more comfortable and relaxed in life than those sea-based Sama dwelling in dilapidated shanties (no longer in houseboats) on the other side of Isla Bella. His physical appearance clearly stated that he was city-bred, and in that sense, his looks lacked the quality that people would generally associate with the mendicant image of the “Bajau” in Davao City. Nobody would easily identify him as “Bajau.” Nonetheless, Guwapo called himself so, and so did many people around him.

Guwapo was born in 1961 in Rio Hondo, Zamboanga City in the Province of Zamboanga del Sur. His father was a half-breed Chinese-Cebuano who was a mechanic. He disappeared after the birth of Guwapo. His mother, Aniya, who called herself “Bajau,” was a sea diver, who gathered coral and shells, and sold them for a living. Guwapo’s early memories, at the age of nine or ten, were of diving for coins and bottles thrown from cargo

ships.

Most of his mother's relatives were vendors in those days. They engaged in barter trade along the shore with those who came by from cargo ships. As far as he could recall, they never engaged in fishing as a livelihood. Amdaniya, Guwapo's aunt on his mother side, remembered those days vividly. Amdaniya's narration: (translated from Cebuano into English)

I learned [how to run the business] from my parents because they were also vendors. From my father's generation to my child's generation, we have been engaged in this type of business...[as she recalls life in the past] We dove for coral. When we returned home, we cleaned and polished the pieces we had collected until it all shone. We dried the coral under the sun to be ready for sale. Then we peddled it [in the town]. Aside from the coral, we sold flowers, shells and stones ["bato", including some types of coral] we gathered along the seashore. We also sold our goods to the cargo ships, which we approached by "bangka"[small boats]. In those days [estimated from 1960s to early 1970s] we traded with various customers, Japanese, American, Tagalog, Cebuano, and many others...I spoke English to the Americans, and Japanese to the Japanese. You know. I have never attended school, but I can speak many languages. I cannot write them, but I can speak them...If you look at my palm [for palm reading], you will see it reads my partner [of marriage] would not be a foreigner [laughter]. Look at my grandchildren. They were married to Cebuanos by fate. Just like my fate was to marry a Yakan. That's why I married [my late husband]. (recorded on August 19, 1999)

Tabin, the husband of Aniya's sister Amdaniya, also recalled:

There was an American company making coral decorations. Sometimes we sold a bulk of coral to the company...The name of the owner was Robinson. We communicated with him in Chabacano [rather than in English]. We often stayed on an island for about a week and gathered a large amount of coral. Then we brought it home to Zamboanga [City] and sold it. Well, about 6,000 pieces ["You mean, that's the amount of money you could earn from selling them at that time?," we asked.] No, I'm talking about the amount of coral we would collect a week. We went to the seashore where they [the Americans] came in trucks for our coral. They counted how much we had collected and

paid us. [“Did you dive into the sea for the coral?”, we asked.] Yes. [“The ‘Bajau’ who live in Macao of Isla Bella used to dive for coral also when they were still in Zamboanga City?”, we asked.] No, [in those days], they engaged in “pana”[spear gun] fishing. Otherwise, they were beggars...It’s like we were Americans, while they were Norwegians. I mean, we were better than they were [in terms of the community status]. Besides, we could communicate in any language, even if we knew only a smattering. [“Are you not ‘Bajau’?”, we asked.] No! I am Laminusa.(recorded on October 15, 1999)

Guwapo’s mother, Aniya, had a distinct tendency, recognized among her relatives, to be a vagabond. Guwapo remembered that one time, in the mid-sixties, he accompanied her wandering from Rio Hondo to Davao when he was about five years old. Otherwise, as a little child, he spent most of the time with his aunt, Amdaniya, in Rio Hondo while his mother was far away, wandering somewhere else.

In the early seventies, the tension between Muslim separatists and the Philippine government heightened in Mindanao. The peace and security deteriorated in Zamboanga City. It was no time for anybody to gather and sell coral. In 1974, Guwapo and Aniya left their house in Rio Hondo and fled to Davao City. It was then that Isla Bella was beginning to emerge as a habitable islet.

However, making a living in the new place was not easy for Guwapo and Aniya. After a short time in Isla Bella, they moved to Olongapo City (Zambales Province, Central Luzon Region). There they started a “buy and sell” business to survive day to day. Peddling various kinds of dry goods, they continued to move from one place to another, wandering back and forth between the cities such as Olongapo, Davao, Manila, Cebu, and Zamboanga. Guwapo recalled how often he had moved from one school to another in those days:

When I was in grade one and grade two, I went to an elementary school in Rio Hondo, and then I attended grade three and four [at a school] in Davao, and returned to Rio Hondo to finish grade five and six, and went onto high school [which he dropped out at the end of the first year]. We kept moving from place to place! When I was in Davao, I had an opportunity to work with a circus called “Expo 70.” In other places, I worked as a newspaper vendor, shoe polisher, “ice-drop”[Filipino version of popsicles] peddler, and so on. I did not mind at all doing any kind of job to earn, you know. (recorded on October 28, 1999)

In those days, Guwapo and Aniya still maintained their house in Rio Hondo. However, it was becoming harder for the "Bajau" to stay there because the number of Tausugs, a dominant Muslim group, drastically increased. These people were refugees, escaping from other war-affected areas in Sulu. Moreover, the security condition of Zamboanga City itself had been deteriorating without any sign of improvement.

It was in 1982 that Guwapo and Aniya finally decided to sell their house in Rio Hondo to a Tausug. They moved to Davao City and settled in Isla Bella. Being pioneer settlers with no family members or relatives to offer them a place to live, they lived in a small boat, locally called "*bangka*," for some time. They roofed the boat with nipa leaves and moored it near the shore as their temporary dwelling. Their neighbors naturally took them to be sea-based "Bajau" migrants.

Ada, Guwapo's wife, accompanied them, starting a new life together in Davao City. She shared her story on how she met Guwapo when they were still in Zamboanga.

[It was not an arranged marriage.] *We were in love. Yet I was not quite sure if it was a true love or not. So, I did not really expect us to get married. It was puppy love. I was only fourteen years old when I met him. At the time, he [Guwapo] was seeing other girls, and I had more than ten suitors, too. [The boys could see her] because I was attending a sari-sari [local version of a small convenience store] that our family ran at the corner of our house. You see, in those days, there were not many opportunities for girls to go outside because parents kept their daughters at home. Say, it was only once a month that they allowed their daughters to go out...I watched a movie only once. There was also a time I got sick and threw up in a "dypni" [public utility vehicle] because of motion sickness [she was not used to riding]...Have you experienced "harana"?* ["You mean, a serenade wherein the man comes to the house of the lady he admires and courts, and sings for her as she listens near the window inside the house," we replied to her]. *That's right. Isn't it so romantic to listen to such serenade at daybreak? Every one of my suitors came and sang for me. All but one, and it was Guwapo. He was the only one who did not know how to serenade at all.* (recorded on September 24, 1999)

Ada claimed herself as a "half-Bajau" whose father was Tausug. Just like Guwapo, she was

born and raised in Rio Hondo. Her father worked with the local government. Being Muslim, he had three wives and fifteen children. Ada's mother was the second wife. The only complaint that Ada had about her parents was that they would not allow her to go to school. But she was well trained in domestic duties such as cleaning, washing, cooking, and raising and caring for children. For this, she was ever thankful to her parents. When she was young, she used to sit and prepare milk formulas for as many as six children at a time. They were her nephews and nieces. She enjoyed imagining her own married life in the future. But when she got married, it was the beginning of a difficult time in her life, something which she had never expected before. She shared her story on Rio Hondo, telling us how quickly Rio Hondo, a peaceful settlement cultivated through their own efforts, turned into a war-affected area:

[The name of the place, Rio Hondo, is] *Spanish. The place where we used to live in was thick with mangrove trees. My grandfather explored and cultivated the land to make it habitable... You know, my grandfather and his companions discovered the place. At first, there were no more than ten houses. There were still many "saitan" [spirits] dwelling in the place. But my grandfather was not afraid of them. If you ever did anything wrong and made those spirits angry, you had to give them food as offerings. The spirits were not visible, though. So people like my grandfather filled up the spots [where the sprits were believed to dwell] with sand and stones, and the place became a "barrio" [an equivalent of "barangay," the smallest administrative division in the Philippines at that time]. One side [of the place] was land, but the other side was a river. It was situated at mouth of the river. [The location relationship of the places was that] there was Mariki, and next to it was a bridge, and then our place [down river]. So it was called Rio Hondo [meaning a deep river]. There were many rivulets, and the current was strong. So whenever we crossed the river, our small boat had to be pulled by a rope from the other side. [Around the place] the tide would continually come in and out, and it was a place of mangrove trees where the river and the sea met and mixed...[In the neighborhood] once I mentioned the name of grandfather, saying "My grandfather is Hadji Panoling," everybody recognized the name right away and responded, "Oh yes, we knew him!" My grandfather and his companion journeyed by ship [to Mecca] and stayed there for three months [and that was why people called him "Hadji"]...[From the early seventies and the early eighties] you know, the war [armed*

conflicts between the Philippine Government and the Muslim separatists] *in Jolo heightened. So Tausug people who escaped from Jolo started flowing into Zamboanga [City]. Tausug refugees came into Rio Hondo, too, and we sold our house to such people. The price was 5,000 pesos and it was a lot of money at that time. The reason why we left Rio Hondo was that we wanted to live longer. Our life in Rio Hondo in those days was trouble-ridden. Guwapo often got involved in conflicts with the Tausug. Besides, Zamboanga City, which has a famous catch-phrase "Zamboanga City is the city of flowers," became nothing but the city of grenades and bombs by that time.* (recorded on September 24, 1999)

When we met Ada in Davao City, there was something truly graceful about her. Her neighbors called her "*donya*" (Doña – an honorable Spanish title). Her elegance drew their attention especially when she was dressed and going to town. When she was at home though, and not formally dressed, she wore what she deprecatingly called a "rag." In other words, there was a certain gap between her appearance around the house and outside the house. Particularly when she was going outside Isla Bella, say to town, she carefully dressed and put make-up on her face and gave the impression of being slimmer and smaller than the hefty matron at home whose body had borne ten children. She carefully coordinated the colors of everything she wore from her clothes to sandals and hand bag. She never forgot to have her nails polished. She wore her hair short and wavy. She simply did not look like a typical "Bajau" woman: people would not identify her as "Bajau" until they heard her speak fluent Sinama.

There was a time when Guwapo disappeared. Sometime around 1986, as he himself admitted, he left his family, and got into drinking and gambling. At the time of our interview, however, he positively stated, "I am a good father and a good husband." True to his word, Guwapo and Ada looked happy as a couple. Both of them were hard workers. Every time we visited them for research, they were busy working. They made their own plans and schedules to get the things done as efficiently as possible. They never bothered to rest from their business and household chores, even as we started interviewing them or taking notes on whatever they were doing. They always extended a warm hospitality to us, offering "*merienda*" (snacks), sometimes meals.

II Selling pearls, and enjoying fighting cocks and “videoke”

Steady and extensive business

Guwapo’s household was a nuclear family consisting of his wife and six unmarried sons. Their sons were all in school except for the youngest one of preschool age. The breadwinner was Guwapo who had multiple jobs, the pearl business being the most successful.

Guwapo had a variety of other jobs before he started selling pearls in Davao City. When he first settled in Isla Bella around in 1986, he paddled a “*bangka*” with his mother to sell coral stones to cargo ships around the pier. During the Christmas season, they hefted baskets of canned goods on their shoulders and peddled them around town; that was in the last days of President Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship just before the People Power Revolution (the EDSA Revolution) that ousted Marcos and installed President Corazon Aquino’s administration. Many people were engaged in illegal economic activities. Guwapo continued the barter trade with cargo ships anchored in Santa Ana Wharf, which was in viewing distance from his house in Isla Bella. The barter involved many commodities such as groceries (canned goods and noodles), pottery, and decorations. He sold them in town and made quite a fortune.

Guwapo was primarily a trader who engaged in a business called “buy and sell.” However, there was a time he attempted blast fishing, though he quit after one month. He remembered those days:

We used to go fishing in Sigaboy [in the province of Davao Oriental]. We would stay there for a few days with no catch at all. Even if we caught some fish, it just did not pay more than enough to buy “tubaq” [local coconut wine]. They [dynamites for fishing] came in many sizes, eight ounces, family [sizes of Coca Cola bottle], and a gallon [size of container]. I had already known it [blast fishing] even when we were still in Zamboanga City. But it was only after we moved to Davao City that I actually tried it. You know, I was not accustomed to handling dynamite. I was good at paddling bangkas, though. I was so afraid of dynamite at first. When they handed me dynamite and told me to throw into the sea, I did not know what to do. I was so horrified. And yet I got used to it as I continued the job... We normally operated the blast fishing in the shallow waters from two to four “dupa” [fathoms]. [Demonstrating to us with actions] say, this

one is dynamite. You ignite it with a match, and throw into the sea. The dynamite could explode easily. You see, it could explode in your hand and your hand could be blown off...One day, we went to Sarangani Island, carrying two gallons of dynamite. When I threw the dynamite, it bumped the edge of our boat and bounced back to me! Luckily it did not hit me, though [sigh]...Those who still engage in blast fishing are mostly the Kubingaan and the Kalagan. They [the "Bajau" living in Isla Bella] seldom operate such type of fishing. Perhaps they have found other livelihoods. (recorded on October 28, 1999)

By the 1990s, Guwapo and Ada had started an "ukay-ukay" (secondhand clothing) business together. Ada was the primary breadwinner of their family at that time, earning more than her husband. When they had amassed a small amount of profits from their "ukay-ukay" business, Guwapo would spend it to purchase pearls for his own business. He would buy the pearls from "Bajau" vendors who had already been in the business. Just like other "Bajau" vendors, he started his pearl business as a peddler. Soon he learned through that experience that he could hit the jackpot on his lucky days. In 1993, he chose the pearl and shell business as his major livelihood.

Although selling pearls was rather new to Guwapo, the nature of the business was not: he had always been a vendor from an early age because of his vendor mother; and he already had the knowledge and skills he needed for the buy-and-sell business. He had entrepreneurship. Besides, he spoke bits and pieces of many languages, including English and Japanese, which he learned through contacts with foreigners whenever he had opportunities to serve them as a tour guide.

During the time of our long-term fieldwork for three years, Guwapo was dealing with various kinds of accessories and decorations. Some of them were made of cultured pearls from Hong Kong which he purchased from Maranao merchants. Others included trays and paperweights using local shells from Davao. Guwapo gained permission in 1996 from the management of Insular Hotel, a luxury resort hotel near the international airport, to run his business at the hotel's pier, where many tourists took the boats to Samal Island. Pleased with this job, he shared his thought with us:

I like this job so much because nobody orders me around. I am totally free to decide what to do. I can dance any time I want, I can go out any time I want, and I can go

home any time I want. Nobody bothers me at all. [Regarding Maranao merchants who consign goods to Guwapo,] they wouldn't bother me so long as I don't owe them too much to pay back. (recorded on October 28, 1999)

There was a counter where Guwapo and his fellow vendors (mostly his relatives) operated their shell and pearl business at the resort hotel. The rectangular table was covered with a pink cloth, highlighting the whiteness and the shine of the goods placed on top of it. Various kinds of cultured pearls, synthesized stones called “diamond,” “black onyx,” “cat’s eye,” colorful birth stones, plastic “moon stone,” turtle-shaped handicrafts made of shells, polished conches such as large cowries and “budyong” (helmet shells), mothers of pearl were neatly arranged for sale.

Guwapo dealt with a variety of cultured pearls. They had different colors, including white, pink and black. Their shapes could be round, baroque, and “*siopao*” (Chinese pearls, referring to the shape of a popular Chinese steamed bun). Many sizes were available from baby sizes (about a half of a grain of rice) to a large one, 8 mm in diameter. Aside from the relatively wide selection of items, Guwapo was equipped with communicative skills, being fluent in Tagalog and other languages. He took orders from customers and made his pearls into any item they wished, whether it was a necklace, bracelet, ring or a pair of earrings. He never hesitated to negotiate with his customers.

Guwapo was the president of ten “Bajau” vendors who shared the booth at the pier. He would carefully coordinate shifts among them in order to avoid excessive competition: his fellow vendors would take turns so that only two of them would operate with the president at the counter each day. Guwapo was also required to clean the beach by the hotel management for 300 pesos a day, a job that he shared with his fellow vendors as part of his responsibility.

The income from selling pearls and shells to tourists fluctuated greatly depending on days, seasons, as well as sheer luck. In order to maximize his sales, Guwapo made an effort to wait patiently for customers ten hours a day; although he also gathered information about the time of arrivals of guests from hotel employees.

Guwapo’s monthly earnings, or net profits after deducting the total cost from the gross sales, ranged from 5,000 pesos at the lowest to 30,000 pesos at the highest with the average of 12,000 pesos during the eight months of our observation. His monthly average income was considerably high, given that the minimum legitimate wage in the

non-agrarian sector in Davao City as of November 1999 was set at 158 pesos a day. Guwapo however, had more than the average number of dependents in his household.

Aside from the pearl and shell business as his main source of income, he hosted two types of "Last Two Ending," an illegal gambling operation that he used to play with his neighbors based on the scores of basketball games. This sideline provided him with a relatively high and stable income. It enabled him to earn as much as 260 pesos per game. Although the frequency of games changed seasonally, Guwapo earned at most 1,300 pesos from five games a week. Whenever he had spare money, he engaged in an illegal, usurious money lending activity "Five-Six," but only with his close friends.

Their household ran throughout the period of our eight-month observation, utilizing for most part Guwapo's income balanced with his debts. Ada never sought any alternative jobs to support their household; although she always helped her husband in designing and making pearl ornaments for his business.

However, Ada started a "*sari-sari*" in a small extension of their house in November, 1999. This new family business was not meant to help cope with any particular short-term crisis; she and Guwapo merely wanted to cover and increase the budget of their household in the long-term. They were anxious about the future of their pearl and shell business partly because there were rumors that the resort hotel might close temporarily and that the pier for passenger boats would be transferred to another place. For the first two months after the opening of her store, Ada earned an average net profit of 165 pesos a day, considerably gainful employment for a female in a depressed area like Isla Bella at the time.

Such careful diversification of income sources and accumulation of interest through informal money lending generated for Guwapo's household an average of roughly 17,000 pesos in cash per month throughout the period of our observation. Consequently, the average monthly income per head in the household proved to be over 2,000 pesos, considerably higher compared to any of the groups with a lower community status in the research site. Indeed, the level of income of this Sama-Bajau family proved to be much higher than the salary of my research assistant's Cebuano husband, who had finished technical school and was working as a full-time radio technician at a local station for 8,000 pesos a month.

Aniya the wanderer (omitted)

Cholesterol and blood pressure (omitted)

Lace curtains and three electrical appliances

Guwapo's family lived in an area called China Pikas. The word "*pikas*" means the other side, thus his house is located on the opposite side of Isla Bella from "*Macau*," the area where the other clusters of the Sama-Bajau dwelt. If one started from the highway and walked on straight through a paved alley, passing the Cebuano neighborhood, one would see China Pikas just before hitting the coast. Guwapo's house stood out, the biggest in the neighborhood. Their stilt house of two stories was built on the sandy shore, facing the Davao Gulf. The first floor provided a living-dining room and a kitchen, while the second floor held three bedrooms. The house had a walled and roofed outhouse bathroom attached to it. It was basically built of wood except for the galvanized-iron roofs. The total floor area of the house was approximately 70 square meters. Similar to the stilt houses of other Sama-Bajau families in Macau, the seawater rose close to the floor level at high tide. Otherwise, his house was distinctively different from those of the other four clusters in that it had two stories with separate rooms. Unlike the others, this family did not keep a small boat or makeshift raft for daily use. Instead, they owned cages to keep five to six of Guwapo's fighting cocks in front of their house. They also had a large-sized white pet dog named "Bongbong."

The interior of Guwapo's house appeared to us even much less "Bajau" in many ways. The living room had a sofa and stools covered with cloth. There was a set of table and chairs made of pale green plastic. The windows were hung with salmon pink lace curtains, which gently ballooned with the fresh air filtering in and out through the glass Jalousie blinds. The walls were veneer plywood, bare and unpainted, decorated with a huge Chinese fan of bright colors and a calendar with the lunar cycle and tide times. It was a gift from Helen's, a pawnshop in downtown. There was a round plastic clock, a square-shaped mirror framed with lacquered rattan, and other knick-knacks. There was also a cupboard filled with a huge collection of books and videos that shared the shelf space with family pictures and various kinds of tiny figurines. In a corner of their living room sat something that looked like another table. It turned out to be a washing machine covered with bright yellow

cloth on which stood a vase with colorful imitation flowers looking like it had been there for quite a time.

The family had two televisions, one of which was a SONY. They also owned a video recorder and “*videoke*” (karaoke-machine with music videos) in their living room. These appliances provided them with home entertainment. They watched Tagalog TV shows and dramas, and sang their favorite English songs. Ada took special pleasure in those forms of relaxation in between her household chores during the daytime when the other family members were away.

Their kitchen was well equipped with an electric rice cooker and refrigerator, which made it easier for Ada to cook and do other household chores efficiently. Above the silver stainless steel sink in the kitchen was a window, through which Ada could see the sea from time to time while cooking. Such amenities in their kitchen could be attributed to the better government infrastructure in China Pikas compared to Macau where the other four Sama-Bajau clusters dwelt. With better utility services, Guwapo's household owned a faucet to get safe, potable water for daily use. They also depended on electricity as a major energy source. Of course, they had to pay the bills to the Water District and the Davao Light and Power Company, according to their contracts and the level of consumption every month. They spent about 600 pesos on electricity, 120 to 200 pesos on water, as well as 200 pesos on LPG (liquefied petroleum gas, mainly used for cooking) every month on average. They spent about 10 pesos every week to buy charcoal to grill the fish for their regular meals.

Guwapo's household possessed more durable goods than most of their non-Sama speaking neighbors. However, the relative affluence that they enjoyed at the time of our observation was only a recent phenomenon. They built their big house in 1995 and started buying home electrical appliances. They purchased the appliances one by one, namely the refrigerator, the karaoke machine and then the washing machine, on installments of about 18 months. These appliances also served as solid “assets” they could pawn any time they needed to raise cash fast.

At the beginning of our observation, Guwapo and Ada considered the possibility of moving to some other place because although they maintained their house rather well, it suffered from the damage caused by high tides that often flooded its first floor. But in the end, they decided not to move. Instead, they had the house thoroughly renovated and elevated, starting in September that year. They completed the reconstruction mostly with

help from their male relatives. Among them, Tading, Amdaniya's husband, was particularly helpful. Occasionally, they also hired carpenters, all male, from the neighborhood for 150 pesos a day.

The home renovation cost them more or less 10,000 pesos a month for four months from September to December, 1999. Fully remodeled, their house became a one-story stilt structure with a living-dining room, a kitchen, two rooms and an indoor bathroom. It was a wooden house with galvanized iron roofs and "*amakan*" walls. The total floor area was about a half of that of their previous house. A "*sari-sari*" for Ada was also constructed in front of their house.

Children's dreams

Guwapo and Ada considered education for their children to be highly important. Except for the youngest son who was still under school age and the eldest who was studying at a college in Zamboanga City at the time of our research, all of their five sons enrolled in local public schools: Three of them were in elementary school and two others in high school. Their school tuitions and fees were free, yet they needed to spend approximately 6,500 pesos to afford uniforms, shoes, and other necessities for the five children upon enrollment. They also gave each of them 10 to 20 pesos a day for allowance, which they spent on meals and snacks outside the home. There were other costs as well regarding various projects where the school required the students' participation. For example, during our observation, Guwapo and Ada spent 2,000 pesos to buy new clothes and shoes for the five sons for Christmas parties.

Thanks to their parents' efforts, the five sons enjoyed their school life; especially Onil, their third son, who proved to be exceptionally talented in gymnastics. Onil once participated in a gymnastic competition held in the province of Sultan Kudarat and brought home three medals. Guwapo was exceedingly proud of him.

Their eldest son, Henri studied at a private college in Zamboanga City. He met Mendoza there, married her, and had their first child Falida. The three of them lived together with Mendoza's parents. (Mendoza and Falida were visiting Guwapo's house with the mother of Ada when interviewed). Guwapo and Ada sent Henri's family about 5,000 pesos once or twice to help them with his studies and defray their living costs.

Guwapo and Ada hoped that their sons would be sufficiently educated to be able

to find steady jobs. This value on formal education was shared among all the members of his cluster. Sometimes they felt their belief in formal education was at odds with some of their former beliefs in their "traditional" way of life. For example, Tading said to us, "*We still practice the "pag-islam" [a circumcision ceremony], but nowadays it's just performed for reasons of hygiene, and it's no longer meant as the ritual cutting performed on the boys as a rite of passage into manhood. What's important for the children today is to study.*" Amdaniya agreed with Tading, and added, "*It's not a problem even if the children do not know how to catch fish; they should study at school and find professional jobs instead. It's important to learn how to help themselves first, and so, they should not get married too young.*" Regardless of gender of their children, the members of Guwapo's cluster considered it a top priority to give their children the best educational opportunities they could afford. A daughter of Ebita (Guwapo's cousin), was a college student majoring in education at a private college downtown, while working as a part-time *ukay-ukay* vendor. She was also a recipient of scholarship for ethnic minorities from the city government.

Likewise, Guwapo's sons seemed to meet the expectation of their parents. They told us that their father's job (pearl and shell vendor) was not bad, but they were hoping to find some other jobs. Henri, their eldest son, was majoring in criminology with the aim of becoming a police officer, which he regarded as a "cool job." Ariel, their second son, and the rest of their children, were all eager to share their dreams with us. They wanted to become police officers, or seamen, or something more challenging.

III Social relationships with confidence and wider networks

Gatherings of the relatives for prayers to God

Guwapo's cluster was composed of six households. The members of these households were related to each other by blood and included the households of Guwapo's mother's sisters and those of their daughters, or Guwapo's cousins.

Guwapo's house stood in the center of the cluster of these houses. There was a common boarded space of about 10 square meters with three water faucets between Guwapo's house and other houses where female members of their cluster enjoyed chatting while doing the dishes or doing the laundry. Many of them, both females and males, also took their baths there, in the open, wearing T-shirts and pants or any kind of cloth covering

for modesty's sake, which would be eventually washed as they soaped and rinsed themselves.

The members of Guwapo's cluster lived physically close and as kinfolk, engaged in chore exchanges and mutual help, like repairing and building houses. However, there was no perceivable system of income redistribution to equalize the economic standard of living among the six households, except for the occasional borrowing and sharing of spices and food. The monthly household survey showed that all the households in this cluster were earning enough to meet their needs. So it was rather easy for them to maintain autonomy of household management without having to share their income in daily life.

The scale of monthly expenditures in Guwapo's household was the largest among the five clusters we studied by far: they spent more than 10,000 pesos a month on the three basic items of food, utility (fuel, lighting and water), and medical expenses; and they spent a considerable amount of money on education, business expenses, and renovation of their house. Consequently, in some months, the total household expenditures exceeded the total household income. The amount of deficit varied from 5,000 pesos to 28,000 pesos each month. If the deficit was rather small and temporary, the members of this household pawned home electric appliances like televisions, and jewelry like gold bracelets and earrings. We seldom saw or heard them ask their relatives in the neighborhood for financial assistance to make up for such daily needs.

Even in cases of illness and death, they initially tried to cope with any crisis by mobilizing all the potential resources of their household: they pawned everything they could. They asked for assistance from other households in their cluster only when these efforts failed to meet their needs. Yet, the amount of such assistance would never exceed what could ruin them financially. Each household maintained its autonomy rather well, mainly because the individual average household income was relatively high in this cluster. Besides, some of them were members of Social Security System (SSS), a social insurance program by the Philippine government. Guwapo spent 95 pesos for the premium of his SSS membership every month during the period of our observation.

While individual households of this cluster showed strong economic independence in daily household management, they took collective actions when they needed to negotiate with outsiders, especially those who had power and authority. For example, having been granted exclusive permission to sell shells and pearls at the pier of the hotel from its management, Guwapo and his cluster blocked other Sama and non-Sama

vendors from selling in the hotel. Another example was their way of negotiating with the government and other organizations such as NGOs for possible assistance. Such organizations from outside the community would approach Guwapo and Ada first as a visible "leader" or representative in this neighborhood. Then, Guwapo and Ada would call for the rest of their cluster to discuss and decide how to react to the offer as a cluster. It should be noted, however, that this cluster was not aggressively seeking assistance from such agencies during the period of our observation.

This economic autonomy of each household did not mean that Guwapo's family and the rest of the members in his cluster lost close relations with each other and became independent entities with little mutual social obligation. They still engaged in religious rites and social events collectively. The center of social gatherings was Amdaniya, Guwapo's aunt, who was a "*panday*" (traditional midwife) and "*djin*" (spiritual leader) as well. She was believed to be a living incarnation of ancestral spirits. She assisted female members in the cluster throughout and after the course of their pregnancies. She also supported any member who fell ill by diagnosing and praying over them, even while the sick person also sought treatment from western trained doctors in clinics or hospitals in Davao City. She conducted rites and rituals of offerings to appease any disturbed or offended "*saitan*" dwelling in rocks or trees and requested them to allow the sick person to recover. When the patient recovered, she lead thanksgiving ceremonies to "*Tuhan*" (God) called "*pag-hinang ni Tuhan*".

There were religious rites and social events that all the members of the cluster attended that required communal meals. On such occasions, elderly male members led the prayers. Often it was Tading, a "*djin*" and Aniya's husband, who played a central role in collective prayers. When his capacity as a "*djin*" was not enough to perform requested rites, the "*imam*," Muslim Laminusa or Muslim Kabigaan, was invited. The imam would be also called for significant rites of passage events such as male circumcision, marriage, and death. Prayer meetings for the dead were performed a few times till the 100th day after the death. The "*imam*" were mostly males, but there were female "*imam*" to conduct prayer meetings for deceased female members of this cluster. During the period of our observation, Guwapo's sons attended prayer meetings for the dead and a rite to offer food to ancestral spirits. These were social events held by the entire cluster, beyond their immediate family. In other words, Guwapo's sons did not participate in "traditional" religious rites, such as "*pag-mboq*." These were performed on a smaller scale by each individual family.

There were specific places where the *mboq* dwelt and where the members of this cluster would make prayers and offerings to them. They were incorporated in the structure of a “traditional” house. In the case of this cluster, it was Amdaniya’s house that was chosen for the religious purposes. It was a stilt house built over the water with “*nipa*” (nipa palm leaves) walls and roof. It had no partitions. Amdaniya’s house provided the cluster with a meeting place for religious rites. It also provided a social space where the members, each one of whom had been integrated into a larger society with other ethnic groups, would affirm the bonding among themselves.

Leaders and places were indispensable for them to perform social and religious events. Just as important for them, however, was the capacity to finance these gatherings. The fewer resources they had, the smaller the scale of such events would be, and vice versa. Guwapo’s cluster performed best in terms of earning capacity among the five clusters in the research site but the timing of such events also depended also availability of disposable cash. Sudden fortune could prompt them to perform rites as well. One time, Rosalinda, a cousin of Guwapo’s, won in an illegal betting game called “Last Two Ending,” which brought her an unexpected amount of cash. With all this sudden money, Guwapo’s cluster started preparing for *pag-hinang ni Tuhan* to thank God for Rosalinda’s remission from uterine cancer and Guwapo’s son’s recovery from oral inflammation.

Other ceremonies we observed in Guwapo’s cluster during the eight months in 1999 included the funeral of Rosalinda, who eventually died of recurrent cancer of the uterus; subsequently the traditional prayers on the 40th and 100th days after her death; and the “*pakan sumangat*” for their ancestral spirits. The entire cluster participated in these ceremonies, and each household shared the expense according to its capacity to pay. Guwapo’s household contributed from 200 pesos to 10,000 pesos for these religious gatherings. The household of the bereaved collected the money from other participating households. They were responsible for preparing the offerings and meals, and payments for “*imam*” as a token of gratitude.

In addition, Guwapo and Ada threw a birthday party for their first grandchild, Falida, when the baby girl turned one. They invited their relatives and neighbors to their house, and treated them with festive food and drinks. Celebrating one’s birthday like this was common among non-Sama residents in Isla Bella, but it was very rare among the Sama residents in our research site because most of our Sama respondents had no clear idea of the exact date when they were born. It was clear that Guwapo’s cluster had a sense

of time different from the rest of the Sama households. His cluster was clearly becoming more modern in its thinking.

Limited contact with the “Bajau” on the other side (“Macau”)

Guwapo and Ada told us that some of the Sama-Bajau in Macau used to live in China Pikas until the early half of the 1980s. They were under protection of a “minority leader” named Palandawan, who was an ethnic Maranao and married to a “Bajau” woman. His wife identified herself to us later though as an ethnic Sama Bangigi with Islamic faith, and clearly denied her being “Bajau,” or Sama Dilaut.

Palandawan was a “*kapitalista*” whose business was to provide his clients with capital and loans for commercial activities. He himself was said to have engaged in barter trade with merchants from Indonesia. He consigned the commodities that he got through the cross-border trade, locally called “*smaguluz*” (smuggled goods), to Maranao and Cebuamo retailers and vendors in Davao City. While many of his consignees were residents in China Pikas, he did not allow Sama-Bajau to join his business. We searched for his other possible relationships/activities with the Sama-Bajau, wondering if he was perhaps a fish dealer providing them with operating capital for the fishing (especially blast fishing in those days) but we could not find any. In other words, this Maranao leader did not offer the Sama-Bajau economic opportunities that could have connected them with the larger society beyond the neighborhood.

On the other hand, this Maranao leader, Palandawan, provided water, electricity, and security to the Sama-Bajau households in China Pikas before 1984. For these services, he collected cash or payment in kind from each household. He was the owner of the only “*sari-sari*” in the area where the Sama-Bajau obtained their daily necessities on credit. He also allowed them to watch television shows through his window for a fee. Most of the Sama-Bajau then did not own TV sets.

The situation changed, however, when giant waves hit the coastal area and caused tremendous damage to the houses in China Pikas in 1984. Palandawan decided to leave the area and moved to the Macau side of Isla Bella, taking along approximately thirty households of the Sama-Bajau who were under his leadership. Guwapo's cluster did not follow this Maranao leader's decision. Guwapo and Ada told me that they did not want to be controlled by him anymore. Since the exodus of the other Sama-Bajau to Macau,

Guwapo and Ada had limited contact with them.

Members of Guwapo's cluster stressed to us that they were different from the Sama-Bajau in Macau, implicitly criticizing their way of life. Even before we started our monthly household survey, Ada and Rosalinda told us never to identify them with the rest of the "Bajau" in Isla Bella, saying "*Waka, you should know we are not the same as the poor 'Bajau' in Macau. They have different religious practice, "pangita" [livelihood], education and values. Their language is quite similar to ours, though.....*" (October 1998)

Indeed, we have heard many negative comments from them regarding the Sama-Bajau in Macau: "They have too many children, and they do not educate them in school," ; and "I do not understand why they are always in dirty clothes. They smell so bad that the "*dypn*" drivers refuse to give them rides." Such comments, however, were usually general and did not relate to any particular behavior of individuals. Gwapo told us:

They [the Sama-Bajau in Macau] were "Sama Luwa'an" [a derogatory term meaning someone/something people spit on]. When they were still in Zamboanga [City], they were living in boats and did not have houses. Well, I guess, they might have ones, but what I mean is that their houses were far away from "yuta" [a Cebuano word meaning "land." In this context, it refers to the shore]. They did not have property to live on, and that is why they started to build houses over the sea and live there. They must know that we are Samal [this is a different term from Sama. It was originally used by other dominant Muslim groups to refer to land-based Sama in the context of Sulu and Zamboanga]. We know what clothes to wear, we understand the languages [other than Sinama, particularly Cebuano, Tagalog and English], and we are educated. Even my parents went to school. Now the Sama Luwa'an also go to school, but they didn't used to. (recorded on October 28, 1999)

Guwapo continued:

Now, they [the Sama-Bajau in Macau] want to go to school because tuitions and fees are free and they can even get allowances [from City Social Services and Development Office (CSSDO) or Christian missionaries]. Otherwise, they would not be willing to go to school on their own. They are not particularly willing to improve their lives. Some of them are willing to tell people [non-Sama outsiders from higher income class] their

names, hoping that their names will be listed for potential cash gifts or other donations. They beg ["magayo"] from Christian missionaries as well. It seems like they receive some assistance every week. (Guwapo, recorded on October 28, 1999)

Ada added:

It's like the Bajau [in Macau] are the Igorot in the mountains: they are genuine natives. Put this in another way, if [we] the Samal are the second lowest "tribu" [tribe, an ethnic group], they are the lowest one. [When we were still in Rio Hondo, Zamboanga City,] it was true that we were "silingan" [neighbors], and from our houses, we could see theirs. Their houses had roofs that were so low they could hardly stand up inside. They were made of "nipa," they had no windows, and they had no partitions either. (Ada, recorded on September 24, 1999)

Ada also shared with us a story about the vertical economic relationship between her grandfather and the Sama-Bajau in Macau while they were still back in Zamboanga City.

Ada narrated:

I think, in Zamboanga, the Tausug [aside from the Christian Chavacano] were doing rather well economically. You know, they had been engaging in smuggling since old times. Second to the Tausug were the Samal. Most of them were "negosyante" [merchants]. The rich ones would educate their children so well that their children could get professional careers. Well, poor [Samal] people like us would end up peddling "kamatis" [native tomatoes] and soap on the street, though.... Anyway, [compared to the Tausug and the Samal] the only thing the Bajau could do was fishing. If I were rich, I would provide them with "capital" [capital for fishing operations] and get all of their catch in return. Actually, that was how the Samal made money as fish traders [with the Bajau] in Zamboanga City in those days. My family was involved in the business, indeed. My grandfather would lend [to the Bajau fishermen] five "pumpboat" [small boats with engines] and give them cash, and they would pay the boat rent and the cash from their catch upon return. I suppose, up to now [in Zamboanga City], the Samal "naggunit" [are transacting with] the Bajau that way. I hear, though, some of the Samal fish traders demand interest that is too high. For instance, they would lend the Bajau 1,000 pesos one day, and demand 1,500

pesos the following day. If they could not pay back, their debts would grow larger and larger until they could not pay back at all. So, the creditors would need to visit their houses to collect the debts, but they would only find the Bajau becoming petrified and speechless with fear having nothing to pay. I guess that stories [told often by the Sama-Bajau in Macau] of murdered Bajau victims [reportedly attacked by dominant Muslim groups] could be related to their unpaid debts, don't you think? Papa Melbasa [the leader of Cluster Three residing in Macau] should know my family very well, for it was my grandfather who used to give him the capital for his fishing. (Ada, recorded on September 24, 1999)

We were often warned not to be fooled by their appearance. Ada told us:

Those Bajau [in Macau] are not poor. If they were truly poor, they should not have any jewelry to wear at all. That is their "kinaiya" [trait]. They do not want others to think that they have money. Otherwise, they might get attacked and robbed. They do not mind their houses being full of holes. They hide money and jewelry in their pockets, which they can use immediately wherever they may have to move. For us, houses are far more important than any jewelry. But they are different. (recorded on September 24, 1999)

Tading told us:

Those Bajau [in Macau] had been hard up in Zamboanga because they could no longer fish. I would say they have been doing better since they came to Davao [City] and started peddling second-hand clothes, and shells and pearls. [Unlike them] We feel ashamed to beg. Sometimes people mistake me for a Bajau when I am walking in Magsaysay Park, and I find it quite embarrassing. (Tading, recorded on October 15, 1999)

Yet, Guwapo's cluster (Cluster One) was related to the Sama-Bajau in Macau directly and indirectly. The only economic interaction, for example, that Guwapo's cluster had directly with the other clusters was to permit males of Cluster Two (whose main livelihood was peddling second-hand clothes by its female members) to join selling shells and pearls with Guwapo and his relatives at the pier by the Insular Hotel. Cluster One and Cluster Two both claimed to be land-based Sama and they clearly denied being the "Bajau" from the sea.

Guwapo and the vendors from Cluster Two drank beer together mostly at their homes or at nearby stores. Guwapo's household spent about 1,000 pesos for this every month during the period of our observation. Guwapo treated his vendor-friends to drinks from time to time, but otherwise, he would neither lend nor borrow money from them.

Among female members, there were some exchanges as well between China Pikas and Macau. A good example is what happened in a wedding ceremony, where Ada was asked to help with make-up for the couple. Ada lent them a Western-style wedding gown for a small fee. Ada and Guwapo were recognized as rich "Bajau" among the Sama-Bajau in Macau. Especially for Cluster Two, Guwapo's cluster served as a role model in terms of socio-economic success in the larger society.

Long relationship with a Maranao merchant

Unlike the other four clusters in our study, Guwapo's cluster voted in elections. They used to be rather active in local politics, but since they had bad experiences in the campaign for President in 1986, they became reluctant to get involved in local political activities. In 1986, Guwapo and Ada were helping the Barangay with making a list of voters in China Pikas. They were working for President Ferdinand Marcos, but Palandawan, who was ethnic Maranao and a minority leader in the neighborhood, somehow mistook them to be pro-Corazon Aquino and so harassed them, treating them like political opponents. Ada said to us, "*I was so scared. We could have been killed!*" Since then, they avoided being involved in local politics, which was dominated by the Maranao who are the majority in the Barangay. They have little connections with Pagaman, the incumbent Barangay Captain, who is ethnic Maranao and married to a Cebuano.

Although the political life of Guwapo and Ada had little to do with the Maranao, their economic life is another story. As noted previously, Guwapo had the permit to sell shells and pearls exclusively at the pier within the hotel grounds. Securing such a regular place for sale is significant, but this did not guarantee his commercial success. One important key to keeping his business running and stabilized in its day-to-day operation was to have regular access to the supply of the commodities from Maranao wholesale dealers. Guwapo had a regular consignment trade with a Maranao merchant in Davao City.

Being a retailer as well, this Maranao merchant had a pearl and shell shop in a shopping mall, locally called "University Mall" because of its location close to a private

college downtown. Guwapo regularly went to his shop for consignments, sold them at the hotel, then returned to pay according to what he had sold, and received new consignments. The frequency of those transactions and the amount of the items consigned varied, reflecting the business cycle of local tourism as well the needs of Guwapo's household. During the period of our observation, Guwapo visited the Maranao merchant less often in October and November when the number of tourists declined seasonally while his household spent more cash on the renovation of their house. Otherwise, Guwapo transacted more often with the Maranao merchant, visiting his shop once a week or so. Having been a regular consignee of this Maranao merchant for seven to eight years, Guwapo claimed to us, "*I could get consignments from him up to 100,000 pesos!*" We had no chance to observe him handling such huge amount in items in any of the transactions with the merchant. Nonetheless, it was true that Guwapo kept the level of his stocks ranging from 5,000 pesos to 20,000 pesos total value. This was much higher than any other Sama-Bajau pearl and shell vendors in Macau.

This type of long-term relationship helped reduce transaction costs, and benefitted both Guwapo and his Maranao partner. Nevertheless, this relationship was simply limited to the sphere of the pearl and shell business. It was a kind of vertical relationship in terms of the flow of commodity, yet it was different from a typical patron-client relationship, which usually involves "multiple contacts" to share risks that could arise in a client's daily life. In this case, though, Guwapo and Ada never resorted to this Maranao merchant when urgent needs of cash occurred in their household. Instead, they headed for pawnshops run by Cebuanos downtown to manage cash flow problems. Compared to other Sama-Bajau clusters with a lower community status in Macau, Guwapo's household presented relatively higher economic autonomy with more direct and stable access to Muslim and Cebuano businesspersons beyond their community.

In his pearl and shell business, Guwapo's obligation to his Maranao consigner was to repay the "whole sale price" pre-fixed between them. Otherwise, he had a free hand to manage his daily operations. For example, he could decide the retail price of each item, with a certain range of prices in his mind, through on the spot negotiations with the customer, according to the relationship with and the estimated capacity of the customer to pay. The Maranao merchant might come to check Guwapo's business at the resort hotel, but it happened only once every one to two months during our observation.

Guwapo's cluster showed little relationship with the Maranao, though, when it

came to the religious aspects of their everyday life. While this cluster had the strongest Muslim orientations among the five Sama-Bajau clusters we observed in Isla Bella, and they occasionally invited Muslim Kubigaan "*imam*" for religious rites performed at home, they never went to any of the nearby mosques.

While Guwapo's cluster performed religious rites with Islamic orientations, they seldom involved themselves in larger-scale Muslim celebrations beyond the boundary of their kinship cluster in Isla Bella. One such religious related festival is "*Hari Raya Puasa*," which Muslim residents in Isla Bella widely hold to celebrate the end of "Ramadan," or a month of fasting, observed during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. During the period of our observation, Ramadan lasted from December 9, 2000, to January 7, 2001. None of the members in Guwapo's cluster practiced fasting nor joined the Hari-Raya related local events.

Ada nostalgically recalled, however, that the Islamic faith was more colorfully presented in her life when she was still in Zamboanga City. Going to the neighborhood mosque was part of her daily life. The Hari Raya Puasa celebration was one of the annual events her family could never miss as Muslims. She remembered visiting her grandparents on the day of the celebration: she would kiss their hands to show respect first and then receive a gift of money from them; and she would go on to visit other relatives in various places in the city. After she had married and moved to settle in Davao City with Guwapo, such Islamic customs in her life became less prominent. The most important annual celebration in their life in Davao City is now "*Pasko*" (Christmas), instead, as this is widely celebrated by the mainly Christian population in the city. Jaime, the fourth son of Guwapo and Ada, had fond memories of Hari Raya Puasa since he was raised in Zamboanga City, but he too has learned to take more joy in celebrating Christmas in Davao City.

The incidence of intermarriage among the members of this cluster was much higher than that of the other clusters in Macau. As mentioned earlier, Guwapo and Ada both claimed being "mestiso" (mixed-blood): Guwapo is of mixed Chinese and Sama; and Ada, Tausug and Sama. The generation of their parents married other Sinama speaking peoples with Islamic faith such as Laminusa and Yakan, while their nieces and nephews married Christian lowlanders including Chavacano and Cebuano speakers. Regardless of the generation, they had tendency to find partners from other dominant ethnic groups in the places where they resided at the time of marriage.

Such inter-ethnic group marriages that members of Guwapo's cluster have

experienced lead to their openness to non-Sama populations in Davao City. Indeed, this cluster was the only “Bajau” housing in an area where Muslim and Christian residents lived together. They were not only next-door neighbors with other ethnic groups; they participated with their neighbors in informal activities often found in low-income areas such as Isla Bella. In this particular neighborhood, illegal money lending and gambling operations were rampant. In fact, Guwapo was an operator of an illegal numbers game called the “Last Two,” based on the last two digits of winning scores of televised basketball games by PBA (Philippine Basketball Association) and MBA (Metroball Association).

Guwapo’s cluster’s relationship with non-Sama-Bajau neighbors in daily life appeared peaceful. However, Guwapo and Ada told us that their neighbors might be envious of them because the family was doing economically better than most of their neighbors in this small corner of Isla Bella. A typical comment might go like this: “*No matter how hard they [Guwapo’s family and his cluster] might try to look like Bisaya [Cebuano], the ‘Bajau’ would remain the ‘Bajau’*”. Even if they wear jewelry and perfume, it would not change what they are: they are ‘Bajau.’ Such words are said behind them, though, and none of their neighbors ever dared to insult them face-to-face. It is important to stress the fact that their neighbors recognized Guwapo’s cluster as “Bajau,” somehow related to the “Bajau” in Macau. But they did not care about the distinction that existed within the Sama-Bajau residents in Isla Bella, which clearly distinguished Guwapo’s cluster as the land-based Sama from the “Bajau,” or Sama Dilaut (Sama of the sea).

Mistaken for the “Bajau”

The preferred word that this cluster used to describe themselves was “Sama.” Guwapo and Ada explained to me that they were called “Samal” by the Muslims, which refers to the Tausug in this context. In Rio Hondo, their previous place of residence, there was a clear distinction among the Sinama-speaking populations between those who had a relatively sedentary life style in a place on land and those who had a relatively nomadic lifestyle of moving from a place to another by sea. This was also true in the eyes of the Muslims who formed the ethnic majority of the Rio Hondo population. Guwapo and Ada recalled:

The Muslims called us “Samal” [in Rio Hondo]. But we call ourselves Sama. The Bajau [in Macau, Isla Bella] are also Sama. That’s why Sama children [from Macau area and

from China Pikas] *often get into fights about the difference between them. One side would say, "You are Sama Pala'u!"* [the Sama living in the boat], *and the other reply, "No, we aren't!"* (Guwapo)

That's really true. The Tausug [in Rio Hondo] *used to call them "Luwa'an".* (Ada)

When we were still living in Zamboanga City, even we could be called Sama Pala'u. Those Bajaus [in Macau] *were called Sama Luwa'an, the Laminusa were called Luwa'an, and the Kubigaan were also called Luwa'an over there.* (Guwapo, all three citations above recorded on October 28, 1999)

Guwapo and Ada have come to be identified as the "Bajau" by their neighbors as well as by other non-Sama-Bajau acquaintances in the context of Davao City. From their own perspective, being treated like the "genuine Bajau" who live in Macau area is nothing but insulting. Nevertheless, they accepted the label "Bajau" in political exchanges with non-Sama-Bajau in the larger society. They were well aware that such identification could attract those who were willing to help the Bajau as the urban poor and give them benefits, which included scholarships for children and other forms of aid from the government.

They appropriated and manipulated this "Bajau" identity more often in economic exchanges with the non-Sama-Bajau. When Guwapo sold shells and pearls to tourists at the resort hotel, he projected himself to his customers as genuine "Bajau" and created an image of "a nomadic Bajau from Sulu selling his collection from the sea." To enhance the exotic image of the "Bajau" in the eyes of his customers, he coordinated his attire well, wearing loose shirts and pants, which Ada sewed for him using colorful "*batik*," a textile made by using a wax resist dyeing technique originating in Indonesia. His customers may not have been particularly interested in knowing which ethnic group Guwapo belonged to. But what was important for Guwapo was to look different from his customers, or to be more precise, to make his customers feel that he came from a faraway place that was culturally different, and therefore, could offer something valuable for them.

Guwapo was very much aware of his business strategy. He stressed his point to us many times during our observation at the pier or the hotel, saying, "If you wish to be a good businessperson, you've got to be a liar. Nobody would want to buy pearls from us if we told them the truth." So he presented himself as ethnic "Bajau" to his customers. He

created a sales talk consistent with his projected self-identification as well as with the commodities he was selling; his pearls and shells must come from Jolo, the place that his customers easily accepted as the home waters of the “Bajau” based on the nostalgic image of the “sea nomads” that they vaguely had in mind. Such stories enhanced the value of his pearls and shells and helped him attract more customers, persuaded them to buy, and satisfied them as well.

In Davao from 1997 to 1999, the Cebuano and other lowlander Christians were the majority in the city population. They were not quite aware of the ethno-stratification among the Muslim populations, which has its historical roots not in Davao City but back in the previous places of their residence in the Sulu and Zamboanga regions. They lumped the “Bajau” with the “Muslims” and could not tell the differences between them. Among themselves however, the term “Bajau” was widely applied to Sinama speaking peoples in Davao City except for the Laminusa (Sama Laminusa). The Laminusa were people of the Muslim faith, and therefore, as they themselves claimed, they should be distinguished from the “Bajau” who did not appear to practice any of the monotheistic religions.

Given such socio-cultural environment, as Amdaniya (Guwapo’s aunt) repeatedly explained to us, it was only natural for the members of Guwapo’s cluster to identify themselves as the “Bajau” to the non-Muslim populations and as the “Samal” to the Muslim populations in Davao City. Their children also presented multiple and layered identities. They could creatively use different identities depending on the situation, typically demonstrated in their use of languages. For example, Guwapo’s sons spoke Sinama at home, while they talked to their non-Sama neighbors in Cebuano; they also used English and Tagalog in school; and some of them, brought up in Zamboanga City, were also familiar with Chabacano and Tausug. Moreover, there were cases among the member households of this cluster in which Cebuano became a common language within the family. This happened mainly for two reasons: first, couples of inter-ethnic marriage found it easier to communicate with each other in Cebuano rather than in Sinama; and second, parents mindfully chose to speak to their children in Cebuano, a lingua franca in Davao City, so that the children would not have difficulty in communicating with non-Sama children in school.