

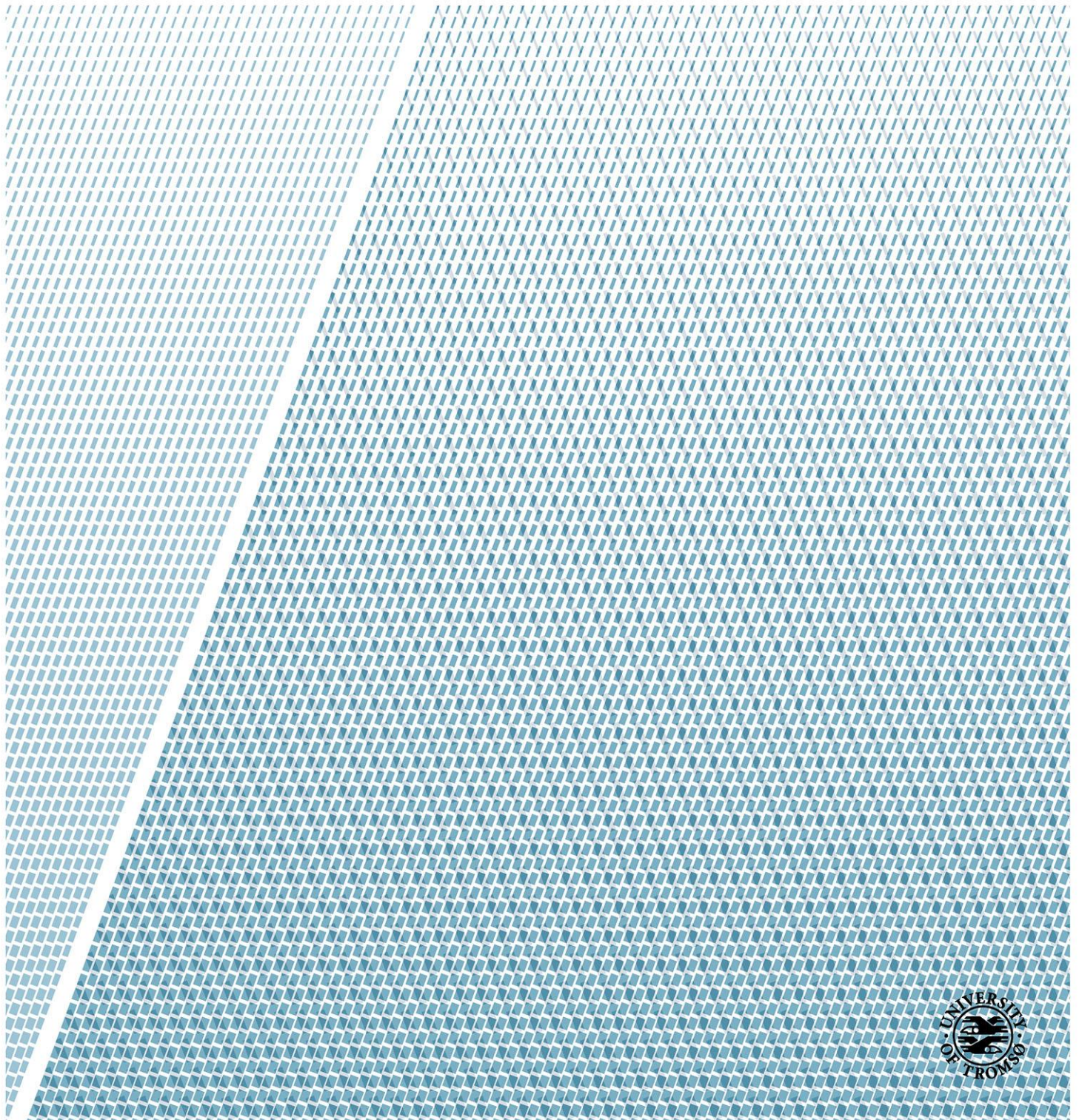
Centre for Peace Studies

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

# **Living by the Day: A Study of the Badjaos in Tawi-Tawi, Southwest Philippines**

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the impacts of sedentarization processes to the Badjaos in Tawi-Tawi, southwest of the Philippines. The study focuses on the means of sedentarizing the Badjaos, which are; the housing program and conditional cash transfer fund system. This study looks into the conditionalities, perceptions and experiences of the Badjaos who are beneficiaries of the mentioned programs. To realize this objective, this study draws on six qualitative interviews matching with participant-observation in three different localities in Tawi-Tawi. Furthermore, as a conceptual tool of analysis, the study uses sedentarization, social change, human development and ethnic identity.

The study findings reveal the variety of outcomes and perceptions of each program among the informants. The housing project has made little impact to the welfare of the natives of the region. Furthermore, the housing project failed to provide security and consideration of cultural needs of the supposedly beneficiaries; Badjaos. On the other hand, cash transfer fund, though mired by irregularities, to some extent, helped in the subsistence of the Badjaos. Furthermore, contentment, as an antithesis to poverty, was being highlighted in the process of sedentarization as an expression of ethnic identity.

Analytically, this study brings substantiation on the impacts of assimilation policies to indigenous groups, such as the Badjaos. Furthermore, this study serves as a springboard for the upcoming researchers in the noticeably lack of literature in the study of social change brought by sedentarization and development policies to ethnic groups in the Philippines.

Key words: sedentarization, nomadism, Badjao, social change, development, housing program, cash transfer, ethnic identity.



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## **Abbreviations**

4Ps – Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program  
ADB – Asian Development Bank  
ARMM – Autonomous Region on Muslim Mindanao  
ASEAN – Association Southeast Asian Nations  
BBC – British Broadcasting Company  
BCV – Badjao Community Village  
BVLCI – Badjao Village Learning Center Incorporated  
CCT – Conditional Cash Transfer  
DC – Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul  
DepEd – Department of Education  
DOH – Department of Health  
DSWD – Department of Social Welfare and Development  
EU – European Union  
FIES – Family Income and Expenditure Survey  
HUDCC – Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council  
ICCs/IPs – Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples  
ILO – International Labor Union  
IPs – Indigenous Peoples  
IPRA – Indigenous Peoples Rights Act  
MCCT – Modified Conditional Cash Transfer Fund  
MSU-TCTO – Mindanao State University – Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography  
NCIP – National Commission on Indigenous People  
NHA – National Housing Authority  
NHTS-PR – National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction  
OMI – Oblates of Mary Immaculate  
OND – Oblates of Notre Dame  
OSCC-ARMM – Office of the Southern Cultural Communities – Autonomous Region on Muslim Mindanao  
PRSPs – Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers  
UNDP – United Nations Development Program  
UNDRIP – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples





## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Sedentarization of the Sea Nomads: The Beginning

Sulu<sup>1</sup> has been the stronghold of the Islam faith in the Philippines. However, the influx of foreign Catholic missionaries in the thickly Muslim populated provinces of Sulu<sup>2</sup> and Cotabato in the 1940's lead to the societal change on the lives of the different ethnic groups in the area.

During post World War II, development projects were made available by the American aid and the Philippine government. However, Luzon and Visayas regions heavily benefited while Mindanao, where the Sulu archipelago is located, was bypassed.<sup>3</sup> This forced the appointed missionary priest, Fr. Arcand to invite missionaries to Mindanao to help improve the living conditions.<sup>4</sup>

In Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, the first foreign missionaries came before the second World War however, in the 1950's, it was restarted by Father Emile Laquerre of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI)<sup>5</sup> congregation. The OMI missionary priests focused on the provision of social services for the Muslim population. One priest started a hospital boat that sailed from the northern Sulu region to Bongao down to Sibutu and Sitangkai bringing medical assistance to the poorest of the poor.<sup>6</sup> From 1950 to 60's, there has been expansion of the Christian education in Tawi-Tawi; for instance, eight Notre Dame schools were opened in the different islands including the Notre Dame of Bongao (1951) and Notre Dame of Tungkalang (1960). These schools and medical facility solely served the Badjao population and became an important impetus on the sedentarization of the Badjaos in the area<sup>7</sup>, unfortunately, Muslim secessionist rebels burned down the school in 1973.

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<sup>1</sup>Prior to the separation of Tawi-Tawi as a province under the Presidential Decree No.302 of 1973, Sulu was a greater province encompassing all the islands in the Sulu archipelago.

[http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/presdecs/pd1973/pd\\_302\\_1973.html](http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/presdecs/pd1973/pd_302_1973.html)

<sup>2</sup> 97 percent of the Sulu population is Muslim <http://www.cbcponline.net/jolo/>

<sup>3</sup> Gowing, P.G. (1979). Muslim Filipinos-Heritage and Horizon. Quezon City: New Day Publishers

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.omiphil.org/beginningsofthemission.htm>

<sup>5</sup> OMI is a French Catholic missionary congregation founded in 1816 and reached the Southern Philippines in 1939 (ibid., 4)

<sup>6</sup> Substantial economic development was experienced in the Philippines in the post-WWII era during and after the American occupation. However, the muslim provinces in Mindanao region remained to be in the peripheries of poverty and scarce of services. <http://www.gov.ph/1940/01/22/manuel-l-quezon-sixth-state-of-the-nation-address-january-22-1940/>

<sup>7</sup> Nimmo, H. (1968). Reflections on Bajau History. Philippine Studies 16 (1):32-59

The missionary projects of the priests also ventured into mass communications, as early as 1948, the first Catholic newspaper was published and in 1968 a radio station was established in Bongao. In 1968, the priests opened the Holy Family Hospital and was managed by the Medical Mission Sisters. The hospital gave free services to the Badjaos and poor inhabitants of Tawi-Tawi. The hospital was taken over by a group of Muslim medical professionals in 2003. The free medical services for the Badjaos continued up to this date.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, the penetration of the foreign missionary priests in Sulu gave way to Catholic universities and colleges in Manila and Cotabato to collaborate in the documentation, dissemination and preservation of the Sulu culture. This resulted in the publication of Sulu Studies, a compilation of researches in the archipelago.<sup>9</sup>

The arrival of the Catholic missionaries and the improvement of the social services encouraged the natives to build stilt-house communities along the shorelines of Bongao. In Sanga-Sanga island, where the waters were not as rich as the other places in Tawi-Tawi, construction of houses were seen.<sup>10</sup>

Based on the narratives of the locals, families mooring in boathouses in Bongao were offered by the priests to build houses in the lot owned by the Catholic Church. They became the first settlers of Luuk Banca, an adopted community of the Church.

*We were told by Father Laquerre to cut down the mangrove trees and use the wood to build our own houses. We were around seven families living in boats who first established here in Luuk Banca. We had our own graveyard and we were given a lot to plant our crops. Some of us were sent to school, some of them got American names.*

- Tando, one of the first residents of Luuk Banca

The introduction of Christian education, opening up of medical and telecommunication facilities were part of the social development missions of the Catholic church that was heavily funded by Franco-American and American missionaries. These missions did not impose Catholic religion to the population. The main interest and concern of the missionaries were to

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ndjc.edu.ph/index.php/academic/graduate-program/27-home/president-articles/48-daring-foreign-oblate-missionaries-in-sulu-and-tawi-tawi.html>

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 4

*develop the intellect of the youth, so that they may become better citizens and can judge for themselves what course of life to take and what to follow.*<sup>11</sup>

## **1.2 Sedentarization: An effect of economic opportunities**

In Sibutu Island<sup>12</sup>, the vast and rich reefs have been historically moored by the Badjaos.<sup>13</sup> Tongehat, a community in Sibutu, has become the center of southern Badjao<sup>14</sup> population in the island. In the 1970's, the cultivation of seaweeds or locally called *agar-agar* was introduced in Sibutu, which lead to the land settling and seaweed tending of the sea nomads. Also, the aquaculture industry in Tawi-Tawi became a boom<sup>15</sup> and it enticed more Tausugs<sup>16</sup> to move.

Economic exchanges with the land dwelling, Sama Daleya,<sup>17</sup> also encouraged the sea nomads to settle on the land. The sedentary resident fish-buyers, ready market and regular income added to the movement to the traditionally fluid Badjao boat villages.<sup>18</sup> This relationship encouraged the Badjaos to moor regularly until they permanently stayed into the villages where they could sell their fish.<sup>19</sup> In Nunucan community of Sibutu Island, Badjaos were allowed to moor on the areas owned by a Sama leader in return of their caught fish.

The dawn of house construction and land dwelling by the early Badjaos quickly became a mark of social prestige in the Badjao society as others followed the example of the first house-dwellers.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> OMI in the Philippines. <http://www.ndjc.edu.ph/index.php/academic/graduate-program/27-home/president-articles/48-daring-foreign-oblate-missionaries-in-sulu-and-tawi-tawi.html>

<sup>12</sup> Sibutu is an island municipality in Tawi-Tawi that lies 14 kilometers away from Sabah Malaysia

<sup>13</sup> Nimmo, H. (2001) Magosaha. An Ethnography of the Tawi-Tawi Sama Dilaut. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City Philippines.

<sup>14</sup> Nimmo (2001: 15) characterized the Badjaos into two, the northern and the southern groups based on their geographical, economic and living practices.

<sup>15</sup> The introduction of seaweed farming in 1970s in the Philippines made the country as the primary producer seaweeds in the world market. The central seaweed cultivation was in the islands of Tawi-Tawi. (ibid. 13: 81)

<sup>16</sup> Tausug is one of the 13 Muslim ethnic groups that is historically native in the northern parts of Sulu Archipelago and Zamboanga Peninsula (Pallesen, 1985).

<sup>17</sup> Sama Daleya is a separate ethnic group that is native in Tawi-Tawi, they are land dwellers and Badjaos are considered to be part of the larger Sama ethnic group (ibid., 13: 38)

<sup>18</sup> ibid., 7

<sup>19</sup> ibid., 13

<sup>20</sup> ibid., 7

A resident recalled the movement of Badjaos:

*We didn't liked living in boats anymore, it was no longer fitting in the tides of the time.*

- One of the oldest residents of Luuk Banca

### **1.3 The Church Tipping its Toes**

After the Badjaos settled, the Catholic missionaries have gradually scaled down their operations. The killings of missionary priests in different parishes in Tawi-Tawi, the continued death threats that the missionary workers received and the ongoing instability of peace and order due to the civil unrest between the Muslim separatist groups and the government placed the church in a delicate position.

The schools that were established by the missionaries all over the archipelago were still open and ran by different Catholic congregations<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, the Vicariate of Jolo gave up its supervision of Luuk Banca or now called as Badjao Community Village (BCV) as its protected community. Primarily, the Badjaos only inhabited the community. However, the current practices of inter-ethnic marriages lead to the diversity of the population.

Currently, BCV is being 'guided limitedly'<sup>22</sup> by The Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul<sup>23</sup> (DC) nuns. The nuns serve as counselors, aid donors and conflict mediators however; they could no longer completely prevent the increasing diversity of the community. At present, the DC sisters symbolically represent the entire BCV. A nun expressed:

*They (Badjaos) still don't know that we do no longer hold the responsibility for their protection. We can only do so little. They come here for help and I personally extend my hand to them, when I do that I no longer bring the name of the congregation. That is my personal choice.*

There are two remaining missionary missions that are still in Bongao, the Badjao Village Learning Center Incorporated (BVLCI), an elementary school being facilitated and funded by the DC sisters and an organization formed by the Oblates of Notre Dame (OND) sisters that

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<sup>21</sup> Except for the burned mission school for the Badjaos, which was never rebuilt.

<sup>23</sup> The Daughters of Charity Sisters is a missionary congregation that served as representatives of the Badjaos in the municipal and other formal affairs. The DC works with the local government and the military to provide security and development of social services in the BCV.

focuses on the poor families of Bongao. Patterning the footsteps from their successors, the DC sisters aim to broaden the intellect of the Badjaos.

#### **1.4 Philippine Government Taking Over**

There has been recent developments and shift of responsibility since the creation of an Autonomous Region on Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) (Bertrand 2000: 2). The establishment of ARMM ended the three decades of war that killed more than 100,000 people. It also brought optimism that Mindanao could restore stability and develop the most impoverished provinces of the country.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, ARMM was expected to bring lesser bureaucracy, yet, corruption, ineffectivity and mismanagement of the transitional structures marred the fruit of the 1996 peace process.<sup>25</sup>

##### **1.4.a Housing Program**

The government-housing program in Tawi-Tawi is part of the larger endeavor of the National Housing Authority (NHA) in providing homes for the different indigenous peoples (Molintas 2004 in NCIP) in the Philippines. Driving the implementation of a comprehensive and integrated housing program, NHA functions under the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC)<sup>26</sup>. This is a government agency under the office of the president chaired by the Vice President of the Philippines. The particular housing project intends to facilitate the improvement and ensure the well being of the indigenous peoples<sup>27</sup>.

In January 2013, the national government granted the province of Tawi-Tawi housing project with the a budget allocation of 90 million pesos wherein 9 out of 11 municipalities aimed to build 90 units and the primary recipients were the Badjaos.<sup>28</sup> The aim was to give one house to every family. This would break the habit of two or more families staying in one house. In Tawi-Tawi, this project was being carried out by the National Housing Authority with its coordination with the Office of the Southern Cultural Communities – Autonomous Region on Muslim Mindanao (OSCC-ARMM)<sup>29</sup> and the local governments of Tawi-Tawi.

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.hudcc.gov.ph/content/hudcc-profile>

<sup>27</sup> [http://nha.gov.ph/news/articles/govt\\_build\\_home\\_IPs.html](http://nha.gov.ph/news/articles/govt_build_home_IPs.html)

<sup>28</sup> Though the primary recipients are the Badjaos, Sama and Jama Mapun groups are also entitled to acquire free housing in other municipalities, according to the provincial officer of OSCC-ARMM

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.hudcc.gov.ph/pr011113>

In the town of Bongao, the housing project was constructed in Pahut Community while in Sibutu island the project was divided into three different communities, 30 houses in Nunucan, 20 in Mochton and 50 units in Mochtar. Apart from stilt-houses, footbridges and septic tanks were included in the construction of Badjao housing program.<sup>30</sup> Conditions and criteria for housing beneficiary were not fully specified in any government documents, however, the provincial officer of OSCC-ARMM articulated that belongingness to the Badjao ethnic group was a sufficient proof to claim for a housing right.

#### **1.4.b Conditional Cash Transfer Program**

The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) is a human development measure of the Philippine government that provides conditional cash grants to the poorest of the poor.<sup>31</sup> It aims improve the health, nutrition, and the education of children aged 0-18. It is patterned after the conditional cash transfer (CCT) schemes in Latin American and African countries, which have lifted millions of people around the world from poverty<sup>32</sup> (see Mexico's Oportunidades, Brazil's Bolsa Familia, Nicaragua's Red de Proteccion Social) (Das, et al., 2005).

Introduced in 2007 and implemented in 2008, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is the pioneering government agency that carries out the program with the main goal of alleviating poverty by giving financial support to the extremely poor families and investing on health and education of poor children.<sup>33</sup> Along with DWSD, government agencies such as Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Education (DepEd) are working together in the project. The 4Ps is a mechanism of the government to fulfill its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).<sup>34</sup> It has become the cornerstone of the government's social protection efforts. It serves a renewed effort in solving chronic poverty and hunger, achieve primary education, promote gender equality, reduce child mortality and improve maternal health (Das, et al., 2005).

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.mindanews.com/top-stories/2013/01/12/nha-to-build-houses-for-badjaos-in-sibutu-tawi-tawi/>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.gov.ph/programs/conditional-cash-transfer/>

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Goals in poverty and hunger eradication, achieving universal primary education, gender equality, child mortality reduction and improving maternal health care. (*ibid.*, 31)

The 4Ps operates in all the 17 regions in the Philippines, covering 79 provinces, 143 cities, and 1,484 municipalities. As of March 26, 2015, the program has enlisted 4,425,845 households, of which 558,609 are indigenous households. The program also covers 11,058,303 schoolchildren aged 0 to 18, from the total registered families with an average of two to three children per household. The 4Ps has two types of cash grants given to its beneficiaries, a health grant that amounts 500 pesos per month and an education grant which amounts 300 pesos per child for ten months. A maximum of three children per household can be registered in the program.<sup>35</sup> For instance, a household with three children may receive 1400 pesos every month, or a total of 15,000 pesos for five years, from the two types of cash grants available.<sup>36</sup>

In order to be registered to the program, firstly, a household must be in the database of National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR), identifying them as poor. Secondly, a household must have a pregnant member or have children from under 18 years old during the time of registration. Thirdly, a household must be willing to comply with the conditionalities of the program.<sup>37</sup> Other requirement is the submission of marriage certificate and birth certificates of the household's child/ren.<sup>38</sup> In Tawi-Tawi are aware of the 4Ps scheme mostly women are the primary beneficiaries and through this program, Badjaos developed the necessity of having birth and death registrations.

Indigenous groups are under the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer Fund (MCCT), which is another feature of 4Ps, designed to reach out definitely poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged indigenous households with equal opportunities to access the services and benefits of the program.<sup>39</sup>

It is important to identify poverty trends for indigenous and ethnic minority communities in comparison with other sectors of the national population. From the data collected by National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP), the poverty analysis for specific geographic regions in Mindanao, (e.g. poverty indicators) is particularly severe.<sup>40</sup> Based on the Asian

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.gov.ph/programs/conditional-cash-transfer/>

<sup>37</sup> <http://pantawid.dswd.gov.ph/images/stories/pantawidfaq.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> <https://openaccess.adb.org/bitstream/handle/11540/2965/indigenous-peoples-philippines.pdf?sequence=1>

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

Development Bank (ADB) study,<sup>41</sup> the region with the highest poverty incidence was the ARMM with 56.7% poverty incidence.

## 1.5 The ‘Original’ Badjaos

*There are different types of Badjaos, but we are the original Badjaos. ‘Dilaut.’ The Badjaos of the sea but we are so few now.*

-A Badjao leader, field interview in Sanga-Sanga

The Badjaos of the Sulu Archipelago represent a subculture of the greater nomadic boat culture found throughout Southeast Asia<sup>42</sup>. They are the most sea-oriented people of a larger Sama-speaking group.<sup>43</sup> In the Philippines, outsiders refer from this group commonly apply the name “Bajau” or “Badjao”, they have also been called by many other names by the people within Sulu area as: Orang Laut, Turijene, Luwaqan or Lua'an, Palaqua, Pala'u, Lutao, Bajo, and so forth. However, Badjaos identify themselves as Sama Dilaut, which means Sea Sama.<sup>44</sup> In this paper, the terms Badjao and Sama Dilaut are the preferred names for this group of people.

A Badjao of Bongao is not the same as the Badjao of Siasi. They consider themselves as distinct yet are aware that they belong to a bigger Samal group that is extremely diverse and complex, almost every island – sometimes each village within an island – views itself as unique<sup>45</sup> from other groups.<sup>46</sup>

The *original* Badjaos are the first residents of the communities formed after series of sedentarization processes. They are the ones who experienced boat-dwelling tradition and are the experts of boatbuilding and fishing. The *real* Badjao is a Dilaut, someone who considers him/herself as a native of the sea.

### 1.5.a Badjao: Ethnic Relations

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<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> The boat dwelling culture extends from the groups of people living in southern Burma, Singapore, coasts of Java and Saumatra of Indonesia to the coasts of eastern Borneo reaching to the Sulu islands and as far as Zamboanga city on the island of Mindnao Philippines (Sopher 1954: 81).

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.ipedr.com/vol20/56-ICHSC2011-M10061.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, 13. pp. 36

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, 7.



As part of a larger Samal-speaking group, the Badjaos and the Sama Daleya (land dweller natives) establish interaction on the basis of mutual economic need.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, Badjaos consider their Sama counterparts as peaceful and both groups enjoy amicable relationship.

On the other hand, the Badjaos consider the Tausug as non-natives of Tawi-Tawi.<sup>48</sup> The Badjao perceives them as fearful people who steal, cheat, murder, humiliate and are to be avoided whenever possible.<sup>49</sup> Nimmo (2001) pointed out that the disdain of the Tausug to the Badjaos stems from the religious practices of the sea natives.

Currently, they have become Muslims but they are incorporating their indigenous beliefs to Islam (See Bottignolo 1995). In line with this, terms such as ‘subhuman’ (see Kiefer 1972) and ‘filthy pagans’<sup>50</sup> have been used by scholars in relating the Tausug-Badjao relations.

The Badjaos share the Sulu Muslims’ perception of Christians as outsiders who oppress and exploit the natives of Tawi-Tawi. This is largely because Christians are usually connected to the government and branded as bureaucrats.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the Badjaos have a little sense of belonging to the larger Philippine nation.<sup>52</sup>

But the influx of Christian missionaries in Tawi-Tawi altered to the perceptions of the Badjaos toward Christians. The helpfulness, honesty and genuine kindness of the religious orders won the admiration the locals.<sup>53</sup> Currently, Badjaos perceive Christians as *desirable neighbors*.

### **1.6 (Im)Mobility and cross-border migration**

As a social phenomenon, migration is influenced by the push and pull forces in our society.<sup>54</sup> Prior to the establishment of state borders, the Badjaos have been crossing the seas between Malaysia and the Philippines practicing their nomadic lifestyle from the earliest records since 16<sup>th</sup> century (Sopher 1965). Pointing reasons such as war and conflict from the secessionist

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, 13. pp.38

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 41

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, pp.40

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, pp.42

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 41 p. 289

groups, the recently Lahad Datu stand-off<sup>55</sup>; affecting trading and other economic opportunities, customs and kinship ties, the Badjaos among other groups in the region suffer in the border issues.

Furthermore, as part of the conditions in getting governmental benefits, registration to national registry, thus, securing citizenship, makes it harder for the Badjaos to go to Malaysia. As a Filipino, one must secure a passport when crossing national borders. However, getting a passport is both time and money consuming, as the nearest foreign affairs office is in Zamboanga City. With these prerequisites, Badjaos, among other groups, cross the border in dangerous, and usually, illegal process.

### **1.7 ILO No.169 and IPRA**

In recognition, promotion and protection of the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs), the Philippines has enacted the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA). This law substantially incorporates and contains the minimum standards and principles of the International Labor Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169 (ILO Convention No. 169),<sup>56</sup> which was adopted in 1989 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007 (UNDRIP). ILO 169 is the only international legal instrument solely for the protection of ICCs/IPs that is open for ratification by States. The Philippines, however, until now has not ratified ILO Convention No. 169.<sup>57</sup>

As a domestic legal instrument, IPRA creates and organizes institutions such as the NCIP as the executive organ of IPRA through implementation of programs. It aims to correct the historical injustice, which placed the indigenous peoples (IPs) at a disadvantage in comparison to the rest of the society. IPRA recognizes the rights of the IPs to their ancestral and domains.<sup>58</sup> It gives special emphasis on indigenous women, children, youth, elderly and differently-abled IPs.<sup>59</sup> In the case of the Badjaos and other indigenous groups in conflict-ridden areas, it is highly important that IPRA also recognizes their rights during armed

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<sup>55</sup> <https://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/03/26/crisis-in-sabah-after-malaysias-standoff-with-armed-filipinos/>

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/indigenous/Conventions/no169/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>57</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-manila/documents/publication/wcms\\_171406.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-manila/documents/publication/wcms_171406.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 6

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*

conflicts.<sup>60</sup>

However, the ILO convention No. 169 provision on emphasizing certain rights of IPS on cross-border contacts and communications has no equivalent provision under IPRA. Furthermore, ILO 169 covers a wider range of issues pertaining to IPs inclusion employment, training, education health and social security, customary law, traditional institutions, languages, religious belief and cross-border cooperation. It contains ILO's supervisory mechanisms and technical assistance that would facilitate and monitor the implementation of IPRA.<sup>61</sup>

### **1.8 Research Problem**

This study focuses on the impact of sedentarization policies on the Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi in the southwest Philippines. It is specifically about the Badjaos experiences with the housing program and cash transfer policies. It looks at the kind of houses allocated by the National Housing Authority and their location vis-à-vis the responses of the beneficiary hitherto sea nomads, Badjaos. It is also about the terms and conditions of the Conditional Cash Transfer Fund, which is meant to reduce poverty and improve welfare among the Badjaos. It taps into Badjao responses to and experiences to housing and cash transfer policies to highlight the dynamics of social change - from sea nomadism to sedentarization, from traditional to modernity.

### **1.9 Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following questions:

- How do the Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi view the content of the housing policies?
- How do the Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi view the terms and conditions of the cash transfer fund?
- How do the Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi view the sedentarization policies of the government of Philippines?

In this paper, the point of my discussion is by not dehumanizing the Badjaos by making them as victims more so branding the Tausugs as antagonists. Furthermore, I attempt to move away

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<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, pp.2

from pigeonholing an ethnic group by refraining the use of derogatory terms but to put a clear picture of the ethnic dilemmas based on the findings I have collected.

### **1.10 Motivation of my thesis**

My childhood memory of the Badjaos inspired me to write about them. I first encountered them when one night, during Christmas season, they knocked on our doors. They were dark-skinned, had long and slender arms and legs with bright copper colored hair walking in barefoot. I had never seen anyone like them before in my hometown. They begged for money but my parents gave them blankets, mosquito nets, carton papers for makeshift beds and also food. I asked my parents who are they and they said they are Badjaos and they came from a very far away place.

I grew up with the perception that the Badjaos, along with other indigenous peoples only beg for money during Christmas. I thought that all of the indigenous peoples live in the mountaintops and only go down to the urban civilization during the time of *giving*. Growing up, I got more bewildered by the Badjaos. They would entice people to toss coins in the pier and they would dive after it. Oftentimes, I would see them selling fish and pearls in coastal cities. When I moved to a more urban area in the southern Philippines to finish my bachelor degree, it caught my sight of how they lived in riverbanks and shorelines. I associated Badjaos with water.

People labeled them as violent, dirty, uncivilized and poor. These negative perceptions about them started my curiosity. Through my readings, I found out that they were actually boatpeople living in the seas between the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. A group of people that was moving freely. Because of my background in International Studies Major in Asian Studies I speculated if the Badjaos in Malaysia and Indonesia experience the same phenomenon, if they are were once free on the seas but now ended up on the city streets.

Moreover, the establishment of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a suprastate entity spanning through Southeast Asia patterned to European Union (EU), transpired my interests on the Badjaos even more. I was inquisitive about their position being in the middle of the seas of the member-states of ASEAN. I was interested to know about their perceptions about the Philippine government and their sense of belonging to the larger Filipino identity or a pattern of ASEAN integrated identity.

Furthermore, after watching a British Broadcasting Company (BBC) documentary<sup>62</sup> about the Badjaos and reading literatures about the governments and their policy provisions such as the banning of boat dwelling in Indonesia and the use of the Badjao culture for tourism in Malaysia and at the same time labeling the Badjaos as *the most peaceful group of people* or *the most passive people with no any forms of war and retaliation techniques* (See Macalandag 2009; Bracamonte 1995), my interest on the Badjao on their plight and experiences from government policies became my ultimate drive in writing my master thesis.

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<sup>62</sup> Excerpts from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgRpwESWPLM>

## **2.Badjao: Past and Present**

This chapter delves into the processes of change on the lives of the Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi by looking into their past organization, religion and economic practices to their present integrated condition among other ethnic groups. Taken together, the chapter will draw an outline of the research context, sedentarization, and its effects to the ethnic identity of the Badjaos.

### **2.1 Organization and Social Structure**

Malinowski (1944: 39, 44, 52) theoretically described organization as the way in which a group of people equip themselves materially and rules of status and rules of performance for carrying out their activities and satisfying their certain needs. In addition, I add on the economic approach of organization as Weber (1947) emphasized the ways in which the various types and services are continuously combined with one another and with non-human means of production. In the next part of this chapter, I will be dividing the analysis of Badjao's organization and structure into two; the *boat dwellers* which refers to the history of the Badjaos and the *sedentarized* which points to the natives who have opted for land dwelling since the efforts of the Catholic missionary groups up to the present take over of the government.<sup>63</sup>

### **2.2 The Boat Dwellers**

The traditional boat-dwelling household is typically single nuclear family. Some boat-dwellers lived in extended household if the houseboat is large enough or if a newly married couple has not yet acquired its own houseboat. Generally, the size of the boat limits the size of the household to a single nuclear family<sup>64</sup>, which serves as the basic unit of the Sama Dilaut society.<sup>65</sup> Although extremely independent, the nuclear family is not completely isolated as it regularly attaches itself to a larger group especially when at moorage.<sup>66</sup> It anchors itself near to the house or houseboats of its kinsmen, in order for them to be together and celebrate ceremonies.<sup>67</sup> Thus, boat life encourages the independence and integration of the nuclear family, in which, in accordance with the definition by Murdock (1949: 2)

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<sup>63</sup> To be not confused with the land-dweller Badjaos of Sitangkai that Nimmo (1972) identified, the sedentarized Badjaos that I classify in this paper are the ones who abandoned boat-dwelling out from the circumstances that were present since the arrival of the Catholic missionaries.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.* 13., pp. 2

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 105

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.* 13., pp. 117

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

“consists typically of a married man and woman with their offspring, although in individual cases, one or more additional persons may reside with them.”<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, residence pattern is dictated by the fishing season and the availability of fishing grounds. Some families are more nomadic than the others, as some could take months in the seas in search for fish while other families moor in one place and only move when they have to look for a new fishing ground.<sup>69</sup>

### **2.2.a Boat-dwellers: Societal composition**

The Badjaos are distinguished from the rest of the groups in Tawi-Tawi due to their physical attributes as a consequence to the long tradition of boat dwelling. These attributes include darker skin and deformed spine as a result of continual squatting inside their narrow boats and their long history of endogamous marriage.<sup>70</sup>

*When I was still young, I saw these Badjaos walking like ducks when they dock their boats here in Bongao. They were used to their tiny boats that walking seemed unnatural for them.*

- a Catholic missionary

The practice of marrying within the relatives is widely accepted and considered to be the best option. The Badjaos are free to marry their relatives except the members within the nuclear family, grandparents and siblings of parents and grandparents. First cousin marriage is accepted except between patrilineal parallel cousins and those who were reared together intimately by the same woman.<sup>71</sup> Within the family, there is an equal division of labor between the husband and the wife. The husband, with the consultation of the wife, takes major decisions. Commonly, it is the wife who handles the finances and takes care of household chores such as childcare, cooking, weaving, repairing of fishing nets and taking care of the children. Because of their houseboat living, there is an established strong intimacy within the family as all of the members are at the sea often separated to a larger Sama community.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Nimmo, H. (1965). Social Organization of the Tawi-Tawi Badjaw. Ethnology. University of Hawaii.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.* 13 pp., 110

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.* pp., 37

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.* ,pp., 113

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

The Badjao society is egalitarian, not all are destitute and there is no remarkable difference that create remarkable imbalance (Bottignolo 1995: 149) and its boat dwelling tradition, physical features and its religion are the most obvious distinctions that separates the Badjao from the rest of the groups in the archipelago.<sup>73</sup> Its political system is lightly loose, as some Badjaos acquire leadership role and the title of *datu*<sup>74</sup>, which has limited authority among the Badjaos. They are individually very independent and only defer to their chiefs at their convenience (St. John 1974: 372 quoted in Miller 2001). The Badjaos create family alliance unit, it is a group consisted of a married man and his several married sons and daughters. The grouping of families into alliance unit when they are mooring is the second most important social unit in the Sama Dilaut society.<sup>75</sup> Within these kindred or *Dakampungan*<sup>76</sup>, working and fishing groups are created and ceremonial activities demand the participation of the entire unit. The panglima or the chief that primarily functions as an arbitrator selected by the community on the basis of charisma and seniority heads a *dakampungan*.<sup>77</sup> A *dakampungan* is characterized as having five strata; on top is the headman or panglima, followed by the healers or the pandai, the permanent dwellers of the moorage are in the third level of the strata while the semi-nomads are on the fourth stratum and at the bottom are the true nomads. This stratification, however, is unfixed as it is influenced by prestige and wealth (Nimmo 1972 cited in Jumala 2011: 106).

## 2.2.b Boat-dwellers: Religion

The Badjaos do not have a wide oral literature that deals with religious matters, they believe in a host of spirits that are responsible for the fortunes and misfortunes of the everyday life.<sup>78</sup> Their world is populated with countless supernatural beings. They are found in the trees, mountains, in the sky and in the seas.<sup>79</sup> They believe in a supreme being; Tuhan, and Saitan<sup>80</sup> as the cause of suffering. Prior to the introduction of Islam in Sulu region, the Badjaos practice the praising of deceased ancestor or *pag-omboh*<sup>81</sup> (see Sopher 1977).<sup>82</sup> *Omboh* is

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<sup>73</sup> *ibid.* 13. pp., 36

<sup>74</sup> *Datu* is a malay word that honors monarchs, chiefs and leaders.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.* 13 pp.,117

<sup>76</sup> A *Dakampungan* is not strictly closed kin groups since all members have kin ties to other groups or moorages *ibid.* 13 pp., 127.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, 13

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.* 13. pp. 140

<sup>80</sup> Saitan could be of Islamic derivation Saytan, a rebel spirit who opposes Allah and seeks to mislead man (*ibid.* 74).

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.* 7

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.* 42



believed to be a creature of Tuhan and is described as the first man, the great Badjao and where the name of the religion of the Badjaos was taken from. However, in other studies (see Arce 1962, Szanton 1962) have labeled the Badjaos as pagans that Nimmo (1968) purports as deceptive as it denies the recognition on the impact of Islam in the Badjao society and it overlooks that most of Badjao villages in Tawi-Tawi and Semporna have mosques. *Omboh* is believed to be a creature of Tuhan and is described as the first man, and the great Badjao and where the name of the religion of the Badjaos was taken from.

Despite the isolation of the boat dwellers to the Islamized communities of Tawi-Tawi, similar Muslim traditions such as superincision<sup>83</sup> or locally called as *pag-islam* is evident. Pag-islam or literally translated as ‘to become a Muslim’ is obviously an Islamic origin and its name is being used by the Muslims of Sulu however deducing that the Badjao superincision rite is derived *wholly* (italics mine) from the Islamic tradition is uncertain as it shows original characteristics of its own, typical of archaic religiosity which appreciates a cosmic symbology which is irrelevant to the Islamic circumcision.<sup>84</sup>

### **2.2.c Boat-dwellers: Economy**

The economic life of the boat-dwellers revolved mostly around fishing. They fish in the coastal areas, reefs and in the open sea depending on the time and the season, the location of their moorage and the availability of fish. Thus, fishing is primarily for subsistence and the Badjaos are reluctant of spending money, which is needed for their ceremonies such as weddings and pag-islam. It may vary from different families, as some are more nomadic while some are permanent in the moorages. During fishing trips that could usually take up to one year in the sea become a family affair as each member participates in the activity.<sup>85</sup> Apart from the fishing cycle trips, Badjaos practice several types of fishing techniques and their income may greatly vary from ones initiative, skills, location of the moorage and the amount of time being spent in fishing. Some Badjaos are more knowledgeable of the sophisticated marine environment than the others, thus the income that they accumulate from their fishing trips may vary from different factors. Skillful Badjao fishermen are occasionally being hired

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<sup>83</sup> a traditional process circumcission that is practiced by the people in the Pacific stretching from Hawaii to the Philippines. in [http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1120&context=hss\\_pubs](http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1120&context=hss_pubs)

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.* 13. pp. 206

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.* 13. pp. 83

by fish dealers for fishing trips to Palawan that sometimes could last up to three months. In some cases, they bring their family with them.<sup>86</sup>

Whenever they have a big catch, and they have enough for their family, Badjaos sell some of their caught fish to the local town market. Moreover, barter of fish has been practiced in exchange to moor in the areas owned by Sama. In some instance, fish is exchanged for cassava, a root crop that is the food staple of the Badjaos. Apart from fishing, weaving of pandan leaves<sup>87</sup> or *pagtepoh* and gardening were the other means of the Badjaos for their sustenance.



Photo 1. Stilt-houses in Sanga-Sanga

### 2.3 The Sedentarized

In the current setting, the Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi are now fully sedentarized settling in different communities all over the province.

*All of us are in the land now. If you want to see Badjaos living in boats then you can find them in Malaysia.*

- A BCV resident

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<sup>86</sup> *ibid.* 13., pp.84

<sup>87</sup> *Pandanus amaryllifolius*

The conflict between the government and Muslim secessionist group during the Martial Law in the 70's drove the Badjaos to consequently move from one moorage to another. Badjaos from the moorages of Tungkalang, Lu'uk Tulai, Tungbangkao and Lioboran left their homes during the outbreak of the war and sought refuge to Lu'uk Banka that was opened by the missionary priests,<sup>88</sup> which is currently called Badjao Community Village, while some fled to Sabah, Malaysia.<sup>89</sup>

In 1982, Lu'uk Banka had some 40 houses from a joint project of the OMI priests and the national government for the war displaced Badjaos. In addition, there were six houseboats moored in the area. On the other hand, some families returned to Tungkalang with their houseboats yet the Tausug already invaded the communities of Tungbangkao and Lioboran and no Badjao returned to that area anymore. In March 1992 another government housing project was inaugurated in Lu'uk Banka. An additional of 80 families received wooden huts with galvanized roofs.<sup>90</sup> In the 1960's there were about 1,600 Badjaos however in 1997 there were probably about 225 of them left.<sup>91</sup> Some of them died during the clash between the secessionist groups, some fled to Sabah and established a community near Semporna (Sather 1997: 84), while some sought refuge to the island of Sibutu which never experienced violence during the 70's.

Currently, there is about 3,650 Badjaos in the municipality of Bongao<sup>92</sup> including the communities of Lamiun, Luuk Banka (BCV) and Pondohan in Sanga-Sanga. In Luuk Banca, there are approximately 200 stilt-houses with indefinite population, primarily because of the poor practice of population registration and the migratory tradition of the Badjaos. In BCV, a household normally shares their stilt-house with another one or two households within their kindred. The possibility of building a separate house is encouraged however economic reasons bar the newly wed couples, for instance, to be independent. Moreover, living within personal kindred is still being practiced by the sedentarized Badjaos. On the other hand, in Pondohan in Sanga-Sanga, each family has its own stilt-house and the whole community belongs to one clan.

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<sup>88</sup> *ibid*, 13., pp. 224

<sup>89</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid*. 79

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 226

<sup>92</sup> Based from the data acquired from the local government of Bongao.

### **2.3.a The sedentarized: nomadism or dispersal**

Since their sedentarization, the Badjaos have only been using their boats as means of fishing or moving. Whenever insecurity arises, they move and seek new shelter, usually traversing the seas to Sabah. Moreover, crossing the seas also means visiting their relatives and finding better opportunities of livelihood in Malaysia. Currently, due to the amount of undocumented migrants to Sabah, there has been a massive crackdown to stop illegal migration and import/export of goods and services. When caught, migrants will be under the harsh penal system of the Malaysian government and later on will be sent back to Tawi-Tawi, called *halaw* or returnees. Most of *halaw* are Badjaos bringing with them diseases and poor health that they acquired from detention and their horrifying experiences under the Malaysian police.

### **2.3.b The Sedentarized: Societal composition**

From the beginning of the sedentarization of the Badjaos, the Badjaos of Sibutu, represent two-thirds of the population of 3,400, have apparently involved in the political and economic affairs of the land-dwelling Samal compared to the Badjaos of Bongao (Nimmo 1972: 53). Moreover, in the studies of Taylor (1936) (in Nimmo, *ibid*) the Badjao communities in Sibutu have always been more actively involved in the greater political structure of Sulu. Furthermore, Taylor (in Nimmo, *ibid*) noted that the Bajau (Badjao) owed allegiance to certain land-dwelling datu, who in return, offered protection to the Badjaos.

Consequently, the movement of the Badjaos from boats to houses was politically initiated by the local datu who wanted to gain the political support of the Badjao community. During this time, the Badjao represented an important voting bloc in Sibutu, and no politician seeking and office can ignore them. Contrariwise, the Badjao community in Bongao is almost completely outside the political interests of politician.<sup>93</sup>

The current political organization of the Badjaos is somewhat organized yet dependent on the larger group. In BCV, despite the democratic process of electing their chieftain and tribal leaders, these posts are mere symbolic as they are heavily reliant on the supervision of the missionaries and the marines.<sup>94</sup> Meanwhile, in Pondohan in Sanga-Sanga, the leader is chosen by seniority and is tightly supported by the university rector, which is a devout catholic. On

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<sup>93</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>94</sup> The marines put up an outpost outside the Badjao village to ensure peace and order, cut down drug dealing activities and to prevent the Tausug from coming in the community.

the same note, community leaders in Tongehat and Nunucan in Sibutu Island are picked through tenure. Just like in other communities in Bongao, the leaders in Nunucan and Tongehat are reliant on the larger Sama group. In a much larger scope, the Tausugs dominate the political landscape of the province of Tawi-Tawi while there is no Badjao holding any governmental post.

Succeedingly, leadership roles are taken over by larger ethnic groups. However, the sedentarized Badjaos situate themselves in the industries of boatbuilding, fishing, seaweed farming, weaving and labor.

Furthermore, ethnic composition has changed considerably in Bongao. The Tausug language now dominates the marketplace and is widely used for school instruction.<sup>95</sup> Despite the introduction of K-12 program<sup>96</sup>, Tausug along with Tagalog and English will be the medium of instruction after the first three academic years of the students.

On the other hand, the ethnic structure in Sibutu is still dominated by Sama and Badjao groups. To keep the status quo, constructing public market and creating communal transport system are discouraged in the island. In this way, Tausug will not be enticed to settle in Sibutu. In connection with this, Sibutu remains to be a sixth-class municipality in nationwide ranking.

### **2.3.c The Sedentarized: The *New Religion***

The relatives of the Badjao, who built the first mosque in the Philippines, tend to be the most acculturated to Islam. Historically, they are the first Badjao family that has been acculturated to Islam. They regularly attend mosque services and some of their family members went to pilgrimage in Mecca. Furthermore, mosque attendance is an important indication of the degree of Islamicization.<sup>97</sup> Currently, Badjaos belong to the 13 ethnic Islam groups in the Philippines. Most of them are amalgamated to the Islamic society and traditions. However, evidently, Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi are, to some extent, non-practicing Muslims. Attendance to mosque in BCV is relatively low among Badjaos compared to Sama.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, 13. pp. 222

<sup>96</sup> part of the K-12 education program is the usage of mother tongue as a medium of instruction from kindergarden to grade 1.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, 7, pp 53

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*

On the other hand, the indigenous believe of *pag-omboh* is still heavily practiced by the Badjaos despite their full embrace to Islam. This incorporation of their traditional beliefs makes them distinct among all the Islamic ethnic groups in the Philippines. The embrace of the sea-dwelling natives to Islam brought many changes to the realm of values than the structure of the Badjaos.<sup>99</sup> Their Islamicization<sup>100</sup> was a step by being more acceptable to their Muslim neighbors thus defying the belief that the missionaries were Christianizing the Badjaos as suspected by the people of Bongao. First cousin marriage is already seen as a taboo among land-dwelling Badjaos. Apart from that Nimmo (1972) compared the boat dwelling and land settling Badjaos of Sitangkai, the latter are more hospitable, cleaner, less shy and have stricter views on premarital and extramarital sex prohibitions – things that they learned from their muslim neighbors. Nimmo (1972) contended that the Islamicization of the land dwelling natives and the Badjaos contact with them lead to the gradual conversion of the sea-natives to the religion. However, he denied that that the Badjaos<sup>101</sup> borrowed the Islam religion to the land dwellers yet argue that there has been incorporation of indigenous practices to the Islam religious system, interpreting Islam to fit on their existing traditional beliefs (see Taylor 1931). Being the last ethnic group being converted to Islam and their incorporation of their traditional beliefs and practices, the Badjaos are seen as outsider in the Moro society.<sup>102</sup>

Intermarriages between Tausug-Badjao and Sama-Badjao are also becoming widely accepted in the society, yet, this brought to the *impurity* of Badjao village as what the old settlers believe.

*This village is becoming more and more diverse. Tausugs are coming in and we don't like it. If it were the Christians or the Sama then it is okay, they are peaceful like us. But this village is supposedly only for us.*

- A BCV resident

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<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, 13. pp. 96

<sup>100</sup> there is no available study on the exact reasons and time when the Badjaos converted into Islam however, the closest study is from Horvatich (1997) on the religious change among Sama in Simunul island. Although the Simunul people are not Sama Dilaut, Horvatich's discussions of religious changes are relevant to all Sama of Tawi-Tawi.

<sup>101</sup> Nimmo (1972) used the data from the boat dweller Badjaos of Sitangkai.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.* 43

### **2.3.d The Sedentarized: Economy**

In 1960's, fishing, boatbuilding and farming were the main economic activities of the Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi.<sup>103</sup> However, the loss of Badjaos to access to fishing grounds lead to the incorporation to the wage labor economy. Today, most of men and even young Badjaos turned into laborers in Bongao market, working for different businesses of the Tausug, Chinese, Christians and Sama.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, Badjao women knock doors of different homes offering cleaning and laundry jobs. Due to the change in the societal composition and the control of fishing grounds Badjaos cannot harness fishing in Bongao.

Furthermore, Badjaos were incorporated, by using their knowledge in marine life, in the marine research facility that was opened by the state university in Sanga-Sanga. However, in this endeavor, it was only the community leader and his family benefited. Conversely, Badjaos of Sibutu are still reliant on the utilization of marine life. Because of the different societal composition in Sibutu compared to Bongao, Badjaos still practice fishing in the seas and contribute to the extensive seaweed industry in the region.

### **2.4 Summary**

The boat-dwelling practice of the Badjaos formed a distinguished societal composition from the rest of the ethnic neighbor groups in Tawi-Tawi.<sup>105</sup> It was a society based on family groups with a lightly loose political system. Apart from that, the long tradition of boat living resulted to the distinct physical formation.

Furthermore, the Badjaos developed a system of belief based on ancestral worship. On the other hand, economic life revolved primarily on the extraction and utilization of marine resources. In connection with this, both religious and economic practices depicted tinge of connection to the upcoming sedentarization of the nomads.

In the course of sedentarization, Badjaos experienced in their societal composition, wherein, communities developed political system that was dependent to the larger ethnic groups. Within Bongao, language has been change from Sinama to Tausug, however, Sibutu remained to be Sama dominant, thus, retained the Sama dialect.

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<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, 13. pp. 227

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, 13 pp. 229

<sup>105</sup> see chapter 2 pp. 22

Religion became an important factor in looking into the change of the Badjao society. Many became Muslims, however, the practice of *pag-omboh* was still observed. The acceptance of the *new* religion gained the custom of inter-marriage making Badjao communities diverse, an issue that will be discussed further.

Finally, the loss of access and control to fishing grounds made the Badjaos of Bongao leave their boats and fishing nets and got integrated to the wage labor system. On the other hand, Badjaos of Sibutu retained the utilization of marine resources as their economic subsistence.

However, the Badjaos were never forced to abandon their nomadic lifestyle to be integrated to the land-dwelling settlers of Tawi-Tawi. The Badjaos were able to conform to impose behavioral patterns, and they were able to continue some of their traditional practices that proved congruent to their new dwelling lifestyle. The processes of change operating in such situation are different from those, which occur in societies that have been forced to adopt a particular way of living. This concept of dynamism and flexibility has always been a concept of societies and is responsible for bringing and allowing social change will be discussed further in the theoretical conception chapter of this paper.



### **3. Methodology**

This chapter focuses on methodological issues, specifically on the choice of study area, informant selection and size, field access and data collection techniques. It is also about ethical dilemmas and field reflections especially my social attributes such as; my ethnic background, language proficiency and religion, which may have influenced the data collection process.

#### **3.1 Areas of the study**

Tawi-Tawi is located in the southwestern most region of the Philippines. It is the country's last province bordering Malaysia and is geographically distant from the mainland Mindanao. It consists of 11 municipalities and about three hundred islands, with rich marine resources and making it suitable for the habitat of the Badjaos. Tawi-Tawi has also been in the center of conflict between the Moro rebels and the government forces as some islands within the province were considered as the hideout and training ground of the secessionist groups.

Tawi-Tawi is a thickly Muslim populated region is part of the larger Philippine Islamic region of ARMM.<sup>106</sup> However, despite the dense presence of Islam, it has been a recipient of several missionary programs from the Catholic church.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Tawi-Tawi belongs to Philippine provinces with high incidence of poverty and is considered to be one of the least developed. Thus, government projects such as housing and welfare development programs are used to curtail poverty in the region.

Several reasons triggered me in choosing Tawi-Tawi as my field research area. As the apparent diaspora<sup>108</sup> of the Badjaos in the urban cities in the Philippines, I could have easily chosen the nearest metropolitan city from my hometown where a big number of Badjaos are living. But the exodus of the Badjaos has certain reasons rooted to their ethnic geographic origins, leading my choice to Tawi-Tawi, the home of the Badjaos. In addition, I was intrigued by its location being in the last frontier of the Philippines. Furthermore, the civil conflict between the Muslim secessionist groups and the government added interest on my pursuit in choosing Tawi-Tawi as the locale of my study. The complexity of ethnicity, armed resistance and the peace and order situation were considered vital in bringing a new aspect in

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<sup>106</sup> Autonomous Region on Muslim Mindanao is the result of the Peace Process signed between the Moro National Liberation Front and the Government of the Philippines in 1996.

<sup>107</sup> See chapter 2 discussions

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.* 43

looking into the lives of the Badjaos after their full sedentarization. However, the presence of the two congregations of nuns: the missionary nuns of Daughters of Charity and the nuns of Oblates of Notre Dame<sup>109</sup> finally made me choose Tawi-Tawi as the area of my study. Their presence veiled as to be my primary access in Bongao.

Considering that the province consists of several islands, I assumed that I will be traversing seas to reach Badjao communities. I chose the town of Bongao, the capital of Tawi-Tawi, as the base of my fieldwork because it is strategically accessible, it has a stable peace and order situation and is where the missionary groups are based.

I conducted my fieldwork in three different island localities in Tawi-Tawi using qualitative methods of interviews and participant-observation with the goals of looking into the ethnic identity under the process of sedentarization.

The localities are as follows;

#### A. Badjao Community Village (BCV)

BCV is an adopted community<sup>110</sup> of the missionary group, Daughters of Charity (DC), and has an unfixed population<sup>111</sup>. It is locally called as Lu'uk Banka and it was the first location that foreign missionaries opened for Badjao refugees in the 1970s during the onslaught of the civil war. Currently, it is the second biggest Badjao community in Bongao, next to Lamiun. A total of three weeks was spent in conducting participant-observation in the area. BCV became my primary area of fieldwork because of its vicinity and the established presence of the missionary nuns who became my gatekeepers and hosts at the same time. Furthermore, most of the residents of BCV are recipients of 4Ps cash transfer fund. Data collection was done in the methods of participant-observation and interviews in the area.

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<sup>109</sup> It is the same congregation that runs the high school that I attended.

<sup>110</sup> Adopted communities are popular in the Philippines, usually carried out by non-government organizations or religious groups. It is a form of extending assistance to poor communities by providing education, housing, livelihood programs, etc.

<sup>111</sup> There was no official record of population in the area as some Badjaos still practice nomadic activities such as moving to Malaysia. Also, intermarriages among Samal, Badjao and Tausug tribes added to the difficulty of determining the population. However, a rough estimate, there are about 160 stilt-houses with around 800 residents. Apart from that, the community is partly mixed with Tausug, Sama and Badjao Siasi, whom the Badjaos of Bongao consider as not the same type of ethnicity as they have.

## B. Bancao Pondohan Layohan (Pondohan)

*Pondohan*<sup>112</sup> is a small Badjao community in the island of Sanga-Sanga, a sub-community under the jurisdiction of Bongao municipality. It is an adopted community of the Mindanao State University Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography (MSU-TCTO). Pondohan has around twelve stilt-houses standing in the middle of the Bongao channel. There is no footbridge that connects the houses and visiting the community I needed to cross the channel by canoe.<sup>113</sup> I had frequent visits in this area and had an overnight stay at one of the households. A total of three days was spent in studying the community. *Pondohan* became an important part of the data collection because the community was planned to be turned into a government housing project. On a similar note, participant-observation and interviews were made in collecting data.

## C. Sibutu Island communities

Sibutu is an island dominantly populated by Sama followed by the Badjaos. It is a municipality that is only 14 kilometers away from Borneo, Malaysia. Nimmo (1972) noted that Sibutu Badjaos are the most Islamicized Badjao in Sulu. Within the island, I visited the communities of Nunucan and Tongehat. Nunucan is one of the recipients of the housing project of the government. It has thirty stilt houses and has a population of around 200<sup>114</sup>. Limited observation and unstructured interviews were made and my immersion in the community could only be summed up to four to five hours.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, Tongehat community is home to the oldest Badjao moorage (Nimmo, 1965) and has a long history of Badjao settlement. It is an adopted community of the local Catholic Church and has an indefinite population. Furthermore, it is the biggest of all the communities and interviewed the beneficiaries of the 4Ps system. However, limited participation and observation for three days was made. Furthermore, interviews were also done among the locals.

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<sup>112</sup> Pondohan is a general term for a Badjao community. There could be several communities in Tawi-Tawi that has the word Pondohan attached to it. However, i will be using the term *Pondohan* referring to the community that is adopted by the university.

<sup>113</sup> The reason why there was no bridge that connects the community to land and to each houses is to isolate themselves from the Tausugs which my informants perceived as troublemakers.

<sup>114</sup> Population estimation was given by a Sama community leader

<sup>115</sup> I intend to include Nunucan community since it is the only government housing project I was able to visit. Also, despite of my short visit the value of the data that I collected is very significant.

Taken all together, the time spent in data gathering was one month. Considerably, the amount of time doing the fieldwork was short, however, using multiple data collection techniques and swift access to areas helped me to perform the study in a manner that is required.

These areas play a central role in the sedentarization process of the Badjaos. The *Pondohan* in Sanga-Sanga has a long history of movement of Badjaos. Furthermore, BCV, or previously known as Luuk Banca, was the first mooring area that was opened by the missionary priests. In addition, Sibutu communities have been an important part of the history of moorage of the Badjaos. Finally, in Nimmo (1972), Badjaos of Bongao and Sibutu belong to the Northern Badjao unit wherein they share ties, kinship and other cultural features than any other Badjao group.

### **3.2 Gatekeepers and Access**

As the localities were classified as *limited entry societies*, wherein permission must be secured from the gatekeepers who served as ‘police’ before entry for research<sup>116</sup>. The missionary nuns of DC served as my gatekeepers in the BCV community. At the same time, because of our religious similarities – Roman Catholic - they opened the door of their convent and served as my hosts in the entire course of my fieldwork. It was an advantage that to live with the nuns as the BCV community was situated few meters away. Most importantly, trust and legitimacy were somehow passed on unto me. During my first days in the community, people were still skeptical about my presence and motives until I told them that I stayed with the nuns then I felt immediately that they slowly begin to trust me and let me visit their houses. Moreover, having the connection with the missionary nuns, I gained an immediate access to the rest of the communities.

Ethnographers will be able to have their paths smoothed by individuals who act both as sponsors and gatekeepers (Bryman 200: 407) In my case, the DC nuns, as my initial gatekeepers, paved the swift process of my data collection. However, problems occurred when my secondary gatekeeper<sup>117</sup> and at the same time translator, from the *Pondohan* community tried to conceal and twist information from me because of our religious

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<sup>116</sup> Spradley, (1980). Participant Observation. University of Minnesota.

<sup>117</sup> I refer to the key person assigned by my gatekeeper to be my assistant in the field. I consider him as a gatekeeper since I needed to go through him every time I go to the field.

difference. I have noticed that my secondary gatekeeper/translator attempted to ‘clean’ the Tausug identity, as he knows that this research work will be published abroad. For instance, he told me that I could not go to the area during working hours because the Badjaos are “fishing freely in the seas of Tawi-Tawi”. Yet, when my informant personally talked to me, grasping to communicate in my own language, he confirmed that they too are barred from fishing. Access does not finish when the ethnographer had made a contact and gained entry to the group. Access is an on-going activity and it is likely that problems may occur in closed contexts or in societies that are classified with limited admission (Bryman 2008: 408). Suspicion (Sharpe 2006: 366) could lead to deceptions and misinformation (Goffman 1956).

Gatekeepers are generally concerned as to how the ethnographer paints the community. They usually have practical interests in seeing themselves in a favorable light and at least to safeguard what they perceive as their legitimate interests (Atkinson & Hammersley 2007: 128). In dealing with these instances, it is important to cross check data and this can be done by playing up the ethnographer’s credentials – using experience and knowledge of the organization – society – and the understanding of their problems (Bryman 2008: 408). In my case, my knowledge on my informant’s experiences and language contributed to the prevention on the twist of information.

### 3.3 Language

*Language is bound to be of importance for social research...Understanding language categories had been an important component of research involving **participant observation**, because knowing how words are used and the meanings of specific terms in the local vernacular is frequently viewed as crucial to an appreciation of how the social world is being studied by its members (Bryman 2008: 493)*

Local language proficiency was definitely an important aspect of the research that I did not master, particularly because of time constraint. However, the availability of my key informants who also became my translators helped me in attaining information. Translators served as intermediary between the researcher and interviewee who do not share similar language competencies. The researcher-interpreter match stresses the importance in terms of

characteristics such as sex, culture, religion and age.<sup>118</sup> In Bongao, Tausug was widely spoken and is the local dialect of the region, Badjaos speak a variant of Sinama, a sama dialect. On the same note, Sinama is the *lingua franca* of the locals in Sibutu. In all of localities, the informants roughly speak Filipino, which is my dialect, however, a significant Filipino speakers can be found in BCV. Among the three interpreters I worked with, I came across with the concealing and twisting of information from the one which I do not share common religion and ethnic background.

### **3.4 Informant selection and Size**

It is very essential to get informants who can provide quality data in the course of research. Yet, it is important to know that almost everyone can be selected as informants but not everyone could give the vital information that the researcher needs.<sup>119</sup>

When I conducted the fieldwork and established access to the communities, there were informants who were presenting themselves directly, while there were some who had to be sought. The latter gave more valuable data and showed greater spontaneity and naturalism (Bryman 2008: 410), while the former gave extensive information ranging from older traditions and customs. At first, I was more concerned on the cultural aspect of the Badjaos; intermarriages, weddings, etc. yet as I got to know them better, important information aroused me that lead to focus on the informants who gave delicate data. These informants are community leaders of the different communities and are the witnesses of important events in the changing Badjao society.

All of my informants were recommended by my gatekeepers and translators since they were the ones who played important roles in their communities. The primary criteria for the selection of my informants are their affinity to Badjao ethnicity and age. Though my primary informants are the Badjao themselves, it was also important to get data from the locals coming from different ethnic and religious groups such as the Christians and Samas.

As Silverman (2006: 20) noted, authenticity rather than sample size is often the issue in qualitative research. The aim is usually to gather an ‘authentic’ understanding of people’s experiences. Furthermore, for Oinas (2004: 216, 219 cited in Kuosmanen 2013: 26), it is an

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<sup>118</sup> Edwards, R. (1990). Connecting Method and Epistemology: A White Woman Interviewing Black Women. *Women’s Studies Int’l Forum*. 13(5): 477-490.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.* 116

advantage to have limited participants in qualitative studies because it is easier to secure that the differences between them (participants) are not lost in generalizations. Similar to my approach, I used a limited number of participants, a total of six, however, well represented on every issue that I take. There were three who presented the delicate data that made this study interesting. They are the ones who gave information about the failure and the success of the government in meeting up their needs as an indigenous group in the aspect of housing program. On the other hand, a separate group of informants, a total of three, discussed their perception and experiences on the government's conditional cash transfer fund. In the process of the selection of participants, I became reliant to my gatekeepers and translators. They often develop an appreciation of the research and direct the ethnographer to situations, events or people likely to be helpful in the progress of investigation (Bryman 2008: 409).

### **3.4 Data Collection Techniques**

Ethnography is one of the many approaches that are available in social science research. It deals with studying cultures through observation and interviews. For Malinowski (1922) (cited in Spradley, 1980: 3), the goal of ethnography is “to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world.” In my ethnographic research, I used participant-observation with a combination of unstructured interviews as tools in acquiring data. Participant-observation includes participating and observing the people and communities with whom the researcher is working, it involves the use of behavioral analysis and recording of the information gained from participating and observing on daily interactions.<sup>120</sup>

Moreover, in qualitative method of researching in communities it is crucial to extract the explicit and tacit aspects of culture. Explicit culture accounts to the things that we know, the level of knowledge people can communicate with a relative ease (Spradley, 1980 in Dewalt, et. al., 1998). On the other hand, tacit aspects of culture deal with the knowledge that is outside our consciousness or awareness. This is an understanding of the culture that is not easily articulated or recorded. In this way, participant-observation works in collecting data in unstructured manner in naturalistic settings and with subsequent analysis by the ethnographer

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<sup>120</sup> Dewalt, K. M., Dewalt, B. R., & Wayland, C. B. (1998). *Participant observation*. I Bernard, HR (ed.). Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology.

who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied.<sup>121</sup>

### **3.5.1 Interviews**

In Silverman (2006: 20), interviews in qualitative research using ‘open-ended’ question are the most effective method towards getting authentic understanding of people’s experiences. Furthermore, in an open-ended interview approach, respondents are encouraged to offer their own definition of particular events, sedentarization for example. I considered interviewing as a method is befitting to the study. In Corbetta (2003: 264), qualitative interview is an in-depth method that can grant access to deep knowledge and explanations, and help to grasp the subject’s perspective. Moreover, Bryman (2008: 438) asserted that, through interviews or face-to-face discussions subjective and detailed personal story can be told, with the focus on how the interviewee understands and explains different phenomena. In Portelli’s (1998: 67) words, oral sources are valuable precisely because they tell us ‘less about events and more about their meaning’.

Most of the interviews were conducted in the homes of the Badjaos where they feel safe to share information. I did not follow any fixed patterns on the interview process however; I started on the topics that the informants could easily talk about, such as traditions and practices, until important issues began to surface. On the aspect of government’s housing program, the average interview duration ran for more than an hour and in several days as I kept on coming back to the houses of the informants. On the other hand, average interviews duration in the aspect of cash transfer ran from thirty minutes to an hour. In the process of qualitative interview in an unstructured form, there is much greater interest in the interviewee’s point of view. It tends to be more flexible the responses of the interviewees directed the course of the interview. Furthermore, the ethnographer aims rich, detailed answers yet at the same time establishes the character of having a conversation (Bryman 2008: 437-438).

Experience is reworked through memory, language, genre, and culture. Through telling experience we begin to understand what it means to be part of a specific group (Bhattacharyya 2009: 138). In the process of interviews, informants displayed in-depth

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<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*



knowledge about the topic. they seemed motivated to participate and volunteered easily. In most of the interviews, informants seemed to be more interactive when they feel safe, that is, when interviews were being conducted in boats and in houses.

My status as an outsider was constantly being discussed in different ways during the interviews. Informants would discuss about the traditions and practices of the Badjaos. In the long run, discussions lead into issues that the informants were experiencing. In some instances, I was perceived as a messenger by the informants to the government to help them in their struggles. Even though these discussions arose, I valued the information that I collected because in these instances informants tend to be more conversational.

### **3.5.2 Participant Observation – “Going Native”**

*We cannot study the social world without being part of it (Atkinson & Hammersley 1983).*

To compliment with the interview method and to best capture the understanding on the sedentarization processes of the Badjaos, I used participant-observation as a technique in data collection. Bryman (2008: 402) defined that participant-observation is the process where the ethnographer immerses in a group in an extended amount of time, observing behavior, listening what is said in conversations and asking questions. Furthermore, Jorgensen (2014: 3) noted that, through participant-observation, it is possible to describe what goes on, who or what is involved, when and where things happen why and how they occur. Participant-observation is fitting for this study as it claimed as exceptional for studying processes, relationships among people and events, the organization of people, continuities and patterns over time, as well as the immediate sociocultural contexts in which human existence unfolds.<sup>122</sup>

In doing participant-observation, I positioned myself, most of the time, as participant-observer role (Gold 1958: 220), wherein I developed relationships with my informants through time and where I have been more participating than observing. By visiting and talking with the informants several times and attending to ceremonies, in this way, uneasiness

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<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*

disappeared when informants learned to trust me and vice versa.<sup>123</sup> On the other hand, the role of participation and observation changed in Sibutu communities where I became an observer-participant due to time constraint. This role is used in studies involving one-visit interviews and it calls relatively more formal observation.<sup>124</sup>

In Silverman (2006: 19), observational studies have been fundamental to much qualitative research. The observational method has often been the chosen method to understand another culture from the pioneering case studies of non-Western societies by early anthropologists (See Malinowski, 1922; Radcliffe-Brown, 1948). The core of the study is to get the indigenous identity of the Badjao with regard to the shift of their complete sedentarization through governmental efforts under the circumstances of violence and conflict in the locality of Tawi-Tawi.

Participant-observation allowed me to examine the lives of the locals in an approximately holistic way and obtain insights that are true and deep. Not only did I interviewed but also cross-checked the data that I have collected through participant-observation. As a researcher using this method I participated and observed the communities as much as I could. In participation, I managed to witness weddings, mourned with the bereaved, went on a pilgrimage to Badjao's sacred mountain and prayed to their ancestors, went fishing in the waters of Bongao and Sibutu, ate with them and spent nights in Badjao homes. While doing participation I was at the same time observing my informants and their actions. Looking into the differences such as physical attributes; I have verified that the pure Badjao have long and slender arms compared to the typical Filipino built. I observed their love for music, Badjaos play music all day long in their houses, at least those who afforded to buy stereos and musical instruments. I observed that a lot of them lie on the floor in midday looking tired because they have nothing to eat.

Irrespective of the degree of involvement or of participation, the practice of participant-observation provides two main advantages to research. First, it enhances the quality of the data obtained during the fieldwork. Second it enhances the quality of the interpretation of the

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<sup>123</sup> Gold, R. (1958) Roles in Sociological Field Observations. *Social Forces*. 217-223

<sup>124</sup> *ibid*

data. Thus participant-observation works both as a data collection technique and an analytical tool.<sup>125</sup>

The process of participation and observation varies from each locality I have been. With the proximity compared to other localities, in BCV I had the chance to delve deeper into the lives of the natives. I got to know more people and talked to the locals even sometimes without the help of my translator. Since the community is in the capital of Tawi-Tawi, the heart of business and political center of the whole province, the natives there could comprehend in Tagalog to some extent.

On the other hand, I have achieved an evidently good data gathering in the community of *Pondohan*. In this community, an informant took advantage of the time when my translator was not around, he then became more involved in the process of interview. Despite the short period of time spent in *Pondohan*, I am satisfied with the data that I collected in the area. Even so, I managed to experience living in a stilt house in the middle of body of water that is completely disconnected from the usual way of living.

My fieldwork in Sibutu communities had been limited because of time constraint security reasons. Due to its distance from Bongao and the lack of public transport within the island, getting to one community to another had been a challenge. However, interviews in Nunucan were helpful because it was the safest government housing project that was available. On the other hand, I had to be careful when I had to do interviews in Tongehat, as informants were critical about my presence. Participants were more involved only when I was with my translator.

I was advised by my secondary gatekeeper and at the same time translator in Tongehat that I should limit myself in interviewing the natives, as it is very unsafe for me to go to the community. I was a little bit frustrated not to get into the lives of the Badjaos in the area compared to what I achieved in BCV and *Pondohan*. Security threat played a big role in delineating my data gathering in the oldest Badjao moorage. There have been cases where outsiders have been shot because they were thought to be government intelligence working against illicit drug trade.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *ibid* 120., pp. 264

<sup>126</sup> According to locals, Tongehat served as a drug trade center in the area as it is vitally located near Malaysia.

### **3.6 Field Reflections: Silencing and voicing groups**

In doing ethnographic research in ethnically fractionalized societies, it is likely that the researcher faces ethical quandary of being, one-sided or bias. The effects of the researcher's ethnic belonging, physical attributes, gender, citizenship and religious affiliation substantially affect on the reflexivity of the process of participant-observation in field research.<sup>127</sup> It is no doubt that in my ethnographic research, my religious affinity gave me an upper hand in accessing the localities I have studied. However, because of it my research was accused as 'colonial' by one of the locals, as I focus on the antagonizing the Tausugs and branding the Badjaos as the underdogs.

My attributes, being from the mainland, speaking the national language and religious affinity, brought advantages and disadvantages in data collection process. In Tongehat and BCV, locals suspected me as a military man because of my built and my dialect. At the same time, informants expected and trusted me as a messenger that will relay their plights to the national government. My religious belonging opened doors for the localities I have able to conduct research, the nuns, priests and the university rector allowed me to gather data within their adopted communities, however, my interpreter in *Pondohan* tried to conceal and twist information because of our religious differences.

The purpose of my research was to investigate primarily into the lives of the Badjaos and the effects of government policies into their ethnic identity. Though I aimed to get the side of the Tausug on the ethnic rivalry issue, my position as a Filipino and a catholic from the mainland barred me to do so.<sup>128</sup>

### **3.7 Summary**

Ethnographic research crosses possibilities and challenges. In my case as a researcher in Tawi-Tawi, where long history of ethnic diversity and continuous accounts of violence and societal changes brought by policies and differences, it is highly important to choose the adequate tool of data collection. Participant-observation and interviews, defining and choosing localities in accordance to access are important in writing ethnography. Apart from

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<sup>127</sup> *ibid*, 120.

<sup>128</sup> Discussing ethnic violence on an outsider's position poses a security threat to me as the issue is highly sensitive as it can be connected to the armed struggle by the muslims against the government.

that, the right amount of participants in the study contributed to the easy management of data that was collected.

Furthermore, access and trust play centrally on my ethnic and religious affinity that I share with my gatekeepers. To add, my religious belonging gave me upper hand such as established rapport and swift networking among three localities. On the other hand, my faith also brought consequences to the data collection. Furthermore, because of my outsider status, I faced the difficulty of 'going native' as I was mistaken to be a military, my inability to speak the local dialects needing me to have interpreter who concealed and regulated facts being relayed thus harming the validity of my data.

Moreover, the quality of participant observation will be dependent on the characteristics of the researcher and that includes ethnic orientation. Also, training such as the ability to speak the local language is important.<sup>129</sup> In this sense, it very important to know my position as a researcher in the ethnic perplexed climate during and after the course of fieldwork obtaining a reflexive stance of being a researcher and a participant at the same time.

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<sup>129</sup> *ibid*, 120.

## **Chapter 4. Theoretical Framework**

This chapter attempts a theoretical framework on the study of the sedentarization of the Badjaos in Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. Sedentarization is change; change from a more nomadic to a less nomadic way of life, from a nomadic to a more sedentary lifestyle.<sup>130</sup> In understanding sedentarization, it is important to begin on the inquiry on the evolution of societies. Societies evolving from simple to complex entities undergo through the process of social change, which will be discussed in the second part of this chapter. Succeedingly, the inquiry on the concept of change and its processes will be presented. Central to the discussion is nomadism and the evolution to sedentarization. Finally, a discussion on violence will be given as an evaluation of sedentarization process.

### **4.1 Society: Origin and Evolution: From Primitive to Complex Societies**

Theories on the origin, further change and the collapse of human social systems are grouped into four. The first group of theories is the unilinear theories of development or evolution (Marxism, Neoevolutionism, Modernization theories, etc.) Unilinear theories explain how human society evolved from local groups of primitive hunters to modern post-industrial world society. On the other hand, the second group of theories is the theories of civilizations that propose that there is no unified world history – that there are different clusters of activity that constitute qualitatively different civilizations. Like organisms, these civilizations are born, live and die.<sup>131</sup>

In between these two poles of theories are the world-systems perspective and multilinear theories of social evolution. The world-system theories distinguish three models of society: mini-systems, world-empires and world-economies. The multilinear theories suppose that there are several possible paths of socio-political transformation. From chiefdom to a true state, existence of a supercomplex community without bureaucracy (e.g. greek polises) while the third group serves the tribal system under particular ecological conditions – *multievolutionism*.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Salzman, P.C. (1980). *When Nomads Settle: Process of Sedentarization as Adaption and Response*. Praeger Publishers: New York.

<sup>131</sup> Kradin, N. (2002). Nomadism, Evolution and World Systems; Pastoral Societies in Theories of Historical Development. *Journal of World-Systems Research*, VIII, III, 368-388.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid*.

Social evolution among pastoral nomads has not been well conceptualized. In general literatures on cultural evolution of nomads are only touched upon indirectly. However, some attention has been given by Marxist anthropologists (see Gellner 1988.) The debate about the essence of nomadic societies and the formation of nomadic feudalism did not lead to the creation of a generally accepted theory.<sup>133</sup> However, Herbert Spencer's understanding on the social evolution as a "change from a relatively indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a relatively definite, coherent heterogeneity, through successive differentiation and integrations" (Carneiro 1973: 90 in Kradin 2002) has been followed by nomadologists. Furthermore, it is apparent that social evolution has no single line of development, many channels of evolution do not lead to the development of complexity.<sup>134</sup> In Claessen (2000), the obstacles in a way of increasing complexity are vast, and stagnation, decline and even collapse are just as typical of the evolutionary process, it is the characterization of social evolution from one structural state into another.

Nomadic societies are good examples of these ideas, though it is not only of feature of nomadic societies, a cyclical movement among pastoral cultures has predominated over the development of complexity. Nomads have many times united into large political formations and created great empires that have subsequently disintegrated. This integration is mostly common in the steppe nomads of Central Asia and is shared by nomadologists of different countries.<sup>135</sup>

Kradin (2002) suggested that the three levels of cultural integration of pastoral nomads are revealed, falling into an order of increasing political complexity as follows:

1. Acephalous segmentary clan and tribal formations;
2. Secondary tribe and chiefdom;
3. Nomadic empires and 'quasi-imperial' pastoral polities of smaller sizes

Kradin (1994) contended that a change from one level into another could occur in either direction. The evolution of the nomadic political system could easily change from acephalous to more complicated organizations of power and vice versa. The shift of political system

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<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.* 131. pp. 370.

occurs when there is a growth in the population. The political system becomes more complex and the total number of hierarchical levels increases<sup>136</sup> (See Lee, 1972).

#### **4.2. Society: Assumptions and Concepts**

In the modern social science, society is assumed as an integrated system wherein all parts are interwoven with one another, each largely predicated upon the existence and nature of the others. Society is thus, to a greater or lesser degree, a whole, consisting of an overlapping set of determinations. The researcher will find relationships and interconnections only if s/he looks for them. On another perspective, many of the various segments of society are abstracted from the complex human reality, and thus expected to have independent life only at that level, and not in reality. At the level of concrete human life, people's activities must fit together on some reasonably coherent way, understandings and tasks must be workable with one another, or it would be impossible to carry on.<sup>137</sup>

But with this kind of perspective on society then it would be impossible to study change. If everything in the society is closely integrated, then it would be extremely difficult for any part to change, for each part will be held in its place, by interconnections or by elsewhere. With this, change can only result of inexorable *force majeure* changing the entire system a new state. Thus, change must come from the outside for no internal pressure could have the capability of overcoming the inertia of system of integration.<sup>138</sup>

A second assumption on the society is that it is one thing that has particular nature that can be seen as resting upon a specific structure. The approach is that society must be characterized and understood in terms of its key feature, its primary structure. Structuralism emphasizes an underlying structure from which all aspects in life in a society are generated while Marxism highlights the mode of production as the defining and determining element in the society. From this perspective, a society is considered to be stagnant rather than fluid and flexible.<sup>139</sup>

The problematique of the second assumption gives another difficulty in understanding change in the society. If a society that has one definite nature then how would an unalloyed and unitary framework can be moved? Even structuralism provides no explanation on how change

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<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.* 131 pp.2

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.* 131 pp.3

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*



evolves in this setting.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, Marxism with its obsession on the contradiction on the economic interests and control of resources leading to the result of conflict and overthrow of the system, Salzman (1980: 3) explains that most of socio-cultural change does not follow the same fashion.

Instead of assuming society as invariant, integrated and has a clear nature, Salzman (1980: 4) suggests that we should look society as fluid and variable, as loosely integrated, flexible and adaptable. By emphasizing that society provide alternatives – *institutionalized alternatives*: alternative organizational forms, alternative productive activities, alternative value orientations, alternative forms of property control, this results to the encapsulating society as fluid and variable. People within the society switch options between organizational forms and priorities.<sup>141</sup>

By means on institutionalization – customary practices which are present, recognized, expected, accepted – people collectively have readily available to them alternative forms and activities which can be take up, activated, adopted by individuals and group with a minimum of innovation, negotiation, conflict and confusion. Institutionalized alternatives are like enabling legislation in formal legal systems: ready-made tools are available and accessible, to be brought to bear as the occasion demands.<sup>142</sup>

### **4.3 Social Change: Concept and Processes**

Implicit assumptions about the nature of change are sometimes if it is “obvious” or “necessary”. Furthermore, change in the society is assumed as irreversible, directional and cumulative. In irreversibility, the concept can be understood in to two senses: that what has happened cannot be undone, and that a return to a previous state is impossible. Directionality refers to the particular course of change as it continues in, sometimes, accelerating movement. While cumulative nature of change is explained as change itself has an impact in all aspects on all that comes after it.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.* 3 pp. 5

<sup>142</sup> Salzman, C.P. (1971). Movement and Resource Extraction among Pastoral Nomads. *Anthropological Quarterly* 44: 185 – 197.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.* 130. pp. 1

Another assumption on socio-cultural change is its discreteness and absoluteness. Discreteness is seen as the clear change from one thing to another, wherein the previous state is different from the new state. In this process, the shift is flawless: a boundary has been crossed and identity has changed. On the other hand, absoluteness is manifested as a clear cut disappeared identity and the take-over of a new state appears, quite different from the previous one.<sup>144</sup>

On a logical level, assuming change as discrete and absolute, irreversible, directional and cumulative create difficulty in understanding the study of change. The first problem starts on identifying where the level of differences exist, or the unit of analysis that manifest the differences that can be said to be “absolute.” When can one say that a society or a culture is different enough from its earlier state? Thus, the problem of identity is raised, but in the context of analyzing social change, and the practical identifying of specifying shifts.<sup>145</sup>

The second problem is in understanding the “discrete” shift of one socio-cultural phenomenon to another. Assuming the discreteness of phases influences the difficulty in understanding of transition. Furthermore, understanding socio-cultural change will be difficult to comprehend socio-cultural change if the gaps are unidentifiable because of their nature of discreteness.<sup>146</sup>

#### **4.3.a Social Organization as a Process of Change**

The patterns of social behavior found among the boat-dwelling and the current house-dwelling Badjaos have occurred in the Badjao society as a result of the abandonment of the nomadic boat life and the acceptance of the house-dwelling way of life.<sup>147</sup> Every society has certain forms of behavior that it regards as preferable and that may actually dominate in practice, which are based in the jural rules of the society. This feature of the society is called social structure.<sup>148</sup> Social structure is the placement and position of the individuals and groups in the system of obligation-relation – wherein elements of ideal behaviors, anticipated behaviors and actual behavior all enter.<sup>149</sup> But every society also reveals set of deviated behavioral patterns but are somehow tolerated as legitimate practices as ideals cannot be

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<sup>144</sup> *ibid*

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.* 133., pp. 2.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid*

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.* 3., pp. 91

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.* 148

<sup>149</sup> G.G. Brown & J.H. Barnett (1942) cited in Firth R. (1954). *Social Organization and Social Change*. The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. Vol. 84. No.1/2.:Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.

practiced<sup>150</sup> such as boat-dwelling. A person chooses, consciously or unconsciously, which course he will follow and his decision will affect the future structural alignment.<sup>151</sup>

Firth (1955)<sup>152</sup> identifies social organization as the possibility of choosing among alternative patterns of behavior, it is the origin of change in the dominant behavior patterns and ultimately, possibly, in the structure.<sup>153</sup> When members of the society find themselves in a new position where the traditional practices cannot be followed, they turn to those sanctioned or deviated alternatives that are most congruent to the new social milieu. And since the new social setting is often the result of contact with the superordinate, imposing society, those patterns of traditional behavior that most closely approximate the models of the imposing group will be those chosen by the changing society.<sup>154</sup>

Most commonly, acculturation is said to have occurred, when the changing social forms are due to the influence of an intruding society, and the new forms may have been, in fact, borrowed from the new society.<sup>155</sup> Like almost all societies in the world, the Badjao have established relationships outside them, and acculturation process have been operative among them; consequently it can explain the change in the society. However, it would be misleading to attribute the changes among the land-dwelling Badjaos to acculturation alone.<sup>156</sup>

Barth (1967) identifies that majority of the anthropological studies dealing with social change give little understanding of the process of change, but, rather, tell only that one social form became another social form, with insufficient explanation on why the change followed the particular patterns it did. He purports that the use of concepts will enable anthropologists to depict patterns as a statistical thing or as a set of frequencies of alternatives. Furthermore, the importance of looking into continuity in a sequence of change, and the process analyses it entails, and the importance of institutionalization as a process provide better understanding on the how society persists, maintains itself and changes through time.<sup>157</sup> By looking into social behavior as new allocations of time and resources, we can depict the pattern whereby people

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<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.* 154 pp.2

<sup>152</sup> Firth, R. (1951). *Elements of Social Organization*. London:Watts.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*, 130

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, pp.3

<sup>157</sup> <http://www.publicanthropology.org/archives/american-anthropology/american-anthropologist-1960/american-anthropologist-1967-5/>

allocate their time and resources, wherein the changes in these new allocations are observable and as concrete events may have systematic effects and thus generate important change. In this view it does not only limit the description to a singular sector in the society such as economics but can be applied to the whole field of social organization, to describe how people in fact manage to arrange their lives (Barth 1967: 662).

#### **4.4. Nomadism<sup>158</sup> to Sedentism<sup>159</sup>**

I argue that the decline and restriction of nomadism and the increase of sedentism might be different in some studies. In this sense, sedentarization – the changes in movement and residence patterns – can greatly vary from one nomadic society to another. In the case of Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi, the causes and effects of sedentarization might not tightly fit to the theories available.

Modern anthropological literature on the process of sedentarization has taken the view that sedentarization is a typical phenomenon among pastoral nomadic societies (See Barth 1961).<sup>160</sup> The concept of sedentarization came to be regarded as any change that falls along a continuum from nomadism to sedentism, the latter being defined as the settled and immobile location of a social group. Sedentarization refers to the change from nomadism to sedentism, or a shift in degree from nomadism to sedentism.<sup>161</sup> Thus, sedentism is the by-product while sedentarization is the process.<sup>162</sup>

Sedentarization is limitedly divided into three universal models based on historical and ethnographical facts; “drought and decline,” “defeat and degradation,” and “failure and fall-away.”

In the “drought and decline” model, nomads who roam in their territories are vulnerable to the changes of climatic conditions (or diseases), the abrupt change of weather and the death of

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<sup>158</sup> *Nomadism* is defined as movement of the household during the annual round of productive activities. This limits nomadism to societies in which families, rather than individuals, are engaged in movement. In this paper, by tying movement to productive activities, nomadism is limited to societies in which central activities, rather than marginal ones, such as recreation, are involved (Salzman 1980: 10).

<sup>159</sup> *Sedentism* is defined as settled, immobile location of the household during the annual round of productive activities (Salzman 1980: 11).

<sup>160</sup> Boneh, D. (1984). Returning to Pastoralism: Three Cases from the Negev Bedouin. *Nomadic Peoples* No. 15. Commission on Nomadic Peoples.

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.* 130. pp. 10

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.* 130. pp. 41

their animals losing their economic base will lead to their decline of nomadizing. This phenomenon frequently recurred in nomadic societies in arid zones in Africa (Somali, Fulani and Tuareg nomads).<sup>163</sup>

In the “defeat and degradation” model, pastoral societies are threatened and forced out of the nomadic life by militarization. On the same note, competition to the scarce pastoral territories leading to conflict between tribal groups also lead to the sedentism of both victors controlling the scarce pasture and the vanquished succumbing to settled life with the absence of available pasture. Governments forcibly sedentarize mobile groups as mobility is tantamount to military prowess, thus, perceiving them as political threats<sup>164</sup> (See Bates 1973; Arfa 1964; Irons 1975).

In the “failure and fall-away” model, individual pastoralists who do not succeed in building a viable livelihood through pastoralism drop out of the group and move into sedentary agrarian sector.<sup>165</sup>

These models have been elaborated by Barth (1964) in his study on the Basseri of South Persia. Barth was perhaps the first to demonstrate the extent to which sedentarization of certain segments of the Brasseri is a feature typical of the pastoral nomadic mode of subsistence which helps to maintain pastoral nomadism rather than comprising a threat to its very existence (Barth 1980 in Boneh 1984: 2). Furthermore, in Irons (1972) and Salzman (1975) argue that nomadic societies are highly individuated and have a low level of corporateness, with limited mutual support structures and solidarity groups. That all nomadic peoples are not so structured and in consequence do not exhibit the patterns of sedentarization.<sup>166</sup>

In the models stated above, it was described, though it was not asserted, that sedentarization itself is irreversible and absolute. However, Salzman (1980) argued the opposite, sedentarization can lead to reversibility when we consider different factors. A bad year is followed by a good one (Mohammed 1973 in Salzman 1980: 12), the military strength of rival tribes and governments wane (Turkmen of northeastern Iran, Irons 1975 cited in Salzman

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<sup>163</sup> *ibid.* 130. pp. 12

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*

1980: 13), and epidemics resulting to the death of pasture opens to opportunity to aspiring pastoralists.<sup>167</sup> Over a longer span of time, the history of many Middle Eastern nomadic groups reflect alternating phases of sedentarization and nomadization (Adams, 1975; Adams and Nissen, 1972 in Salzman 1980: 13).

The varying processes of sedentarization indicate that of great historical depth, that nomads have been repeatedly drawn into sedentism to agrarian activities (Swindler in Salzman 1980: 21)<sup>168</sup>. However, there is an important distinction to label and identify forced sedentarization as political scheme and self-initiated sedentarization as a response to environmental and economic factors.<sup>169</sup> The “adaptation and response” model of sedentarization is seen as not as a forced, coerced, unavoidable process but rather a voluntary shift from one available pattern to another in response to the changing response, constraints, and opportunities both internal and external to the society.<sup>170</sup> This shift is guided by institutionalized alternatives available that makes the change more possible.

However, sedentarization is frequently held to be a particularly problematic kind of culture change (Barth, 1960); nomads are said to be characteristically resistant to programs designed to encourage settlement. The common assumption seems to be that sedentarization is a process that is hard to reverse and that it consequently change the texture of the (pastoral) nomadic groups so that a return to their previous mode of subsistence is virtually impossible.<sup>171</sup> On the other hand, Salzman (1980: 15) argues that sedentarization process is not absolute because it is usually a relative change; from greater to less mobility and movement, from less to greater spatial stability. Moreover, it is not absolute because the potential and frequently the capability for movement remain – if not completely, at least to a significant degree. Furthermore, Salzman (1980: 15) adds that sedentarization is not the final stage; as decrease of mobility and increase of stability are just the responses to the environmental, social and cultural conditions.

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<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *ibid.*, 160 pp. 21

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*, 130 pp. 14

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.* 160

## **4.5 Sedentarization as a Tool for Development**

### **4.5.a Identity and Ethnicity**

In the words of the Philippine government, the implementation of the housing program and the cash transfer have been used to empower the poor Filipinos, which include Badjaos. In this note, empowerment is rooted in how people see themselves – their sense of “self-worth” (Kabeer 2005: 15 cited in Kuosmanen 2013: 46) With this, identity, is at the core of empowerment (Staples 1990: 38 cited in Kuosmanen 2013: 26).

Furthermore, in Barth (1969), ethnic identity is emphasized as a result of the course of interaction and transaction between decision-making, strategizing individuals. To understand ethnicity, Jenkins (2008: 2) suggested that we need to recognize ethnic categorization – the identification of others, in contrast to self – and group identification – is fundamental to how ethnic identification works. Furthermore, Jenkins (ibid) added that power and authority are completely basic to how categorization works. Similarly, there is a need to think through ethnic ideologies of ethnic identification, and the relationship of ethnicity equivalent to identifications such as race and national identity.

The debate about ethnicity and values has taken place in different arenas, with slightly different emphases and directions (Bhattacharyya 2009: 2). The allegation that some ethnic identities are tied permanently to backward, violent and exclusionary values expects the state to assimilate minority groups such as indigenous peoples, into majority cultures.<sup>172</sup>In Jenkins (2008: 28), the abandonment of ‘tribal’ model societies lead to the notion of ‘plural society’. It was an adjustment to the changing world. Jenkins (ibid) drew to the assimilation of the indigenous peoples to ‘citizenship’. It was the action of the colonial territories to assimilate and integrate the natives.

### **4.5.b Poverty and the Poor**

But with the question on the assimilation of the ‘backward’ (see Bhattacharyya 2009) or ‘poor’ (see Anderson & Broch-Due) and a country with 20 percent of the population is indigenous it is important to identify what is poverty and why indigenous peoples are poor.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Okin, S. M. (1999) *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Princeton: NJ. Princeton University Press.

<sup>173</sup> Not all indigenous people are poor. Many are not. But the pattern repeats itself: people who are indigenous are much more likely to be poor than their non-indigenous counterparts (Eversole, et. al. 2005: 2).

Eversole et. al. (2005: 1) postulated that when the people are poor then there is lacking. The focus is upon *lack* itself – defining it, measuring it, and sometimes even venturing to ask directly: What can be done about poverty? In the international consensus, the UNDP, for instance, placed MDGs as an eradication of poverty. World Bank published the *Voices of the Poor* report while International Monetary Fund made the national production of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).<sup>174</sup>

In this note, poverty suddenly is a concrete thing that can be identified, measured and fought while the *poor* became easy to categorize a group of people.<sup>175</sup> Eversole (ibid) discussed that patterns help us to analyze poverty. If there is observable disadvantage for a group of people, there are sure reasons behind it. Unearthing the reasons is the first solid step toward understanding what can be done to reduce or eliminate poverty.

#### 4.6 Summary

The human society has evolved from indefinite, incoherent and homogenous to a definite, coherent and heterogeneous through continuous exposure to development and assimilations (Carneiro 1973). The complex evolution of human society has undergone into integration and disintegration, and nomadic societies fit as the best illustration of this anthropological phenomenon. The credit of societal evolution is from the expansion the human population as it creates more hierarchical levels and a political system.<sup>176</sup>

Looking at society as an integrated system, stemming from one nature and focusing on its structure expose one on the difficulty of understanding change. Instead, society should be viewed as fluid, loosely integrated and adaptable and that it provides institutionalized alternatives that are available for people to switch priorities and organizational forms.<sup>177</sup> Similar to this concept is Firth's (1955) alternative patterns of behavior. It is the possibility of the people within the society to choose a new pattern or structure when they find it necessary.

The “necessary” social change is often assumed as irreversible, directional discrete and absolute. However, these assumptions preset the study of change as problematic. The problem of understanding change when it is absolute when in fact identifying differences and gaps

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<sup>174</sup> ibid

<sup>175</sup> ibid

<sup>176</sup> ibid. 130

<sup>177</sup> ibid. 131



raises the question of identity. Furthermore, the study of change is vague when change itself is discrete. Rather, social change should be look as a complex entity that encompasses various practices and form, which incorporates sets of behavioral, organizational and ideological alternatives.<sup>178</sup>

The phenomenon on the decline of nomadism and the increase of sedentism through series of integrations (Salzman, 1980) and various conditions (Boneh, 1984) is a typical among pastoral nomadic communities (Barth, 1961). Sedentarization is classified into four based on historical and ethnographical data; movement to sedentary lifestyle was driven by climatic and health conditions, competition and militarization, subsistence failure and finally intended sedentarization.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, the jump-off of ‘tribal’ to ‘plural societies’, with the labeling of ‘backward’ and ‘poor’ connotations to these societies have been used to assimilate indigenous peoples to full membership of the state.

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<sup>178</sup> *ibid.* 130

<sup>179</sup> *ibid.* 131

## **Chapter 5. Data Presentation and Analysis**

This chapter presents and analyzes my findings that are mainly based on my fieldwork in Tawi-Tawi province in the summer of 2014. It focuses on the information about the study's informants by looking into their gender, marital status, household number and occupation that are likely to influence opinion.<sup>180</sup> Aside from that, this chapter delves into the sedentarization programs that are being experienced by the Badjaos. My interviews and observations reflect the perceptions of my informants about the issues of the government programs. To some degree, I used secondary data, such as reports and studies by institutions and other literature, to highlight the housing and monetary support programs.

Analysis is the sorting out the structure of signification...and determining their social ground and import (Geertz 1974). In providing cultural context and meaning on people place on actions, words, things, etc. I'll be using thick descriptions; in this way a person outside the group can make meaning of the behavior (Geertz 1974). Interviews and observations are the main techniques that I have used in collecting data.<sup>181</sup>

### **5.1 Informants**

#### **5.1.a Securing anonymity**

During the processes of interviews, many interviewees shared information that could jeopardize their security. In this note, the anonymity of the interviewees should be maintained (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). The issue of upholding security in data presentation is very vital in the case of analyzing sedentarization issues of the Badjaos. This is because most of the respondents residing in Bongao are exposed to violence and their participation in this study could further endanger and disrupt the services that they are getting.

I used fictional names to substitute the actual names of the respondents. The areas where I conducted interviews in Tawi-Tawi are basically small wherein everyone knows everybody. Thus, I omit the information about the social responsibilities of my informants to preserve their privacy and uphold security.

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<sup>180</sup> Age as a vital information will be disregarded since Badjaos are not keeping record of their birthdays as observed from the data collection

<sup>181</sup>see chapter three for discussion

### **5.1.2. Background of informants**

#### **Gender, civil status and living conditions**

For the study, a total of six Badjaos were interviewed. Three from the housing project and another three from the cash transfer program. The respondents that talked about the housing project were all adult men with age approximately from 50 to 65 years old. All of them are married and has imprecise number of children from their various relationships. They are lived in different housing areas: in Sanga-Sanga, BCV and in Nunucan. During the process of data collection, one out of three informants rely on wage labor occupation while the other two were dependent on fishing and exploitation of marine life. However, the day before I ended my fieldwork in BCV, my respondent turned from being a fisherman to a wage laborer because of threats to his life.

Educational status was important in defining the background of the respondents. Though not perfectly, respondents who were able to go to school were able to comprehend and converse in the *lingua franca*, Filipino. One of the three respondents who talked about the housing project went to primary school that was opened by the missionaries during the height of missionary expansion in Bongao. However, none of them finished high school while all of them could barely read and write.

Two out of three informants who conferred about the cash transfer fund were married women with age range from 30 to 55 years old. All. One out three was involved in seaweed farming while the other two were engaged heavily on wage labor; laundry service and assistant. Educational attainment is also very low from their group. The only male in the group was one of the scholars of the foreign missionaries and was one of the few Badjaos during his time to finish elementary. Compared to all respondents, he was the most successful with in occupation of buying and selling of agricultural products and working extra as an assistant in a private sector.

Below is the complete summary of the informant background information.

**Table 1. Housing project's informants**

<b>Pseudonames</b>	<b>Current Address</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Household number</b>	<b>Government Program Beneficiary</b>
Nalil	Sanga-Sanga Island, Bongao	Wage laborer	8	4Ps, Housing (discontinued)
Utub	Nunucan, Sibutu Island	Fisherman	6	Housing
Manuel	BCV, Bongao	Fisherman/Wage laborer	12	4Ps

*Source: Fieldwork, 2014*

**Table 2. Cash Transfer Fund Program's informants**

<b>Pseudonames</b>	<b>Current Address</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Household number</b>	<b>Government Program Beneficiary</b>
Yna	BCV, Bongao	Wage laborer	11	4Ps
Sumangat	BCV, Bongao	Wage laborer	8	4Ps
Taha	Tongehat, Sibutu Island	Sea weed farming and fishing	-	4Ps

*Source: Fieldwork, 2014*

Common to all respondents is the large number of household. Members of each household comprise of more than 6 members wherein in each house it was common to share it with other relatives. Moreover, the number each household was sometimes fluid as some relatives move from one household to another.

In table 1, informants were spread out in three different island localities. Furthermore, informants were subsistent to market labor industry. On the other hand, in table 2, two of the three participants were wage laborers while the other was dependent on fishing and seaweed farming. Most of the respondents in both tables were beneficiaries of the cash transfer fund system while one was a recipient of Badjao housing project.

## 5.2. On the housing program

Throughout the history of Tawi-Tawi, various housing programs have been started by both the Catholic church and the government.<sup>182</sup> Four of the six respondents are beneficiaries of the housing program of the church. One respondent is a beneficiary of the government's housing project while one is living in an indigenous domain. I attempted to provide stories and experiences of the respondents who succeeded or failed in the process of sedentarization, in terms of the government housing agenda.

According to the United Nations (2005), in the last two decades indigenous peoples worldwide have been successful in bringing legal changes in favor of their human rights and specific situations. However, in most countries indigenous peoples constitute one of the most disadvantaged groups. Their disadvantages were experiences in all realms – economic, social, political, environmental and cultural – and were reflected in their housing conditions.<sup>183</sup>

### 5.2.a Manuel's story: A neglected protection

Manuel considered himself as one of the few *original* Badjaos in BCV. He was also one of the few who were still relying on fishing as most of the Badjao men were now working in the local market as laborers.

According to locals, the Badjaos who settled in BCV were not only given a place to build their houses but also a lot where they could plant their staple root crop called *panggi*, and *pandan* leaves for weaving. During this time, Manuel said that there were only Badjaos living in the area. They could fish safely from one island to another and go back to BCV with their families.

Due to the tides of time, the BCV grew and so as the population of Bongao. The civil war brought changes to the composition of the population of the town. Manuel said that during the height of the war, more and more Tausug fled from Sulu to Tawi-Tawi and the Tausug communities grew larger. *But even there were Tausugs coming to Bongao, the priests did not allow them to settle within or near the Badjao community. We felt secured because the priests don't allow the Tausugs to come near us.* Even more, a big number of Badjao population

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<sup>182</sup> see chapter 1 for discussions

<sup>183</sup> UN Habitat (2005) Indigenous Peoples' Right to Adequate Housing. A Global Overview. United Nations Housing Rights Programme Report No. 7. pp. 1

moved from Tawi-Tawi to Sabah to escape war atrocities. However, when they came back the Tausug became the majority of the population.

Apart from that, the population of BCV increased dramatically. More and more houses were put up as more Badjaos became sedentarized. From seven families, the community grew into approximately 200 families as of today.

But things were far different now than before. The white priests were gone and the Tausugs became more powerful and dominant. *Tausugs built their houses few meters away from ours while some are already living within BCV. We can't stay here any longer. I can't go to the sea anymore because the Tausugs are stopping us. They take our fish and threaten us.*

Images and interpretations of success and failure were reflected in notions of wealth and poverty, and the two were often closely bound together. For some nomadic societies, their apparent failure to keep control of their own production systems was a consequence of the success of their neighbors in alienating crucial resources for their own use (see Datooga pastoralist in Rekdal and Blystad 1999 in Broch-De and Anderson 1999: 131).

For the locals, the threats to the Badjaos and the population growth of Bongao have led to societal change in BCV, affecting especially the long tradition of fishing. Most men left their boats and fishing nets for labor jobs in the public market. Even one of the first residents of BCV, Sumangat doesn't know how to fish because he was afraid in defying the Tausug goons. *I don't know how to fish. I did not even learn it from my father. I am afraid that the Tausug will just kill me.* Now, Tausug controlled the access to most of the fishing grounds in Bongao. Badjao women, however, retained the tradition of weaving and making it as an income generating business to feed their families. Women gathered in groups created cooperatives, and were supplying weaved products to cultural events and bazaars in Bongao. A Sama resident of BCV, started and head the cooperative of Badjao weavers. *I tried to gather all weavers here in BCV so that they can have a common income. I try to help them because they cannot lead themselves alone.* Apart from weaving, some women were now incorporated into the labor job market and working as housemaids or laundry women.

On the contrary, the government commissioned housing program in Bongao did not change the lives of the Badjaos in BCV. In fact, nobody from BCV moved into any of the houses.

While conducting the interview in a fishing boat, Manuel explained why he did not apply for housing when it was purposely built for the Badjaos. He expressed; *we don't want to live where they put up the houses, the Tausug surrounds it. We cannot live with the Tausugs because they will kill us. But when it comes to those houses, I don't know who is living there now.* Sumangat added; *those houses are not for us. The houses have walls inside and we cannot see the seawater beneath the floor.*<sup>184</sup> *We get sick when we don't see any water.*

He divulged that the narrow body of water we were in was the farthest place where Badjaos could fish. Going further through the channel could risk their lives. Furthermore, Manuel vented out that moving to the government housing would not change the status quo; they will still be exposed to fear. *We choose to stay in BCV because somehow the marines are stationed outside the community. Without them the Tausug could just easily get in.*

Manuel received a death threat from the last time he was fishing in Bongao channel with me. He was indefinitely barred from fishing. Out of his fear and desperation he showed me an ID he got from the mayor of Bongao during the election period. It was a supporter's identification card. It was a kind of card that was given during election period to ensure votes, according to Manuel. He asked if being part of the supporter's group could save his life. His family did not have anything to eat for two days because he couldn't go to the sea and fish. Fishing was the only thing he knows to do for a living. *Magosaha*<sup>185</sup>. *All I want to do is to earn for a living so that I could feed my family.* I asked him about his plans; he recalled that he sent one of his sons before to Sitangkay, the farthest and the last Philippine municipality before Malaysia, because of death threats, a similar case which Manuel is facing now. He thought that he could also move and bring his whole family to Sitangkay if things were not getting any better in Bongao.

*I cannot stay like this; I am hungry and so as my family... Life was better when we were still in the sea..*

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<sup>184</sup> According to locals, a Badjao house should not have walls . It has an empty, common space in the middle where they can gather, eat food and sleep at night.

<sup>185</sup> Magosaha is a term that has been mentioned by my respondents several times. It is a term of earning for living. But for the Badjaos it has a more simpler sense which is to go to the sea and fish.

A week after the incident Manuel was calmer. *I got a job*, he said. Manuel felt more secured that he has now a job. He did not only dropped the plan of moving to Sitangkay and reunite with his son but he discontinued also fishing as his source of income.

In Manuel's narratives, the change in societal composition, increase of population and armed conflict affected his fishing practices and mode of subsistence. This made Manuel became part of the labor market, which acted as a sanctioned behavior and changed the patterns of behavior. Manuel's incorporation to the wage labor market also proved that social change was necessary and directional. Firstly, it was necessary to abandon fishing and be incorporated to wage labor in order for him and his family to survive. Secondly, it was directional because the incident made Manuel more sedentarized.

On the other hand, the housing project did not made any remarkable impact to the welfare of Manuel and his family. In his words, the housing project couldn't provide their security needs. Furthermore, Sumangat added that the housing units were not patterned to their cultural needs. Thus, the housing project was a type of 'adaptation and response' form of sedentarization. In other words, Manuel and the community of Sanga-Sanga were not forced to move to the government housing units.



Photo 2. Government commissioned housing project in Nunukan, Sibutu



### 5.2.b Houses of Development?

The right to adequate housing has been recognized in article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and in other international instruments. Having a secured place to live was one of the fundamental elements of human dignity, physical health and overall quality of life, which enable one's development.<sup>186</sup>

Utub lives with his family in Nunucan, one of the two Badjao government-housing beneficiary communities in the island of Sibutu. Nunucan was allocated the housing project because of the long history of Badjao settlement in the area (see chapter 2). In 2013, there were fifty houses built in two separate areas within Nunucan and another fifty units in Mochtar with a total budget of 10 million pesos under government subsidy.<sup>187</sup> Each unit was around 15m<sup>2</sup> in size making it as a kitchen, living room and a bedroom all at the same time. The toilet and bathroom were located outside the house and the rest of the community share several water tanks. Also, the community had a sturdy wooden pathway that connected each house.

Utub expressed his gratitude to the local government for giving them decent houses. He now prefers living in a house than in a boat. *We only live in pelang<sup>188</sup> to earn a living, that's the time when we need to go to the sea and fish. Now we have houses and we like it here.*

There has been a change in the lifestyle of the settlers since they acquired houses. Men were still reliant to fishing in contrast to the Badjao men of BCV, however, they did not spend longer days reaching up to weeks in the sea before they come back home. Now, they usually go for daily fishing trips when the weather permits them. On the other hand, women stay in the houses taking care of the children, doing household chores and sometimes accepting labor jobs such as laundry service. Comparing to the women of BCV, women in Nunucan are no longer practicing weaving. In fact, nobody knows how to weave anymore. These scenarios depicted the social organization of Nunucan community wherein people had the possibility to choose alternative patterns of behavior.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> *ibid.* 183 pp. iii

<sup>187</sup> [http://nha.gov.ph/pts/7a/pdf\\_files/2012-APP.pdf](http://nha.gov.ph/pts/7a/pdf_files/2012-APP.pdf)

<sup>188</sup> Pelang is a Badjao term for boathouses.

<sup>189</sup> See chapter 4 pp. 50

Utub and the rest of settlers of Nunucan housing project were not from Sibutu island. All of the residents in Nunucan housing were originally from Zamboanga<sup>190</sup> and was brought to Sibutu because of opportunities. They are Badjaos but a different kind, they are not Sama Dilaut of Tawi-Tawi.<sup>191</sup> The community leader, who was the grand daughter of the owner of the lot where the houses were erected, confirmed that the Badjaos living in units were non-locals and are brought to the island for some unspecified reasons. Despite of that, the leader revealed, that all settlers are registered voters and are actively participating in the elections. The lady identified herself as an employee of the town mayor.

Government housing programs in the Philippines face several issues that contribute to hindering of sustainability in providing low-cost houses for the poor. One issue is the difficulty of identifying the beneficiaries of government housing programs.<sup>192</sup>

Furthermore, vote buying is getting bigger and bolder in recent elections in the Philippines.<sup>193</sup> Politicians are doing everything to entice people to vote for them... from distributing money, rice, food packs and even education scholarships to voters in exchange for votes (De Villa, 2013).<sup>194</sup> Politicians are exploiting the poverty of the people (Oso, 2013).<sup>195</sup> *Politicians come here in Badjao communities every election handing out money to vote for them. The politician that gives the biggest amount will be voted...The Badjaos are lured with the money because they need it. But of course they don't know the consequences of it when the officials are already seating in public office,* said by a religious leader in Bongao. The religious leader added, *the politicians are using the provincial housing officer to gain political agendas. They put up the housing units in the areas where the politicians could easily manipulate people. They're given houses and they will feel debt-of-gratitude. In return, Badjaos will vote and support for them during elections.*

Local governments, like the municipality of Sibutu, lacked incentives to develop databases for beneficiary registrations, so the awarding of housing units is often ad hoc and politically dependent. Tracking down the beneficiaries has also proven unsuccessful due to lack of

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<sup>190</sup> Zamboanga is a separate region in the southwest Philippines and is around 380 kilometers away from Sibutu.

<sup>191</sup> See chapter 1 pp. 15

<sup>192</sup> <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2010/03/27/reforming-housing-for-the-poor-in-the-philippines/>

<sup>193</sup> <http://www.ucanews.com/news/philippine-bishops-launch-campaign-for-honest-elections/73544>

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/516937/vote-buying-among-poor-rampant-says-catholic-church-official-in-ililoilo>

monitoring system.<sup>196</sup> In Sibutu, a local confirmed that the housing project in Nunucan was a political tool of the municipal officials to control and secure supporters during election. To add, the native Badjaos of the island are still living in the same houses they had before. None from the local community moved to any government-housing unit. Moreover, I observed that there was one non-Badjao family who were living in one house within Nunucan. Utub said that they were a Sama family who got a permission to live in a Badjao housing as a gift from the town mayor.

The case of sedentarization of the people of Nunucan can be depicted in the process of ‘defeat and degradation’<sup>197</sup> wherein government used power, however, not necessarily militarily, but forcibly moved a group of people from one place to another.

### **5.2.c Houses of betrayal**

Another government commissioned housing units was located in the island of Sanga-Sanga where Nalil was from. He and his family were living in a stilt-house in the channel of Bongao. His rich knowledge in marine biodiversity has been tapped by the local educational institution in Bongao, making it as his sole source of income. Nalil was a fisherman but because of the Tausug threats, he now devoted his time to the research facility of the university.

Nalil was one of the few educated Badjaos. Through the missionary education, he attained elementary level and because of that he represented the Badjaos when the vice president of the Philippines, who was also spearheading the nationwide indigenous housing project, was in Bongao to authorize the construction of the Badjao housing project. As a representative, Nalil expressed his demands to the vice president before signing the documents. He emphasized that the planned houses should be built where they currently live. He explained that the marine resources in the area are richer and they are protected from the Tausug.

Contrary to his will, the construction of houses was done in a different area in Sanga-Sanga where the units stands directly to the sea. Natural hazards such as strong winds and waves were not taken into consideration when the houses were built. *We don't want to live there because soon enough those houses will be ruined by the wind and we will go hungry because*

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<sup>196</sup> ibid 183, 213

<sup>197</sup> see chapter 4 pp. 52

*the area is not known for abundance of fish. Indeed, a Tausug public figure in Bongao stated; nobody is living permanently in those houses. Badjaos don't last there long because they get sick, they say.* Similar to Sumangat's statement, the architectural design of the houses is not patterned to the cultural needs of the Badjaos.

The indigenous peoples are concerned of their general poor housing situation, their vulnerability, insecurity and the culturally inappropriate housing alternatives offered by the authorities.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, housing and development policies and programs either discriminate indigenous peoples directly or have discriminatory effects.<sup>199</sup>

Nalil was not taking the chance of complaining; *I don't know what I signed. I did not understand anything because it was in English and it was very thick.* Now, Nalil lived in the same house erected in the middle of the channel of Bongao and was trying to make ends meet with what he gets every month from his job. *Because of this job and the threats to the Badjaos I cannot go to the sea. I am not earning enough and so as the money that we get from 4Ps. If this continues then I will go back to my pelang and bring my whole family to Sabah.*

Similar to Manuel, Nalil viewed that the housing project did not meet the cultural, economic and security needs of the Badjaos. Furthermore, his incorporation to the labor market was a depiction of a sanctioned behavior. However, Nalil attempted to reverse the course of sedentarization, out of his frustration, by going back to boat dwelling.

In the coming discussion, the experiences of the Badjaos on the cash transfer fund program will be deliberated.

### **5.3 On the 4Ps**

According to the data available from 2009, the poverty estimates from the Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) showed that the Philippines is home to around 23.1 million poor people<sup>200</sup>, which comprises of a quarter of the population of the country (Chaudry, et al. 2013). Furthermore, the country also lagged in progress toward Millennium Development

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<sup>198</sup> *ibid*, 198

<sup>199</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>200</sup> National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) website [http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/2009/table\\_7.asp](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/2009/table_7.asp). (accessed 20th of October 2015)

Goal targets, primarily due to large inequalities in health and education outcomes between income groups and across regions.<sup>201</sup>

### **5.3.a. Badjaos and the 4Ps**

Badjaos were not keen on getting pre and post-natal care from professionals as well as on registering births and deaths of their children and family members. However, through 4Ps, Badjao women were obliged to register to avail to the government subsidized funding program. The difficulty of registration was one of the issues that was taken during the interview. Some women do not know when they gave birth while all of them are claiming were born when the moon was full.<sup>202</sup>

### **5.3.b Being a Filipino**

In a sociological aspect, nationality is important because it has a value to citizens. We all derive our identity from it; it is part of the “who am I” (Hofstede 1983). Badjaos considered their identity more of a Badjao than a Filipino. However, informants point out that 4Ps is the reason why they are now Filipinos.

A Filipino is someone who speaks Tagalog, who is not from Tawi-Tawi and who is affluent than a Badjao. These are the words of Manuel when he was dealing with his security dilemma. *Badjao is someone who is free, someone who wanders in the sea. Catching fish and is one with the sea*, Nalil said. *But we are only Filipinos in papers, because of this we cannot go to Sabah. We don't have passports. Before we don't need passports to go there*, he added. Furthermore, Yna said that the most Filipino thing they could do is watch Filipino movies and telenovelas. Watching news doesn't make them part of the larger Filipino society. *We don't care about what's happening outside Tawi-Tawi. We don't watch the news...we are far from Manila*. She said.

Geographical and cultural differences from the central seat of the government and to the rest of the country have made the Badjaos feel that they were left out. *They are not listening to us (Manila government) because we are here in Tawi-Tawi and we are just Badjaos*.

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<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> Full moon is an important aspect of Badjao beliefs. It is considered to bring good luck when someone is born during this lunar phase.

In pluralism, the institutional incorporation of ethnic groups into one societal system (Jenkins 2008: 29) argued, it depicted that as opposed to homogenous nation-state, there is a heterogeneous plural society. Barth (cited in Jenkins, *ibid.*) added, that the identification of pluralist social system is an obvious, although, not a necessary step to take. The way M.G. Smith (1974: 108 cited in Jenkins, *ibid.*) put it, although a society is composed of different ethnic groups with different needs, however, these are not relevant in the political sphere in the criterion of creating citizenship.

### **5.3.c Using the money**

Being affiliated to a nation gives also benefits such as governments services. Most of the Badjaos in BCV are beneficiaries of 4Ps, once in a while women gather in groups during the release of the money. But not all of them spent the money the way the government wanted them to: *when the money comes they buy gold and beautiful dresses. You will see it during the feast of Ramadan or when there is a wedding. Their ears and necks are glittering with gold. They may live in shanty and dilapidated stilt-houses but they have a lot of gold*, Sumangat expressed. But Badjaos have a different perception when it comes to spending money on things such as gold. *When we wear gold it gives us confidence and we feel like people are looking up to us. It feels good.* Nalil said.

On the other hand, Badjaos, like Sumangat, spent the money on food. However, his mother, Yna has a different perception. *When the money comes then that's the time we could pay our debts. We usually borrow money to buy food or when there are other immediate expenses. The money comes late and it goes so fast as well.*

Taha, a mother and a resident of Tongehat thought that 4Ps was helpful to their family's economy. *Whenever we receive a big amount we usually invest in buying fishnets. But most of the time we get so little, around 300-400 pesos, which is, not even enough to buy fishing equipment.*

Sumangat confirmed that the assistance money was being used in marriage and festivals. Believing that marriage should be grand as possible pushed by peers and relatives despite their economic setbacks, Badjaos always celebrated marriage ceremonies as festive as they could. *Of course, we want to spend money when someone is getting married in our family.*

*The whole community gets festive as well. We dance, eat and celebrate days before the wedding day, Sumangat said.*

#### **5.4.d Health is wealth?**

Quantifiable measures of poverty that is usually defined by incomes or nutrition were often both inadequate and misleading when detached as raw statistics from the context of the subject's moorings (Broch-Due & Anderson 1999).

As directed by the DSWD, a poor household was entitled of 500 pesos health grant per month. This grant was dependent on sending their children to school and getting regular check-ups, vaccines, growth monitor, and seeking advice of health professionals during pre and post-natal care in accordance of the DOH protocol.<sup>203</sup>

However, Badjaos in BCV do not comply with these directives because of their traditional beliefs. Whenever someone was ill in the family Badjaos, oftentimes seek medical help from their traditional doctor called *panday*. The *panday* would ask the family members to offer food and prayers to a big tree or to Bud Bongao (sacred mountain of the Badjaos). When this was done, any scientific medical intervention was prohibited believing that it will cause bad luck. *This belief is the reason why five kids died within one week because of measles. If they were rushed to the hospital they could've lived, but Badjaos believe more in panday than a doctor*, Sumangat confirmed. Measles was a disease of undernourished children who were usually living in poor conditions (Rosling 2015). Furthermore, Rosling (ibid.) suggested that the best way of looking into the human progress is the decrease in child mortality. But child mortality depends on many things not just health system services; it depends on education, living standards and community and government protection.

One week after the successive deaths of the Badjao children in BCV, the local authorities got alarmed and started a medical mission vaccinating all the children in the community. During this time, hundreds of mothers with their children were lining up to get free vaccination. Also, medical health workers denounced parents the practice of *pag-omboh* as it was not helping in combatting diseases. All of the respondents were believers of the traditional (*pag-omboh*)

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<sup>203</sup> <http://pantawid.dswd.gov.ph/images/stories/pantawidfaq.pdf>

healing rituals. Even Sumangat, the respondent with the highest educational achievement believed in *pag-omboh*. *I don't want to fail my ancestors. I don't want them to get mad.*

Using Barth's (1967) lenses, the demonstration on how the Badjao informants allocate their time, resources and by looking into events generated important change in the society. However, this change was depicted as not absolute because informants' identity did not disappear after the institutionalization of cash transfer. In fact, it was strengthened as how they valued gold, fishnets, food and traditional beliefs.

#### **5.5.d Issues and perceptions on the 4Ps**

Government programs, like any other, have loopholes. Sumangat revealed that the money sometimes arrive three months late. The Badjaos have no definite idea when the money was released. *When we hear that somebody say that the money arrived then the whole community will rush to the bank. It comes in unspecific schedule and oftentimes late*, Yna said. The late disbursement of money was not only been the issue that the Badjaos were complaining. Usually the amount of money that they get is uncertain. Sumangat complied strictly to the conditions of the cash transfer system, yet, he still experienced irregularities. *I went to the bank one time and the lady said that I have no money to withdraw; she said that I have a negative balance in the system. I don't get it, I did not receive the money for three months because it was late, so I was expecting to get an accumulated amount but I went home empty handed instead*, Sumangat complained.

Because of the delays and uncertain release of funds, Yna, Sumangat and Manuel were pushed to borrow money. For instance, Sumangat had to borrow money with interest when her daughter was rushed to the hospital. He then again borrowed money when her 15-year-old daughter got married. Manuel, on the other hand, borrowed money to provide food for his family. *When the money comes then all of it goes to the payment of my debts.*

Apart from the late release and disappearance of funds, Taha complained about the goons who were also collecting 'membership funds' after the release of the money. *There are people who are coming around and collecting 'fees'. They threaten us that we will not get money next time if we will not pay them. I've heard they are also Badjaos.*



## 5.5 Badjaos and the government

In places like Tawi-Tawi, the only way that the Badjaos can recognize the government was through its programs and services. However, both Sumangat and Yna thought that the government, represented by the politicians, was only present during elections. *We see them here in our community. It is very rare to see rich people go down here in BCV, it is surprising but people get happy because they know that the politicians will be showering us with money again. But after the election then we don't see them.*

On the contrary, Utub thought that the government has been helpful to the Badjaos from Zamboanga. *We were sent here and we were given houses and jobs. I think that the Mayor is really kind.*

In the local public elementary school in BCV, 4Ps obliged the Badjaos to send their children to school. It served as a magnet, at least temporarily, according to the principal of the school. Children got free notebooks and a feeding program was being run every Friday. *Parents just send their children because they cannot feed them when they are at home. It is better when they are here. But we have very limited funding that we can only have the feeding program every Friday. During that day the number of students balloons.* On the other hand, the number of students dropped starting from mid-school year because of the migratory practices of the Badjaos and some parents push their children to get married.

While doing the fieldwork in BCV, certain information was spreading about the public school. Informants said that specifically teachers come only whenever they want to work. Classes were irregular and dependent whether the school was open or not. I observed that the school was sometimes closed even during midday when it was supposedly school hours. In addition, I also observed situations like, where pupils are playing outside the schoolyard while a teacher was in the classroom. Apart from the school run by the government, the missionary nuns in the BCV run a primary school. Its student population is relatively low compared to the government run school. However, the nuns ensure academic guidance from preschool to high school and daily feeding program. According to Sumangat, some parents don't want to send their children to the private school because they are afraid that the nuns might convert their children to Christianity, something that denied by the nuns.

## 5.6 What has been changed?

To understand sedentarization, we must view it as a particular kind of change, defined by its substance, but exemplifying a more general process, the process of socio cultural change (Salzman 1980). In the coming narratives, patterns of change on social behavior have occurred among the informants' experiences.

Apart from Utub, who was brought to Sibutu because of political opportunities, the Badjaos that I interviewed were still living in the same house, or at least, in the same area, since they left their boathouses.

In terms of living standards, *life is much harder now than before. The prices of commodities are so high that we cannot keep up with it.* Yna expressed. She tried to budget the money that she gets from washing clothes and from the 4Ps but she finds it difficult since everything is getting more expensive. However, Taha thought differently. She thought that after the seaweed industry was discovered in Sibutu their life has been stable and satisfying. Furthermore, despite the imperfections of 4Ps, Taha was quite satisfied with it. *It is helping us a bit with our venture in seaweed industry.* She said.

Furthermore, there has been a big change in the aspect of health of the Badjaos. Yna thinks that Badjaos have lower health condition nowadays due to poor nutrition and sanitation. Yna gave an example of the deaths of the children because of measles. To add, BCV's population is getting bigger due to the influx of population and intermarriages but there are only two sources of water for the whole village. The sewage goes directly to the sea where the Badjaos are getting their water for washing their dishes and when they take a bath. Furthermore, when I was in BCV, it was apparent that there were a lot of children that have cataracts and eyesight problem. Locals blame the incestuous marriage of some Badjaos.

Manuel thinks that their identity as a Badjao was in peril. The number of Badjaos was decreasing because of their absorption to the labor market world and because of violence. *Life was better before. It was simple but we were free,* both Manuel and Nalil expressed. *I feel like I can't move anymore, I cant even sail to the adjacent island,* Nalil added.

For Utub, life was more comfortable that they have their own house. They have a decent house to return to every fishing trip. While for Sumangat, who grew up on the land and

remembers only little about their life in boathouses, the Badjaos are slowly integrating into the larger society. *I am now a Muslim because that's what my ancestors want. But being a Muslim still doesn't help to welcome me to the society. I feel left out when I am with Tausugs,* he stated.

### **5.6.a. Who is poor?**

Rosling (2015) claimed that people are poor in so many ways. Far from being a straightforward condition of deprivation and destitution, poverty is in fact a contentious and complex construct which encapsulates a vast range of social and historical struggles and constantly evolving cultural values (Broch-Due, 1995). Rosling (2015) categorized poor households as those who have no access to electricity, water, health care, education and other government services and who were living under a dollar a day.

With the study, Nalil and Manuel particularly don't have access to electricity while the rest have. However, similar to most of the respondents, is the poor access to potable water; Nalil, Yna and Sumangat had to queue several times a week at the communal tap water. Manuel, on the other hand, needed to cross the channel to fetch water from the next island. Free education is available, however, the quality and participation (see previous discussions), and the environment, *mobbing of the Tausug school children to Badjaos*, according to Nalil, caused the high dropouts of Badjao school children. Furthermore, free health services in government run facilities were offered, yet, cultural practices hinder the maximization of the benefit (see previous discussion).

In terms of daily subsistence, responses vary quite differently. Taha and Utub rely on the abundance of the sea. *Sometimes we only wave enough fish for ourselves*, Utub said. *I have an unclear income. When the harvest of seaweeds is good then we will have a good life for the next months. But when the harvest is so little then we tend to save a bit more and spend our money wisely*, Taha expressed. Respondents in BCV and Sanga-Sanga are financially unstable than their counterparts in Sibutu Island.

Poverty of indigenous groups is not merely of metaphors, but even where its social manifestations in insufficiency, scarcity and suffering are blatantly evident, its meanings and interpretations must inevitably be culturally and conceptually constructed (Broch-Due and Anderson 1999). The respondents have repeatedly mentioned fish in the course of interviews.

Eating fish was the most important diet of the Badjaos, while meat consumption was not widely practiced. *We feel like throwing up when we eat meat. But our kids eat meat, they like hotdogs.* Sumangat said. *To eat fish and to fish is important for us. Fish makes me happy, it reminds me of our life when we were still living in boathouses,* Nalil expressed. He further added that; *just give us the chance to fish and we will be contented.* The difficulty of sailing safely to the seas of Bongao also defies the right of the Badjaos for self-contentment.

For Broch-Due (1999) from her study among the poverty of Turkana pastoralists, argues that poverty is ‘made’ by the choices and decisions of the household. Manuel depicted the Badjaos as *kawawa* or specifically means pitiful condition. Referring themselves as pitiful is only brought by outside factors. For instance, contrasting themselves to the Sama, *We are alike,* said by Sumangat. Moreover, the term *mahirap* or poor has been used whenever they contrast themselves to the Tausugs. For Sumangat, being wealthy meant to have a house not made of sticks and broken iron sheets, but with concrete and could withstand harsh weather conditions.

Nalil added that, *when a certain place has abundance of fish, we would go there. We follow the fish. And as long as we have fish and as long as the ocean have fish, then we never go hungry. We never go poor.*

### **5.6.b Moving toward development (?)**

The continuous campaign of combating poverty remains a national agenda. The government has used development as an antidote for poverty and its message is conveyed in political rhetoric, media and among the general public. Within this discourse, ‘development’, then, embodies practical as well as moral aspects, and ‘poverty’, being its antithesis, is intimately linked to images of backwardness, primitivity (sic) and ignorance (Talle 1999).

The difference between contentment and poverty was visible among the Badjaos. As Manuel explained:

*Badjaos only live by the day. When we catch a fish then we will eat it today. Tomorrow is another day. That’s what we are.*

Indeed, Badjao's consumption based on Manuel's statement was testified when I went to Sanga-Sanga. Bringing with me groceries for several days to the family of Nalil, everything was consumed within one night.

Taken from the previous discussions on the unequal opportunities among Badjaos in Sibutu and BCV and Sanga-Sanga, there was hesitance for Manuel and Nalil in moving to a more lucrative life in Sibutu. Belongingness prevailed more than economic security. *I do not belong there (Sibutu)*, Nalil said despite of the hard circumstances in Bongao.

Apart from belongingness, contentment varies to interviewees when asked about returning to nomadic life. Contentment was visible when basic needs were being sufficed and some interviewees depicted this:

*I don't need to go back to pelang. I have a house now and I am happy with it. (Utub)*

*Pelang? (laughs) No! I'm not even planning of going to Sabah. I will stay here in Tongehat. (Taha)*

Contentment is also portrayed among informants when there was no sense of choice.

*We just have to stay here (BCV). We can't go to Sabah because we don't have documents neither going back to pelang is not a choice. (Yna)*

*I grew up in the land...I am afraid of going to Sabah despite of the better opportunities. I'll just stay here (BCV). (Sumangat)*

However, interviewees who experienced insecurity and disappointment are willing to go back to their houseboats:

*In the sea there is nobody who will threaten us. We are all by ourselves. (Manuel)*

Furthermore, identity is also depicted amidst failure:

*We are Sama Dilaut. We belong to the sea and I want to go back to where I belong.*  
(Nalil)

All in all, the government programs; housing project for Badjaos and the conditional cash transfer fund was actively scrutinized and applauded by the respondents. Field narratives showed the changes in social behavior, perceptions, and the strengthening of self-identification in the processes and impacts of sedentarization.

### **5.7 Summary**

In this chapter, I have presented and discussed the field data. The data indicated that, both the housing project and the conditional cash transfer fund had made different impacts to the day-to-day life of the Badjaos. Firstly, the housing project was crafted to improve the welfare of the Badjaos. However, contrary to its purpose, the housing project was turned into a tool for politicians to generate guaranteed voters. Furthermore, cultural and security needs of the Badjaos were bypassed in the construction of the houses. In this case, the housing project that was supposedly for the Badjaos, to some extent, did not achieve its purposes of giving welfare to the Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi. In the end, nobody from the native Tawi-Tawi Badjao availed for the housing project. On the other hand, one of the respondents applauded the housing project, claiming it helped a lot in the

On the other hand, the government conditional cash transfer fund, as a poverty reduction tool, drew diverse feedbacks from the informants. Firstly, the respondents demonstrated awareness on the positive effect of 4Ps. However, like any other governmental programs, many loopholes mired it. Irregular disbursement of funds and the lack of transparency entailed to quandaries such as borrowing of money leading to debt and paying fees to goons to secure the receiving of the government money. Secondly, loopholes are not only depicted from the side of the government. Spending habits of the Badjaos on their lavish celebrations and their affection for gold lead to the misuse of the government's financial support for health and education purposes.

Taken together, the government projects were critically perceived as the main reasons why some of the informants Badjaos felt immobile. Furthermore, the attempt of the government to assimilate the Badjao communities to a larger Filipino society brought different reactions among participants.

Furthermore, the conception of poverty was also different among the informants. Based on the data, the notion of poverty was depicted only from the outside. On the contrary, informants showed contentment in their state, and that is to make for a living. Moreover, the desire of regaining mobility was shown by the respondents who experienced dissatisfaction and insecurity, while, respondents who depicted stability and satisfaction toward government services denounced the idea of going back to boat-dwelling.

## 6. Summary and Concluding Remarks

*Majorities are made, not born.*

*Gladney (1998: 1)*

### **Introduction**

In this study, I have attempted to answer the question on the impact of sedentarization policies to the Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi in southwestern Philippines. It obtained Badjao's viewpoints on understanding the housing project and the conditional cash transfer fund as measures of the Philippine government to assimilate the post-nomads into the larger Filipino society. To explain the impacts and insights, this study has based on six qualitative interviews matching with participant-observation as data collection techniques. Furthermore, the study has drawn on the understanding of poverty and development to explain the effects of sedentarization. It also used analytical concepts such as social organization, social change and ethnic identity to further extract the interviewee's perceptions.

### **Findings**

The analysis of the field narratives has validated that there have been different impacts and perceptions on the sedentarization policies that played out in the Badjao society. To start, social change was visible in various manners. In the data results, it was not completely depicted if the process of sedentarization was irreversible, however, there was an attempt from two informants to go back to the nomadic way of life. The attempt of going back to boathouses was voiced out as the failure of the government to recognize the needs of the Badjao. It was depicted that the housing policy served a little impact, in terms of welfare development among the Badjaos of BCV and Sanga-Sanga.

On the other hand, the impact turned into the strengthening on the awareness of ethnic identity of the Badjaos. Through the housing program, informants of BCV and Sanga-Sanga valued their cultural and security needs. Badjaos were hesitant to move to the government commissioned houses because the architectural design and positioning of the units were not patterned to their identity.

In the narratives of the informant in Nunucan, the housing project highlighted the involvement of the residents to the electoral systems. It was explained that the residents were



moved to the housing units for political purposes. This change depicted the inclusion of the residents of Nunucan to state activities.

Another impact of sedentarization was seen through the change of social behavior of the informants. This was depicted through the spending and allocating of money from the cash transfer fund. Cash grants were used to suffice the cultural activities and livelihood of the informants. Furthermore, the shift on the cycle of fishing trips and the change of health conditions of the Badjaos were the effects their sedentism.

Moreover, the change of social composition: population growth and political structures made the Badjaos even more sedentarized. Narratives in BCV and Sanga-Sanga demonstrated that the take-over of the Tausug on the fishing grounds made the informants part of the wage labor market. Furthermore, the involvement of the Badjaos in the electoral processes made them part of the larger Filipino society. These data narratives also proved that change, in the form of sedentarization, was directional.

Also, the loopholes in the cash transfer system made an impact in the social behavior of the informants. This was depicted by the narratives of BCV through the borrowing of money due to the late disbursements of cash grants.

To further discuss the impacts of the government policies, informants perceived the cash transfer fund as the factor why they cannot go to Sabah. Moreover, the informants' subjection to cash transfer fund obliged them to send their children to schools. However, on the similar note, ethnic identity was again highlighted, as cases of students stopped from going to school due to fix marriages and migratory practices. Though these cases are not encouraged, yet, policies were not patterned to the cultural needs of the Badjaos.

The housing project and the cash transfer fund played out as agents of change from the outside, *force majeure*.<sup>204</sup> However, social change has no single line of development. Change could come in overlapping degrees and directions. It was clearly depicted that the Badjao society was adaptive and loosely integrated, and these are the criteria that social change transpire. It was also demonstrated that the Badjaos had a social organization wherein they had the possibility to choose desired behaviors that they wished to retain in the process of

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<sup>204</sup> see page 39

change. These alternative behaviors were often highlighted as impacts of sedentarization. Finally, it was also validated that the Badjaos picked alternative patterns of behaviors that they think were fitting to their new state.

### **Contributions**

Analytically, this study has attempted to contribute to understand the impacts of sedentarization policies to the Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi using different theoretical lenses. It was insightful that impacts of sedentarization could come in different manner and directions. This study proved that there is not single direction to change and development. Lastly, this study contributed to the understanding on the impacts of development policies may highlight identities.

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