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Map of the Philippines



Chapter 1 Profile

Introduction

The southern Philippines was part of an ancient trading network which, over time, expanded from regional to global. This made the area appealing to many outside powers.¹ In the 14th century, Arab Muslim traders were the first to introduce Islam to the inhabitants of the southern Philippines.² Residing in an expansive archipelago of some 7,107 islands, the Yakan were one of many isolated tribes that attracted proselytizing foreigners.³

Islam provided a form of spiritual resistance to Christian colonization after the Spanish secured control of the northern Philippine islands in the 16th century. The Spanish referred to the Muslims as the Moors, later called Moros because they shared the same religion as people of Berber and Arab descent who had once colonized Spain. The Moros regarded European imperialism as an assault on the sanctity of Islam and not without cause—the Spanish had a missionary agenda in addition to furthering their economic interests. The Spanish would fight the Moros for 300 years in an effort to exploit natural resources and gain control over the shipping lanes connecting Southeast Asia to the world.⁴

Topography and Climate

Basilan Island, home of the Yakan tribe, is part of the Sulu Archipelago, which extends from Mindanao and is comprised of volcanic and coral islands. It is bordered on the west by the Sulu Sea and North Borneo, on the south by the rest of the Sulu Archipelago (of which Jolo Island is the most important), and to the northeast by the large island of Mindanao with the city of Zamboanga to its immediate north.



The island's undulating terrain becomes steeper as one moves inland from the coast. Densely forested uplands provide ground cover for a series of volcanic peaks exceeding heights of 2,000 ft (600 m).⁵ Short streams act as the source of drainage, and mangrove forests exist at lower elevations. Rolling slopes and valleys contain rich soils which, along with steady rainfall, provide favorable conditions for the cultivation of rice, coconut, and rubber. Located well below

¹ Google Books. *Between Integration and Secession*. Yegar, Moshe. "Chapter 17: The Spanish Occupation Period [p. 204]." 2002. New York: Lexington Books. http://books.google.com/books?id=S5q7qxi5LBgC&pg=PA203&lpg=PA203&dq=spanish+sultan+sulu&source=bl&ots=tm2GA_I98v&sig=kDkR4GVdSTbIc2Ahr0jhziFOHGU&hl=en&ei=0KBfSq76MYyllAe73-nmCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4

² Slate.com. Koerner, Brendan. "How Islam Got to the Philippines." 28 January 2005. <http://www.slate.com/id/2112795/>

³ Philippines-Archipelago. "Philippines-Archipelago." 2001–2009. <http://philippines-archipelago.com/>

⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica*. "Philippines." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/456399/Philippines/23714/The-Spanish-period>

⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica*. "Basilan." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/55083/Basilan>

the devastating typhoon belt, seasonal differences in temperature are minimal. Rainfall averages 1,100 mm (43 in) while mean annual temperature is 26–27 °C (79–81 °F).

Bodies of Water

Sulu Sea

Located in the northern portion of the western Pacific Ocean, the Sulu Sea sits between the Philippines and Malaysia. With a surface area of 260,000 sq km (100,000 sq mi), it has an average depth of 4,400 m (14,435 ft). However, shallow waters surround the numerous islands, traditionally affording staging grounds for raiding parties. The shallow water continues to pose challenges to security. The islands of Tawi-Tawi and Basilan can function as shipping chokeholds. The Philippine Navy has limited resources to patrol the area and maritime cooperation with neighboring Malaysia is minimal owing to an antagonistic history dating back to the colonial era.⁶ As a result, piracy and trafficking of narcotics and guns—as well as people—is said to be rife.⁷ Terrorist groups with local maritime expertise are in a position to finance their activities through piracy and use the islands as sanctuary.⁸

Celebes Sea

To the south of the Sulu Archipelago, the Celebes Sea is slightly larger than the Sulu Sea, with an area of 280,000 sq km (110,000 sq mi). Like the Sulu Sea, it has a depth in excess of 4,000 m (13,120 ft) along with extensive shallow plateaus rimming island land masses.⁹ It is thought to contain the world's greatest species diversity of shallow water marine animals, and may well claim the same title for the deep water marine mammals that have evolved in isolation.¹⁰ Known as the “coral triangle” and named for the Indonesian island of Celebes, this sea is roughly circular in shape. Its location affords passageway to the Sulu Sea (northward), the Makassar Strait (southward), and the Philippine and Malacca Seas (eastward), making it the thruway for almost all nautical traffic in Southeast Asia.¹¹



⁶ Center for East and Southeast Asian Studies, Lund University. Eklof, Stefan. “The Return of Piracy: Decolonization and International Relations in a Maritime Border Region (the Sulu Sea), 1959–63.” 2005. http://www.ace.lu.se/images/Syd_och_sydstasienstudier/working_papers/Eklof.pdf

⁷ Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development. Valencia, Mark J. “Securing the Sulu Sea.” 10 July 2008. <http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/08053Valencia.html>

⁸ Asia Times. Storey, Ian. “‘Triborder Sea’ is SE Asian Danger Zone.” 18 October 2007. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/IJ18Ae01.html

⁹ Atlas of Oceanic Internal Waves. “Celebes Sea.” February 2004. http://www.internalwaveatlas.com/Atlas2_PDF/IWAtlas2_Pg263_Celebes.pdf

¹⁰ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. “Exploring the Inner Space of the Celebes Sea 2007.” 27 September–16 October 2007. <http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/07philippines/welcome.html>

¹¹ Google Books. *Homeland Security Handbook*. Johnson, Eric. “The Abu Sayyaf and Maritime Piracy [p. 160].” Jack Pinkowski, Ed. 2008. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press. <http://books.google.com/books?id=XEmVaxZBXXQC&pg=PA160&lpg=PA160&dq=sulu+sea+piracy&so>

Crude oil tankers pass through the Makassar Strait because the Strait of Malacca is too shallow.¹²

Major Cities

Isabela

The Spanish government established Fort Isabela in 1844 in what was then known as Pasangen. Located on the northwest coast of Basilan, fort's establishment was primarily a defensive measure against encroachment by other European powers. The next year Spanish government officials from Zamboanga gave it the name Isabela, in honor of the Spanish queen, hoisting the Spanish flag over the fort. The area subsequently expanded along the lines of a Spanish settlement in which a central plaza is flanked by government offices and a parish church. The Christian population grew as the city became a trade and commercial center. Isabela was occupied by the Japanese in World War II and the Spanish fort was reduced to rubble by American bombing.¹³

Lamitan

In 1637 Spanish forces captured Lamitan, then a stronghold of a local sultan. Occupation proved short-lived, however, owing to the hostility of coastal Samal villagers who did not like the foreign presence. Like Isabela, Lamitan has a significant population of Christian Filipinos who migrated from other places to take advantage of economic opportunities. It was occupied by the Japanese in World War II. A recent string of well publicized kidnappings by homegrown groups with links to Islamic terrorist organizations have made it difficult to attract visitors.¹⁴



Maluso

Maluso, on the western side of the island, is a fishing village that has become a city and a center of aquaculture commerce.¹⁵ Historically the home base of an ethnic Samal seafarer population, expanded port facilities, which are part of a USAID program, have enabled fishermen on big trawlers to unload their catch on Basilan Island rather than using the facilities on Zamboanga. Such infrastructural improvements to the livelihood of islanders are seen as the means to limit the attraction of radical Islam.

urce=bl&ots=YfKvP9Bb1V&sig=UjhvSY9K4rZ74IVvb5c_zMbpCpk&hl=en&ei=Kv5kSqSANobAsQPL6LjrDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5

¹² Energy Information Administration. U.S. Government. "World Oil Transit Chokepoints." January 2008. http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints/Background.html

¹³ Official Website of the Provincial Government of Basilan, Republic of the Philippines. No date. <http://www.basilan.gov.ph/invasion.html>

¹⁴ Sun Star Manila. "Kidnappers Kill Hostage in Lamitan." 14 April 2009. <http://67.225.139.201/manila/kidnappers-kill-hostage-lamitan>

¹⁵ Philippine Star. "Basilan port improvement a boon to fishermen." 19 April 2009. <http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=458972&publicationSubCategoryId=473>

Zamboanga

Although Zamboanga, on the large Mindanao Island, is only 8 km (5 mi) from Basilan Island, strong currents have historically made boat travel difficult and impeded the development of commercial linkages. Beginning in the 1970s, Yakan settlers moved to Zamboanga when tensions between Christian migrants and Muslims first erupted in large-scale violence. More recent security concerns have curbed tourism to Basilan Island. As a result, there is a Yakan population in Zamboanga engaged in the sale of crafts. Woven wares, for which the Yakan are renowned, are especially desirable. Visitors to the “Yakan Village” also seek other items such as traditional weapons.¹⁶



History

Origins of Yakan

The origins of the Yakan people are a matter of some debate. While some believe they are descendants of people who migrated from present-day Papua New Guinea, the Yakan believe their descent stems from people who lived in Borneo and Malaysia. It is certainly understandable that they would prefer to trace their ancestry to peoples that were early converts to Islam rather than the non-Muslim Papuan tribes. Physical resemblance tends to strengthen this claim. Most Yakan have straight black hair and the slight build associated with the Malay rather than the more Negroid features of the Papuans.¹⁷ The name Yakan is derived from a misunderstanding; the Spanish thought the name of an island tree, the Yakal, referred to the island’s inhabitants.

Introduction of Islam

Part of the Sulu Archipelago, Basilan Island’s history is connected to the other islands, a trend that intensified after the introduction of Islam through Arab traders and Muslim missionaries in the 14th century. Rival sultanates, headed by a sultan who is thought to be descended from the Prophet Muhammad, emerged on Jolo Island and Mindanao. Local power remained with the *datu*, a traditional tribal chief. Trade required an expansion of ties, and sultanates had the equivalent of diplomatic relations with imperial China. In addition to the trade in precious material goods, there was human trade, since Islam allowed slavery. Seafarers risked finding themselves in bondage as the human booty of pirates.

Spanish Colonial Rule

Spanish colonization of the Philippines began in the 16th century. At that time, Jolo, the capital of the powerful Sulu Sultanate, was a thriving port and Manila remained a mere

¹⁶ Mindanao Examiner. “Yakan Cloth, Now A Pride of Zamboanga.” 5 January 2006. <http://zamboangajournal.blogspot.com/2006/01/yakan-cloth-now-pride-of-zamboanga.html>

¹⁷ *The Yakan of Basilan Island: Another Unknown and Exotic Tribe of the Philippines*. Sherfan, Andrew. “Chapter 1: A General Background on Basilan Island [pp. 16–17]. 1976. Cebu City: Fotomatic.

fishing village.¹⁸ While the Spanish presence intervened to prevent the spread of Islam northward; Catholicism did not take root among the Muslims. Nor were the Spanish able to establish the coveted commercial presence necessary to capture control of regional trade and natural resources. In those places where they established a garrison, Spanish soldiers rarely ventured far from the fortified seacoast towns. Military occupation was an immense financial drain on the Spanish, and Moro piracy and slave raiding was an ongoing obstacle to expanding their commercial interests.



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Flag of the Sulu Sultanate

In 1844, the French government viewed Basilan Island as a good location for a series of naval bases to protect French trade. Toward this end, they purchased Basilan from the Sultan of Sulu on neighboring Jolo Island.¹⁹ The initial French effort to occupy Basilan was bitterly resented by the natives who vigorously resisted their authority for a year. They abducted several French crew members from the battleship *Sabine* in a skirmish that left one dead. The others were released as a result of Spanish colonial intervention. The French returned with greater force to blockade Basilan. After heated debate within the French government, King Louis Philippe withdrew his forces. The French abandoned their short-lived plan to incorporate Basilan Island into a naval defense line owing to the projected costs of securing the island.²⁰

In 1848, the Spanish started to use steamships with canons and were able to bring the southern sultanates under control and end piracy. Three years earlier, Pedro Cuevas, a Tagalog from Cavite in the northern Philippines escaped from a penitentiary in Zamboanga; he sought refuge on Basilan Island.²¹ His leadership enabled the Yakan to fend off an encroachment by the Tausug, as well as launch attacks on the Spanish in Mindanao. After marrying a local woman and converting to Islam, he became known as Datu Kulun, a revered figure. He introduced the Yakan to coconut cultivation, which developed into a cash crop economy based on copra (dried coconut meat).

¹⁸ New York Times. Crossette, Barbara. "In Filipino Port, Lawlessness Grows." 11 September 1987. <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/11/world/in-filipino-port-lawlessness-grows.html?pagewanted=all>

¹⁹ Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University. "Historical Timeline of the Royal Sultanate of Sulu Including Related Events of Neighboring Peoples." 1996–2009. http://www.seasite.niu.edu/Tagalog/Modules/Modules/MuslimMindanao/historical_timeline_of_the_royal.htm

²⁰ *Manila Times*. de Viana, Augusto. "'What ifs' in Philippine History." 17 September 2006. http://www.allempires.net/topic15834_post346316.html#346316

²¹ PCIJ.org. Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism. "Troubled Return of the Faithful." June 2003. <http://www.pcij.org/imag/SpecialReport/balik-islam2.html>

American Colonial Rule

With the Treaty of Paris in 1898, the territory of the Philippines came under American colonial rule. The U.S. was able to exert far greater authority over the southern Philippines than the Spanish. The U.S. War Department created a Moro Province that encompassed two thirds of Mindanao Island and the entire Sulu Archipelago. Each Muslim group responded to American rule according to how the new system of governance affected them. There was no unified “Moro” response. Beginning in 1906, Muslim leaders were recruited as heads of “tribal wards.” These wards provided a means of collecting taxes and mediating conflicts between communities. They created an opportunity for *datu* and sultans to expand their authority as power brokers. By the second half of the first decade of American rule, southern Mindanao—which had been considered the place most difficult to govern—was declared peaceful and stable. The Muslims in fact wished to remain under American colonial rule or become independent, sensing the prospect of second class status in a Christian-dominated country.



DOD Image
Native Moros

Independence

After Philippine independence in 1946, Christians from the more crowded islands in the North continued to migrate into Mindanao. This migration provoked a Muslim backlash against the Christians, who often gained title to the best land and quickly became the majority. The changing demographics, in short, posed a threat to the traditional Muslim way of life. Responding with military force posed problems for the government of Ferdinand Marcos. The Philippines was reliant on oil imports from Muslim Middle Eastern countries where there was sympathy for the plight of their Filipino brethren.²²

The different Filipino Muslim communities had a long history of fighting each other, making collective action against Christian encroachment problematic. Ironically, it was two different educational initiatives which both came from outside that laid the groundwork for effective organized resistance on the part of the Moro people. One was a national effort to create a Muslim class of professional degree holders who, through expanded educational opportunities, would acquire a stake in the existing political system. Toward this end, a scholarship program was set up to bring Moro students to Manila for advanced study. While only 1,391 students gained professional degrees through this initiative, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founder, Nur Misuari, was among them.²³ The second initiative took Muslim students to Egypt through

²² Google Books. *Timber Booms and Institutional Breakdown in Southeast Asia*. Ross, Michael. “Chapter 4: The Philippines: The Legal Slaughter of the Forests [p. 56].” 2001. New York: Cambridge University Press.

http://books.google.com/books?id=rWxlCRVB8YC&pg=PA56&lpg=PA56&dq=ferdinand+marcos+patronage&source=bl&ots=RJN8DYXxw2&sig=cFjjBcw0ZPLEUN9lxcBR42VJKU0&hl=en&ei=MqZfSunFA4PANfaEtK4C&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=8

²³ Australian Association of Asian Studies. Donnelly, Charles. “Terrorism in the Southern Philippines: Contextualising the *Abu Sayyaf* Group as an Islamist Secessionist Organisation.” 2004. <http://coombs.anu.edu.au/SpecialProj/ASAA/biennial-conference/2004/Donnelly-C-ASAA2004.pdf>

former President Gamel Abdel Nasser's efforts to create a pan-Islamic consciousness. Among the two hundred Filipino scholarship recipients was Hashim Salamat, the leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Under the Marcos regime, membership in either organization was a criminal offense punishable by both legal and extralegal means.²⁴

The Post-9/11 World Order

The rebellion in Mindanao of the 1970s led to as many as 200,000 casualties. Some of the fighting occurred on Basilan Island.²⁵ In the 1990s, the Philippine government entered into tenuous truces with the two main local Islamic militant groups—the Moro National Liberation Front (MNFL) in 1996 and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2001. The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), a more radical offshoot, operates mainly on Basilan and Jolo Islands.²⁶ It relies on kidnapping as a source of revenue leading some to question whether it has any political objectives or is in fact simply a criminal syndicate.²⁷ In an environment where residents are hostile to the government, the ASG can buy informants, good will, and safe houses where weaponry can be concealed and guerrilla fighters can melt into the civilian population.

The group was able to operate within a political culture of patronage and was viewed as a “local problem.”²⁸ That changed when ASG expanded its operations by targeting victims off of Basilan Island, including foreign nationals. Moreover, the increased flow of ransom revenues meant the ASG had more money to spread around, making it an alternative source of patronage. This threatened the local government's monopoly on bestowing largesse and gave it an incentive to put the group out of business.

The U.S. extension of the war on terror into the Philippines included the dispatch of U.S. troops to Basilan for training purposes given ASG's ties to other Islamic radical groups to whom it might provide safe haven.²⁹ At the same time, the American presence created an opportunity for local officials to rid themselves of the



DDO Image
Soldiers training in Zamboanga

²⁴ Google Books. *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines*. McKenna, Thomas. “Introduction [p. 2].” 1998. Berkeley: University of California Press. http://books.google.com/books?id=wYvwWcL0_DIC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0

²⁵ Australian Association of Asian Studies. Donnelly, Charles. “Terrorism in the Southern Philippines: Contextualising the *Abu Sayyaf* Group as an Islamist Secessionist Organisation.” 2004. <http://coombs.anu.edu.au/SpecialProj/ASAA/biennial-conference/2004/Donnelly-C-ASAA2004.pdf>

²⁶ Congressional Research Service, U.S. Library of Congress. “Abu Sayyaf: Target of Philippine-U.S. Anti-Terrorism Cooperation.” 24 January 2007. http://www.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/crsreports/crsdocuments/RL31265_01242007.pdf

²⁷ Foreign Affairs. Rogers, Stephen. “Beyond Abu Sayyaf.” January/February 2004. http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-1269265/Beyond-the-Abu-Sayef.html

²⁸ East-West Center. Abinales, Patricio. “American Military Presence in the Southern Philippines: A Comparative Historical Overview.” October 2004. <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PSwp007.pdf>

²⁹ BBC News. “The Arrival of U.S. Troops in Basilan.” 18 January 2002. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1767524.stm>

ASG, an objective they had been unable to accomplish on their own. American aid offered the prospect of creating new channels of patronage. Indeed, the U.S. and Philippine armed forces have not only destroyed enemy sanctuary, but also provided infrastructure to improve the lives of Basilans. These efforts have included digging new wells and surfacing roads—improvements that are also intended to strengthen law and order.³⁰ Still, the recent exchange of “good will money” by a Basilan province official for a hostage held by the ASG has generated criticism from a Defense Department official in Manila.³¹

Finally, periodic outbursts of ASG activity on Basilan Island raise the question of whether such groups can be quashed without addressing the underlying sources of Moro discontent. Within the Muslim community on Basilan, the Philippine military is viewed as equally responsible for the violence.³²

Government

Although the Philippines is a free press democracy, a weak judicial system has allowed corruption to flourish. Muslim politicians have not proven any less susceptible to using public assets for private gain than their Christian counterparts. This is due to the presumption that anyone elected to public office will provide jobs for family and friends rather than hiring staff through a system of meritocratic recruitment. It has proved no less true in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), created in 1989 which includes all of Basilan Island except the city of Isabela.³³ The creation of the ARMM was long in gestation because of concerns over the plight of Christians who would fall under its administrative authority. On Basilan, this was solved by exempting the city of Isabela, which is the capital of Basilan province, from inclusion in the ARMM since its population is mainly Christian. Nonetheless, efforts are ongoing to expand the amount of territory under ARMM administration. Negotiations between Manila and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) focus on the specific area to be included. In addition, the right of the ARMM to retain revenues from the sale of natural resources as well as the amount due to the central government is also determined through negotiation.³⁴ When both sides have reached agreement, the plan is then subject to Philippine Supreme Court approval. In 2008, the Philippine Supreme Court ruled against such an expansion to include approximately 725 additional villages on Mindanao Island.³⁵

³⁰ Davao Today. Conde, Carlos. “Abu Sayyaf in Basilan: A Deadly Redux.” 26 August–1 September 2007. <http://www.bulatlat.com/2007/08/abu-sayyaf-basilan-deadly-redux>

³¹ Business Mirror. “Teodoro Urges Basilan Officials to Back Drive Against Bandits.” 20 July 2009. <http://businessmirror.com.ph/home/nation/13432-teodoro-urges-basilan-officials-to-back-drive-against-bandits.html>

³² BBC News (World Edition). Head, Jonathan. “Was the US’ Basilan Operation a Success?” 18 September 2002. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2266060.stm>

³³ Asia Society. “The Origins of the Muslim Separatist Movement.” 25 August 2008. <http://www.asiasociety.org/countries-history/conflicts/the-origins-muslim-separatist-movement-philippines?page=0%2C1>

³⁴ BBC News. “Philippine Muslim Area to Expand.” 17 July 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7512401.stm>

³⁵ Reuters. Mogato, Manny. “Interview-Philippine Muslim Rebels Urge Truce, Peace Talks.” 1 July 2009. <http://www.reuters.com/article/featuredCrisis/idUSMAN486967>

Economy

Basilan Island, like the rest of the Philippines, has an economy reliant on the export of primary products. Timber has been a traditional source of revenue. At one time lumber mills supplied both North American and Asian markets. Basilan is an attractive source of highly sought Philippine timber. Moreover, Basilan's forests can be naturally replenished because the Sulu Archipelago is outside the typhoon belt and is therefore not susceptible to the devastating environmental degradation which is evident in the denuded northern islands.³⁶ Yet security concerns have driven away foreign investors and the revenues from timber exports are negligible. Rubber was also an important export in the past and an impetus to create rubber plantation farms during the colonial era. Copra, made from dried coconut meat, continues to be sold as a cash crop marketed within the country and as an export. There is plentiful grazing land and also a potential for hydropower owing to several large waterfalls on the island. The seas around the island are rich in aquatic resources including tuna and sardines.

Language

The Yakan language is written in Malay Arabic script and native words have been adapted into the alphabet.

However, it is difficult for Arabic speakers to read the Yakan script—the syllables are frequently disconnected and some letters are formed differently. The structure and syntax reveal strong Malay-Indonesian influences, particularly Javanese, which probably occurred prior to the introduction of Islam.³⁷ Very few Yakan are literate in

their written language or any language. Though Basilan Island is home to settlers from groups with high literacy rates, it has one of the lowest provincial averages in the Philippines. Only 69.4% of Basilians are literate, as opposed to a national average of 92.6%.³⁸ Moreover, schooling increases the likelihood of Yakan moving far from their native home.



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Yakan gathering

Ethnic Groups

Yakan

The Yakan are subsistence farmers who reside primarily in the mountainous interior region of Basilan Island where they cultivate rice and cassava. Although they comprise less than half of the island's total population, Yakan is the dominant tribal culture on Basilan. While known as fierce warriors, Yakan actions are dictated by a strong internal code of honor that specifies the circumstances under which a life should be taken. For example, a man should never be killed while bathing. Instead, he should be allowed to dry off and put on his clothes in order to die a dignified death fitting of a human being as opposed to an animal. By the same token, a man should never be killed while eating.

³⁶ Field Museum. Heaney, Lawrence. "The Causes and Effects of Deforestation." 2007.
http://www.fieldmuseum.org/Vanishing_Treasures/Deforestation_1.htm

³⁷ *The Yakan of Basilan Island: Another Unknown and Exotic Tribe of the Philippines*. Sherfan, Andrew. "Chapter 1: A General Background on Basilan Island [pp. 16–17]. 1976. Cebu City: Fotomatic.

³⁸ People's Republic of China Consulate, Cebu. "Brief Introduction to Basilan Province." 29 October 2008.
<http://cebu.china-consulate.org/eng/lqgk/t519987.htm>

Observing such protocol will also mitigate the killer's offense when he is judged by Allah who will recognize that while he is a killer, he allowed his victims to die decently.³⁹

Chavacano

The Chavacano-speaking community is not a tribe; rather, it is the second largest group on Basilan. They are the majority in the cities of Lamitan and Isabela.⁴⁰ Chavacano is the only form of Creole Spanish spoken in Asia. It is widely understood within the Philippines given that speakers migrated to different parts of the country under Spanish colonial rule. In 1635, the Spanish began building Fort Pilar in Zamboanga as a defense against Moro pirates. A Spanish military presence would also serve as the basis to expand Christianity by providing Catholic missionaries and Christian residents with greater security. Other groups such as the Visayans were brought in as laborers. To overcome communication difficulties, Chavacano became the common language. Non-Muslims, the Yakan consider the Chavacano to be *kapil* (non-believers). Yet they admire them for their education, wealth, and administrative capabilities although, as non-Muslims, they will not rise in the ARMM government.

Samal

The Yakan consider the Samal to be a fraternal tribe. Their languages are quite similar and both groups are practicing Muslims. Yet the Samal, in contrast to the Yakan, are among the most widely dispersed groups in Southeast Asia.⁴¹ Known as masters of the sea, the Samal are sea nomads. Historically many did not set foot on land except to collect kindling wood. The shallow reefs provide the aquatic resources they need to survive.⁴² Therefore they have little basis for conflict with the Yakan who are inland farmers. Yet the Samal are frequent victims of stronger groups, particularly the Tausug whose warrior prowess is legendary. Samal self-defense does not extend beyond temporary alliances between boat families at traditional mooring sites, making them easy targets for pirates. Nonetheless, few Samal find a settled existence on shore attractive, not only because they lack knowledge of farming but also because they have no land to farm.

Tausug

The Tausug, sometimes referred to as Jolono on Basilan, are also closely related to the Yakan. The Tausug regard themselves as the social elite within Muslim Mindanao because they migrated from Jolo Island, the seat of the powerful Sulu Sultanate, while Basilan Island was a mere tributary. Renowned for their ruthless warrior culture that



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Tausug women in a traditional dance

³⁹ *The Yakan of Basilan Island: Another Unknown and Exotic Tribe of the Philippines*. Sherfan, Andrew. "Chapter 5: Islam and Related Beliefs [pp. 154–155]." 1976. Cebu City: Fotomatic.

⁴⁰ United Architects of the Philippines. "Welcome To Zamboanga City." 2005. <http://www.united-architects.org/contents.php?id=43>

⁴¹ Every Culture. "Samal." 2008. <http://www.everyculture.com/East-Southeast-Asia/Samal-Orientation.html>

⁴² Google Books. *The Sulu Zone, 1768-1898*. Warren, James. "Chapter 4: The Internal Trade of the Sulu Zone [p. 68]. 1981. National University of Singapore Press. http://books.google.com/books?id=_UyVI5IxcjIC&pg=PA67&lpg=PA67&dq=samal+people+southeast+asia&source=bl&ots=lu1b-CdB-x&sig=UOjjDuoCk-xzADbbuGfGiM8QrEw&hl=en&ei=3etkSrrNK4-MsgO-iLXaDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5

enabled them to control the slave raiding trade in earlier times, the Yakan welcome the Tausug as long as they do not cause any trouble for the Yakan.

It is presumed that Tausug comprise the majority of ASG fighters—even on Basilan Island. In comparison to the Yakan, the Tausug have greater interaction with the outside world and are familiar with Hollywood cultural icons. Thus, for example, despite their contempt for western imperialism, Tausug fighters have adopted nicknames such as Rambo, a celluloid warrior unafraid to use force, nonetheless created by a culture they view as a threat to their way of life.⁴³

Visayan

The Visayans, who speak a collection of related languages including Cebuano and Illongo, are from the central Philippines. They left the crowded Visayan Islands, where natural resources were quickly depleted by cash-crop agriculture, for the promise of work in the South with its untapped natural resources.⁴⁴ Those in Basilan migrated from mainland Mindanao to take advantage of the economic opportunities afforded by the introduction of rubber and copra plantation agriculture under Spanish and American colonialism. Plantation agriculture had been introduced earlier in the Visayan Islands where the Visayans had already proved themselves to be good laborers. Although some have become landowners and prospered, as Christians they have never moved beyond a marginal social status in Basilan. For security reasons, they reside predominantly in Isabela and Lamitan, where Christians are the majority.



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Rubber tree farmer

⁴³ Google Books. *Voices of Terror: Manifestos, Writings and Manuals of Hamas, Al Qaeda and Other Terrorists from Around the World and Throughout the Ages*. Bale, Jeffrey. "Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines [p. 516]." Walter Laqueur, Ed. 2005. Sourcebooks, Inc.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=TSUaFYGOCC4C&pg=PA516&lpg=PA516&dq=tausug+asg+fighters&source=bl&ots=Wfi1VCpmpB&sig=ab_GWydUKRSek-](http://books.google.com/books?id=TSUaFYGOCC4C&pg=PA516&lpg=PA516&dq=tausug+asg+fighters&source=bl&ots=Wfi1VCpmpB&sig=ab_GWydUKRSek-DdQDORIpM83E&hl=en&ei=luBkSqnoPIyosgPSwZVn&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5)

⁴⁴ The Field Museum. Heaney, Lawrence R. "Negros Island: A Case Study in Deforestation." 2002.

http://www.fieldmuseum.org/Vanishing_Treasures/Deforestation_2.htm

Chapter 2 Religion

Introduction

The Yakan are primarily Muslim.⁴⁵ Islam was introduced to inhabitants of the southern Philippines in the 13th century by Arab traders and Muslim missionaries from Sumatra and other parts of Southeast Asia. Rather than displacing the local belief system, Islam was absorbed into it. It addressed the spiritual needs of the Yakan, whose daily life was regulated by taboos that, if not properly observed, threatened to become a source of trouble.⁴⁶



© Dr. A. Hugentobler
Mosque in the southern Philippines

Prior to the introduction of Islam, animism was perpetuated by oral tradition. Children were taught to avoid playing in places such as clumps of trees and caves where spirits bent on doing them harm were presumed to lurk. People learned about the spirit world in order to avoid crossing paths with troublesome spirits. Islam augmented the traditional belief system by providing a clearer picture of an invisible separate universe. The new religion made inroads because it was scripturally based, formal, and claimed universal application.

According to the Quran, Allah fashioned angels from light and then made *jinn* (spirits) from smokeless fire before creating man from clay. *Jinn* disappointed Allah by engaging in such conduct as ascending to the highest vaults of the sky to monitor the activities of angels.⁴⁷ Despite his displeasure, Allah did not destroy them. Like man, *jinn* were willed into existence to worship Allah. They were preserved to unite the seen (people) and unseen (*jinn*) to keep the cosmic forces of the earth aligned.⁴⁸

Religion and the State

While Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion in the Philippines, the constitution stipulates separation of church and state. In recognition of Islam's own legal code (*Shari'a*), the government allows judgment according to *Shari'a* law through the Code of

⁴⁵ There has been a limited amount of conversion to Christianity.

⁴⁶ Google Books. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Abinales, P.N. and Donna J. Amoroso. "Chapter 1: Introducing Philippine Politics [p. 12]." 2005. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. http://books.google.com/books?id=xiOQdEzgp9kC&pg=PA12&lpg=PA12&dq=muslim+folk+religion+philippines&source=bl&ots=PUyYxbkCOM&sig=LJG0VLE-1s3XfHtjG82fzagXZSc&hl=en&ei=pYI2SvyVIIfMM4a3kY0K&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3#PPA12,M1

⁴⁷ Economist. "Born of Fire: In Search of Jinn." 19 December 2006. http://www.economist.com/world/displaystory.cfm?story_id=8401289

⁴⁸ *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*. Dien, Mawil Izzi. "Chapter 6: Islamic Economic Justice and the Environment [p. 130]." 2000. Cambridge: James Clark and Company. http://books.google.com/books?id=AL5qbA9lytMC&pg=PA130&lpg=PA130&dq=jinn+islam+economist&source=bl&ots=B1qYzRvhBp&sig=Kr8XnI97WXTz4X7vciuhBooCLoE&hl=en&ei=r9Y3StmtJo3AsQOriJT-Bg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3

Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines.⁴⁹ The code, enacted in 1977, had a long gestation. In 1973, a task force was set up to consider the difficulties faced by the Moro people, a name bestowed on Philippine Muslims by the Spanish which was long derogatory but subsequently became a source of ethnic pride, as a religious and cultural minority. Part of its mandate was to find ways to make *Shari'a* civil code compatible with Philippine civil law in order to quell local tensions. Continuous Christian migration from the densely populated northern islands had led to rising Muslim fears of assimilation as they found themselves becoming a religious minority in Mindanao, their historic homeland.

The Muslim legal system relies on customary law (*adat*) along with *Shari'a* law, which is administered by the Yakan through an *Agama* court.⁵⁰ This court hears cases related to conflicts over land, divorce, and inheritance disputes. *Shari'a* law is only applicable in civil matters in the Philippines; its criminal code is not applicable.⁵¹

Islam

Muslims demonstrate their faith through five pillars. The first is the *shahada* (to bear witness that there is no God but Allah). *Shahada* is expressed by repeating the phrase “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet.”



The second pillar is prayer (*salat*), which occurs five times a day at appointed hours: dawn (*subuh*), noon (*luhul*), mid afternoon (*ashar*), sunset (*mangarib*), and mid evening (*eisa*).

Exchange 1: When do you pray?

Soldier:	When do you pray?	soomeeyan keh ew nambahayang?
Local:	We pray at noon.	nambahayang kamee letoo

⁴⁹ *Civil Law: Vol I. Persons and Family Relations*. Vitug, Jose C. 2003. Rex Book Store: Manila, Philippines.
http://books.google.com/books?id=rfiIrUV00bEC&dq=Code+of+Muslim+Personal+Laws+of+the+Philippines&source=gbs_navlinks_s

⁵⁰ According to a scholar, “The word *Agama* has come to be known as practice or system. Among the Muslims, it is synonymous with the word ‘ideology.’ *Agama* is a Sanskrit word for Religion. The reason for this is perhaps due to the general concept of law and policy among Muslims. The Muslims do not distinguish law as either secular or divine, canon or civil law.” Website on Muslim Mindanao for Journalists and Other Communicators. “The Philippine *Shari'a* Court System.” 2008.
http://www.muslimmindanao.ph/sharia_system.html

⁵¹ *Islam, Gender and Social Change*. Angeles, Vivienne. “Chapter 11: Philippine Muslim Women [p. 217].” Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L. Esposito, Eds. 1998. New York: Oxford University Press.
http://books.google.com/books?id=RkbZWrU4UfUC&pg=PA217&lpg=PA217&dq=Code+of+Muslim+Personal+Laws+of+the+Philippines&source=bl&ots=4k0Om7n8XV&sig=D4zsXxNmh2-Pny8tojVrCQC0Tqc&hl=en&ei=R3Y5St7hNIOqtgPVz_j9Bg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4#PPA217,M1

When praying, Muslims must face Mecca. Farmers may simply turn in that direction and cease their work to pray, only attending mosque (*langgal*) for Friday prayers when the homily (*khutba*) is given.

Some Yakan do not strictly observe the five prayer a day requirement. The Yakan have come under criticism from other Filipino Muslims for their lack of piety.⁵² For those who miss a prayer on an infrequent basis, they can make it up. If the morning prayer, conducted at daybreak is missed, it can be made up but only 15 minutes after sunrise since Muslims cannot pray while the sun is rising or setting. Additional optional prayers should not be offered until the sun has risen well above the horizon.⁵³ In the case of habitual non-prayer, other means such as additional alms must be adopted to “pay it back.”



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Quiapo Mosque, Manila

The third pillar is *zakat*, or tithing, which can be paid in rice. Yakan farmers have in some measure assimilated this practice with native rituals. For example, offerings are made to the indigenous harvest god at the time of planting and then a portion of the harvest is used to pay the *zakat*.⁵⁴ For those who are wealthier, it is a community norm to give additional voluntary alms (*sadakka*) to orphans and the needy.

The fourth pillar is fasting (*sawm*) during daylight hours for the month of Ramadan. Only the young and infirm are exempt. The fifth pillar is performing the *paghadjih*, or pilgrimage to Mecca, once in a lifetime for those who are physically and financially able to do so.

Religion in Daily Life

Islam rendered the Yakan sensitive to cosmic alignment in their daily lives. One’s personal orientation toward Mecca during *salat* (prayer), the positioning of a new home during construction, and even the placement of a coffin in the ground are taken very seriously. The Yakan also believe Islamic utterances and rituals offer protection from the unknown. Thus, Arabic words serve as a type of divine blessing (*barakah*) used to shield babies from danger as well as to prevent *jinn* from wreaking havoc on a family. Holy water⁵⁵ and amulets are believed to provide further protection.

⁵² Country Studies US. *Philippines: A Country Study*. “Muslim Filipinos.” Ronald E. Dolan, Ed. 1991. <http://countrystudies.us/philippines/38.htm>

⁵³ Learning Islam. “Five Daily Prayers.” No date. <http://www.learningislam.org/welcome/dailylife.html>

⁵⁴ *Culture and Customs of the Philippines*. Rodell, Paul. “Chapter 2: Thought and Religion [p. 44].” 2002. CT: Greenwood Publishing.

http://books.google.com/books?id=y1CVR74_KHQ&pg=PA44&lpg=PA44&dq=islam+spirit+world+philippines&source=bl&ots=kQQUECJV0R&sig=TiZ7it-313hVIIbAMWFu_Sx4CTA&hl=en&ei=l342SoCKFI6-M-Ob4PUJ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4#PPA44,M1

⁵⁵ Since Islam emerged in the harsh Arabian desert, Muslims consider all impurity-free water to be holy. Reading Islam. De Chatel, Francesca. “Drops of Faith: Water in Islam.” 28 November 2002.

http://www.readingislam.com/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1153698300083&pagename=Zone-English-Discover_Islam%2FDIELayout

Jinn can take on any physical form they like.⁵⁶ Thus, they can appear as animals, trees, and even humans, which enables them to take possession of a person. White *jinn* are considered benign and the effects may not be noticeable. By contrast, black *jinn* are to be feared. When someone exhibits signs of mental illness, it is taken as evidence of spiritual possession by *Iblis* (Satan), or the most feared black *jinn*. Possession by any black *jinn* may lead to death. The only cure is for an *imam* (spiritual leader) to exorcise the person. Seeking Western medical treatment is considered ineffective.⁵⁷



In one less serious case, an ethnographer interviewed a Yakan woman who believed she had received a wedding invitation from a *jinn*.⁵⁸ Regardless of the *jinn*'s initial motivation, responding in the wrong way could offend the *jinn* and cause it to seek revenge on her family. Thus, she sought expert counsel on how to respond.

Places of Worship

The mosque is the center of spiritual life for the Yakan.

Exchange 2: May I enter the mosque?

Soldier:	May I enter the mosque?	mekajaree beh koo peh ashek shee masjed?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

The most important member of the religious staff (*pakil*) is the *imam* who leads the daily prayers. A *khatibship* is an apprentice *imam* who can step in and fill the *imam*'s duties if necessary. The *bilal* keeps track of the daily prayer times (*watku*). They have achieved these positions by demonstrating a superior knowledge of Islam, most likely by enrolling in a *madras* (Islamic school), which offers courses in subjects such as *tawid* (oneness of God) and *fighi* (Islamic jurisprudence).

⁵⁶ *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*. Boddy, Janice. "Chapter 23: Spirits and Selves in Northern Sudan: The Cultural Therapeutics of Possession and Trance [p. 403]." Michael Lambek, Ed. 2002. New York: Wiley Blackwell.

http://books.google.com/books?id=S_jZRPPy2jcC&pg=PA403&lpg=PA403&dq=black+jinn+red+jinn+white+jinn&source=bl&ots=NPOgbJcO_H&sig=gAXW3yLjkS4rpJMC4Mrb5gEHCvQ&hl=en&ei=JUc5StiT A4KkswOapuHSBQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=7

⁵⁷ *Spirituality, Values and Mental Health: Jewels for the Journey*. Meah, Luftha. "Chapter 16: How the Muslim Community Can Work Together [p. 223]." Mary Ellen Coyte et. al., Eds. 2007. London: Jessica Kingsley.

http://books.google.com/books?id=7sTRfBd3ZYQC&pg=PA222&lpg=PA222&dq=jinn+spirits&source=bl&ots=UXP8Pkp7Cw&sig=KksNHjCsKbkBCSWruCYXM6IsIVg&hl=en&ei=gswSsasLZDwtAOwu9WzCA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4#PPA223,M1

⁵⁸ Columbia International University. Strong, Cynthia. "Deep Knowledge: Understanding a Popular Muslim Worldview." 2002. <http://www.ciu.edu/muslimstudies/Articles/Deep-Knowledge-Cynthia-Strong.doc>

Exchange 3: Must I take off my shoes inside the mosque?

Soldier:	Must I take off my shoes inside the mosque?	shoobey beh edooan koo sapatoos koo shee deyaleem masjid?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Mosques have separate prayer rooms for men and women. Shoes must be removed before entering the mosque. Unlike Islamic communities elsewhere, veiling (*hijab*) is optional for Yakan women in daily life. While most women veil inside the mosque, it is not required.

Exchange 4: Do I need to cover my head?

Soldier:	Do I need to cover my head?	shoobey beh koopeeyahan koo kok koo?
Local:	No.	gah ee



© Jo Anthony / Fotageo
Woman wearing a hijab

Worshippers must wash first and thereafter avoid touching a member of the opposite sex until the service has concluded. If they do, they must wash again before praying.

After the service, women, attired in *hijab*, may sit outside to collect spittle from men exiting the mosque. This owes to the belief it can cure the sick, having been empowered with *barakah* by male mouths that have just recited Quranic verses.

Religious Rite of Passage

The Quranic Graduation Ceremony (*Pagtammatt*) occurs as soon as a boy or girl can read thirty chapters (*juds*) of the Quran in Arabic. To achieve this level of proficiency normally takes one to two years of study under the tutelage of a *guru*.⁵⁹ The *guru* is usually an older woman whose students are both male and female.⁶⁰ When she declares the student able to meet this requirement, the parents prepare for a graduation ceremony. The ceremony has preparations similar to a wedding but on a smaller scale. Invitations are extended and the family begins to assemble food items such as rice and delicacies that will be offered to the teacher and the guests.

On the day of the event, the family provides a miniature cake house (*malingue*) featuring ornate decorations. It will be consumed later. The graduate, whose face has been painted and is dressed in nice clothing, sits on a pile of mattresses as the *guru* reads one to three chapters of the Quran. Afterwards, the child repeats the same verses while the guests listen and appraise the level of proficiency. An *imam* will then lead prayers asking Allah

⁵⁹ Mountain Research and Development. "Philippine Ethnic and Muslim Minorities: Educating Children the Traditional Way." February 2006. http://www.mrd-journal.org/pdf/Arquiza_MRED26_1_pp24-27.pdf

⁶⁰ *Gendered Spaces*. Spence, Daphne. "Chapter 2: The Mongolian Ger and Taureg Tent [p. 56]." 1992. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. http://books.google.com/books?id=k_yKffFmNsC&pg=PA53&lpg=PA53&dq=yakan+house+women&source=bl&ots=iHa5SjHWhY&sig=ltHr51JJ4HFwJ3ehlA4ApN8m33c&hl=en&ei=bho5SpKDN4T4sQOI7pT-Bg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=10#PPA56,M1

to bestow wisdom, guidance, and blessings on the celebrant as music is played in the background.

Fireworks (*quiltis*) mark the transition to celebration during which each *guru* involved in teaching the child is presented with a cash payment. The payment amount depends on the financial status of the graduate’s family. The expense is typically shared by the extended clan.⁶¹

Religious Holidays

Ramadan

Maintaining a fast during the daylight hours of this holy month is a requirement for Muslims. Only the young, old, sick, and pregnant are exempt. The lack of food and water may cause people to be irritable or fatigued. Business hours are erratic during Ramadan and private shops may be closed altogether. As is the case in any Muslim community, it is polite for non-Muslims to refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, or chewing gum in public during Ramadan. The fast is broken on the first day of the following lunar month with a lavish celebratory feast.

Exchange 5: Will you be celebrating Eid Fitri?

Soldier:	Will you be celebrating Eid Fitri?	kaaw be megpekaradjaan eedeel peetree?
Local:	Yes!	aweh!



Woman praying during Ramadan

The day that signals the end to Ramadan is formally known as Eid Fitri. It is referred to as *Hari Raya* (Grand Day) by Muslims in Southeast Asia. In the Philippines, it was traditionally observed by region but only became a national public holiday in 2002.⁶² People put on their best clothes and visit each other, as well as venture out to the nearest town for festivals and entertainment. It is also a time to give the poor a contribution (*pitlah*), which can take the form of a meal.

Muhammad’s Birthday

Maulid-al-nabi (Muhammad’s Birthday) is celebrated by Muslims in the third month of the lunar New Year. During this observance, congregants of each mosque select one evening for a celebration that will last through the night. During this celebration the *imam* will chant *jikil* prayers continuously.

⁶¹ Profiles of Philippine Cultural Communities. Ahadas, Roxas. “Yakan.” 2002. Manila: National Commission for Culture and Arts.

⁶² Q++ Studio. *Philippines*. “Public Holidays and Bank Holidays in the Philippines.” 2009. <http://www.qppstudio.net/publicholidays2009/philippines.htm>

Since artistic representations or likenesses of people and Allah are forbidden in Islam, special flowers are placed in the center of the mosque to symbolize the Prophet. When the *imam* reaches a certain point in the service, a member of the audience will stand up to hold a flower. Otherwise, attendees seem unconcerned about the significance of the prayers, leaving that to clerical expertise. The informality of the service stands in contrast to daily prayer. On this night worshippers pass the time by smoking and gossiping about mundane matters. Around midnight the service is interrupted by a communal feast to which each family has contributed a tray of food. Sharing with others constitutes a form of giving alms.



© Helen Tan
Mosque in Baguio City

Pursuant to a 1977 presidential decree, *Maulid-al-nabi* and several other Islamic commemorations became provincial holidays in places such as Basilan.⁶³ However, they are not national public holidays and therefore do not affect daily life outside the southern Philippines.

⁶³ Chan Robles Virtual Law Library. "Philippine Laws, Statutes and Codes: Book V, Title I – Muslim Holidays." 1998. <http://www.chanrobles.com/presidentialdecreeno1083.htm>

Chapter 3 Traditions

Introduction

The Yakan are farmers for whom both vocal and instrumental music is an important part of both the agricultural cycle and social interaction. Yakan instruments are made out of wood, bamboo, and metal.

The *gabbang* is one such instrument. It is made of bamboo sectioned into pieces of diminishing size and arranged like a xylophone. Around the fields, the farmers' children play the *gabbang* in order to guard the crops from encroaching animals.⁶⁴

Another instrument of the *gabbang* family, the *kwintangan kayu*, is like a xylophone hung vertically from a tree branch with bamboo slats that taper down to the shortest at its base. During planting season, an open platform is built high up in a tree where a musician will play as the rice crop matures. The sounds of the *kwintangan kayu* serenade the seedlings, just as a Yakan lover uses music to woo the object of his affections. "Its resonance is believed to gently caress the plants, rousing them from their deep sleep, encouraging them to grow and yield more fruit."⁶⁵



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Gabbang

There are several types of Yakan vocal music. *Lugu* are melodies that accompany oral readings of the Quran. *Kelangan* are one of several varieties of courting songs sung at gatherings by soloists and male and female groups who sing back and forth. The *katakata* is publicly sung Yakan oral history. Rooted in the animist tradition, the Yakan believe that such stories of their ancestry come from beings who originated in otherworldly realms.⁶⁶

Yakan women are renowned for their beautiful weaving, which is literally an intrinsic part of the social fabric. Vivid geometric designs embedded in brightly colored garments give the impression the item has been embroidered. Woven products figure prominently in rites and rituals. Particular items form part of a bride's trousseau and may cover a pregnant woman in labor to protect her child from evil spirits.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Tripod.com. "Yakan: Performing Arts." Ting, Gwendalene. 1999. http://litera1no4.tripod.com/yakan_frame.html

⁶⁵ National Commission for Culture and the Arts. de la Paz, Salvo. "National Living Treasure Awardees." 2008. http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca/org-awards/gamaba/uwang_ahadas.php

⁶⁶ Tripod.com. "Yakan: Performing Arts." Ting, Gwendalene. 1999. http://litera1no4.tripod.com/yakan_frame.html

⁶⁷ Filipinas Heritage Library. Essays: The Filipiniana Archives. Casal, Gabriel S. "Cherishing the Lifestyle." 2001. http://www.filipinaslibrary.org.ph/filipiniana/viewessay.asp?aid=59&art_id=59&pg=3



CLIFC Image
Young men

Honor and Values

Predominantly Muslim, the Yakan view the world (*dunya*) as comprised of believers and non-believers. Darul Islam and Darul Harb represent the world of adherents to Islam and that of the disbelievers (*kafir*) or infidels, respectively. This obligates Yakan, in theory, to engage in holy war (*jihad*) against non-believers.⁶⁸

Declaring war on non-believers, however, has been less a source of conflict than tit for tat revenge killings among the Yakan. This is how clan conflicts, known as *rido* in Tagalog and *kontara* in Yakan, traditionally escalate. A number of factors explain the high incidence of such conflicts.⁶⁹ Victims need to exact physical reparation for the damage inflicted on the family's honor.⁷⁰ Lone survivors may resort to what is known as *magsabil* in Yakan, killing anybody in their path and, in the process, exposing themselves to violent death.

Exchange 6: Did these people threaten you?

Soldier:	Did these people threaten you?	eeneen mengeh ke aahan beh menoognaan shee ka oo?
Local:	No.	gah ee

Harm done to one member of the community is considered an assault on the autonomy and safety of the group itself. Thus, males are socialized to protect and defend not only themselves and their own families, but the entire clan as a matter of reciprocal obligation. A Yakan man will put his own life on the line for a family member, no matter how distant a relative, so that when his life is in danger he can be assured the clan will rally to his defense.

Exchange 7: Are these people part of your family?

Soldier:	Are these people part of your family?	eeneen beh mengeh keaahan shakoop shee pameelya noo?
Local:	No.	gah ee

The lack of strong governmental authority reinforces reliance on the group to provide security for its members.⁷¹ In addition, a proliferation of firearms, including automatic weapons, does not allow for a cooling off period.

⁶⁸ For an extended discussion, see Center for Philippine Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa. Magdalena, Federico. "Islam and the Politics of Identity: Lessons from the Philippines and Southeast Asia." No date. <http://www.hawaii.edu/cps/identity.html>

⁶⁹ The Cavalier. Manalang, Wilfredo. "Retributive Justice Across Ethnic Tribes." November–December 2008. http://pmaaii.org/cavaliers/Nov_Dec08/Nov_Dec08.pdf

⁷⁰ Solidarity Philippines Australia Network. Duarte, Ofelia. "A Lesson on Clan Conflict Resolution in the Philippines." August 2005. <http://cpcabrisbane.org/Kasama/2005/V19n3/OfeliaDurante.htm>

⁷¹ Asia Foundation. Torres, Wilfredo Magno. "Rido: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management in Mindanao." 2007. <http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/PHridoexcerpt.pdf>

Exchange 8: Are you carrying any guns?

Soldier:	Are you carrying any guns?	ka oo beh megboh oh eeneh sheenapang?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Greetings

Since most Yakan are Muslims, they greet each other with the traditional Arabic phrase meaning “peace be with you.”⁷² It is used throughout the day since it is not time specific. While ritual handshaking is now a common introduction among Yakan who have had exposure to the outside world, men should not extend their hands to women. They should wait for men to introduce the female members of their family.

Exchange 9: Peace be with you.

Soldier:	Peace be with you.	asalaamo alaykoom
Local:	Peace be with you.	alaykoom osalaam

In addition, Yakan offer each other betel nut (*upa*). Acorn-shaped betel nuts come from the fruit of the Areca catechu palm tree that contains the stimulant arecoline. It is cut into parts, dipped in lime and wrapped in a betel piper vine leaf.⁷³



Chewers derive a caffeine-type buzz before spitting it out. Yakan believe the red juice produced by betel chew (*maginupaan*), in addition to staining teeth, scares away what are known in Tagalog as *aswang* (evil creatures and spirits). Hence the engrained habit of freely spitting in public places serves as a form of protection against the *aswang* as the chewer goes about daily life.⁷⁴

Exchange 10: How are you?

Soldier:	How are you?	kooeengee roo keh ew?
Local:	Fine, very well.	hap doo eesaab

Titles such as *imam* (spiritual leader) are awarded on the basis of merit and placed before a person’s name when addressing them or referring to them. When addressing a pious man one should say *tuwan* before his name.

Exchange 11: Hi, Mr. Kiram.

Soldier:	Hi, Mr. Kiram.	salaam bapah keeram
Local:	Hello!	salaam!
Soldier:	Are you doing well?	kaaw be hap doo eesaab?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

⁷² Dunwoody Press. “Panjadian 1” No date. <http://www.dunwoodypress.com/148/PDF/IntensiveTausug.pdf>

⁷³ Arts of Asia. Valdes, Cynthia Ongpin. “Betel Chewing in the Philippines.” October 2004. http://www.lasieexotique.com/mag_betel/mag_betel.html

⁷⁴ National Commission for Culture and the Arts. Magna, Rosa Maria. “Hidden in the Heart.” 14 May 2003. <http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/articles-on-c-n-a/article.php?i=56&subcat=13>

Dress Codes

The Yakan are modest dressers and visitors, particularly women, should ensure their bodies are covered. Although veiling (*hijab*) is optional for Muslim Yakan women, bare-arm blouses, short skirts or shorts are not to be worn in public, whatever the temperature. These standards apply for visitors as well.



Exchange 12: How should I dress?

Soldier:	How should I dress?	kooenge beng koo namoong?
Local:	Wear loose fitting clothes which cover your body.	noo loog meloowag badjoo eeyeh mekataboon shee eeneen baran noo

For men, the traditional attire includes a sash belt used to fasten black pants (*sawal ilaupán*). They wear a black shirt decorated with gold-plated or brass buttons. A multi-colored cloth turban (*pis*) serves as a head cover. Finally, a bamboo betel nut container (*lutuan*) is a functional accessory no Yakan male is without.

Exchange 13: Is this acceptable to wear?

Soldier:	Is this acceptable to wear?	eeneen beh teeneteeyma eenoosal?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Yakan women wear dresses covered by a wraparound outer garment that may be embroidered or woven, reflecting the Yakan skill in weaving. A head cover (*saputangan*) completes the outfit and a gold-plated tooth is worn for decorative purposes, particularly by older women.

Hospitality and Gift-Giving

An offer of betel chew is a form of Yakan hospitality. No household would be without areca nut, betel leaf, and lime to serve visitors, whoever they might be and regardless of whether they were expected or not. As a government website admonishes, “One may run out of rice or corn, but betel chew—never!”⁷⁵

Exchange 14: I really appreciate your hospitality.

Soldier:	I really appreciate your hospitality.	landoo teh ed akoo kooyag shee kehapan noo
Local:	It is nothing.	gah eh doo be eh saab

It is also common in the Philippines for guests to bring food and simply add it to the food prepared by the host. If the gift is neither edible nor decorative (flowers) the Yakan will initially resist. The giver should politely press them and they will eventually accept it. It will likely be put aside for opening later.

Exchange 15: This gift is for you.

⁷⁵ National Commission for Culture and the Arts. Magna, Rosa Maria. “Hidden in the Heart.” 14 May 2003. <http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/articles-on-c-n-a/article.php?i=56&subcat=13>

Soldier:	This gift is for you.	eeneen regalo para see kah oh
Local:	Why do you need to bring.	weh eh peh keh ew megboh oh



Food and Eating Habits

When an invitation for a meal is extended, the appropriate response is to decline by pointing out how much work it would involve for the host. The host will insist and the guest should then relent and expect to join the family, who squat and take food with their right hands. Utensils are not used. The group customarily says a prayer praising Allah before eating and women eat separately from men when company is present.

Exchange 16: This food is very good.

Soldier:	This food is very good.	eeneen keenakan hap teh ed
Local:	It's roasted.	eeneen deeyangdang

Poorer families eat diets with a greater percentage of cassava (a starchy staple), rice, vegetables, and fish. Meat is a rare treat. As Muslims, the Yakan do not consume pork.

Exchange 17: What ingredients are used to make fish soup?

Soldier:	What ingredients are used to make fish soup?	eeneh lamood peg heenang eeneen sabaw peeyalam?
Local:	Fish, water, tomatoes, garlic, onion, salt and curry.	kena, boheh, kamatees, bawang, seebolyoon, aseem dook karee

All dishes are placed on the table at the same time, rather than being served in successive courses. Guests should try to sample everything but chew quietly. The Yakan believe carelessness with food may cause it to “run away” because it has been disrespected.

Exchange 18: What is the name of this dish?

Soldier:	What is the name of this dish?	eeneh en keenakan eeneen?
Local:	This is <i>piyalam</i> .	eeneen peeyalam

It is polite to compliment the hostess for the food she has put much time and effort into preparing. But while others are still eating, it is considered impolite to get up and leave.

Exchange 19: The food tastes so good.

Soldier:	The food tastes so good.	eeyeh keenakan hap teh ed lesa neh
Local:	Thank you.	megsookool

Yakan do not eat food prepared by Christians. They suspect it contains pork, and that the appropriate prayer is not offered before the animal is slaughtered.

Social Events

Weddings

Traditionally children were viewed as ready for marriage when they reached puberty. Marriage between cousins is preferred by the Yakan because it simplifies inheritance issues. However, marriage between fourth cousins is taboo unless the groom's family is willing to pay an *ellet* fine to placate the spirit who, the Yakan believe, would otherwise cause trouble for the couple.⁷⁶

Today males typically convey a preference to their parents; they send an emissary to the other family to ascertain their interest. The marriage cannot take place if the father of the bride does not agree. If the two families agree, then they both prepare for the wedding. This includes negotiating the size of the dowry, which the groom's family pays to the bride's family. The groom's family also pays for all wedding expenses.

Exchange 20: Congratulations on your wedding!

Soldier:	Congratulations on your wedding!	landoo teh ed kooyag shee pegkawenan noo!
Local:	We are honored you could attend.	kamee eeneen landoo hadjeh beng keh ew mekasaboo

Before the wedding, which lasts three days, the bride is taken away by her relatives to an undisclosed location. The festivities start when the groom's family delivers food for the wedding party to the bride's home. Later, after the groom has been taken to a nearby home to be scrubbed clean, a small group is sent to fetch the bride. The groom then puts on his wedding attire—which may include having his face painted—and joins the bride in her home. This is the first time the couple comes together under the same roof; it is cause for celebrating into the night.

Exchange 21: I wish you both happiness.

Soldier:	I wish you both happiness.	baya koo shee kaam doowangan kekogan
Local:	We are honored.	kamee eeneen kehadjeehan

As in all ceremonies of importance, an *imam* officiates the wedding. He asks, “Are we going to solemnize this union?” three times before getting an answer. Each question he asks is repeated three times. Finally, he recites a prayer. After he finishes, the bride and groom, seated on a pillow that has been turned three times by the groom's family, are considered man and wife.⁷⁷ Firecrackers are lit and the music starts.

⁷⁶ Profiles of Philippine Cultural Communities. Ahadas, Roxas. “Yakan.” 2002. Manila: National Commission for Culture and Arts.

⁷⁷ The Yakans of Basilan Island: Another Unknown and Exotic Tribe of the Philippines. Sherfan, Andrew. “Chapter 3: Courtship and Marriage [pp. 72–79].” 1976. Cebu City: Fotomatic.

The celebration continues with food and dance. For the Yakan, the *kwintangan* (xylophone) is a woman's instrument while men play the *agung* (gong). A male and female band ensemble is recruited to play throughout the festivities in which members serenade each other. The ceremony culminates with a dance between the bride and groom signifying their union as man and wife.⁷⁸ The bride and groom spend the night together in the company of close family. A competition ensues as the entire party struggles to see who can remain awake the longest.



After the guests have gone home and the couple is alone, they bathe separately in order for their children to be born clean and remain clean throughout their lives. Before consummating the union, the bridegroom should stamp his right foot as hard as he can to demonstrate strength. The husband should touch his wife first with his right hand. His first kiss should be on her forehead with his eyes open so their children will not be born blind.⁷⁹

Funerals

Yakan believe there are three causes of death: 1) God's will; 2) illness; 3) murder. All are in Allah's hands. Death simply marks a transition to a different existence. If Yakan sense death approaching, there is a need to seek forgiveness from those whom they have offended in life. This belief is based on the assumption that Allah will not forgive them their sins until those they have offended in this life have done so.

Exchange 22: I would like to give my condolences to you and your family.

Soldier:	I would like to give my condolences to you and your family.	mabaayah koo ngooroong kemaapa an shee keyodjoolan noo dook eeneen pameelya noo
Local:	Thank you.	megsookool

A death is announced by ten strokes of a gong. A family member then closes the deceased's eyes and his mouth. His head is pointed toward Mecca and his arms crossed over the chest. His legs are straightened. If death occurs early in the day, the body will be washed from head to toe that day by a member of the same sex. If it falls in the evening, the ritual washing (*pagpeyhalah*) will occur the next day.

Exchange 23: Please be strong.

Soldier:	Please be strong.	boosoong boosoong soobey keh ew keseg
Local:	We will try.	soolaayan kamee

⁷⁸ UCLA Ethnomusicology Report, Archive Recording Reviews. "Philippine Dance Gathering and Workshops 2001." 2006.

<http://www.ethnomusic.ucla.edu/archive/ear/previous/EARvol6no3.htm#recording>

⁷⁹ Kasal.com. "Reading Room: Yakan Honeymoon Rituals." 1976.

<http://www.kasal.com/html/rr/fili/fili33.html>

The Yakan follow the Islamic protocol that stipulates burial within 24 hours of death (*pagkubul*). The grave must face Mecca. As the coffin is lowered into the ground, the spirit of the deceased begins to prepare for *ahirat* (judgment place) where the person's accumulated deeds in life will consign it to either heaven or hell. The *imam* reads a prayer that teaches the deceased what to say on the road to judgment.



The dead person's spirit is believed to remain in the family home for seven days. The deceased's next of kin dutifully says a prayer each evening (*pagpituan*) to emphasize the former's merits before he embarks on the next journey. After seven days, the spirit sets out on a journey that will last 100 days. The route is marked by specific landmarks. The family repeats a prayer each time they assume the spirit has passed another landmark. Part of the trip involves crossing a body of water. To assist the deceased in reaching the other side, the family slaughters a goat.

The largest and last ceremony (*pagtapusan*) occurs on the hundred day anniversary of the death when the spirit is believed to have reached its new home. A colorful boat-shaped marker (*langkapan*) is placed atop the deceased's grave. It is intended to provide transportation for the spirit in the afterlife.⁸⁰

Non-Religious Holidays

Lami-Lamihan Festival

Initiated in 1983 when Lamitan became a municipality and held annually on 14–15 April, this is not a traditional Yakan festival. Instead, *Lami-Lamihan*, which means “merry making,” is a public celebration of Yakan culture in which activities are organized for visitors.⁸¹ Yakan wear traditional attire to demonstrate different aspects of their way of life. In addition to the colorfully festive clothing and decorations, a regatta is held as well as horse racing. Together, the people celebrate with traditional music, dance, and craftwork.

Philippine National Day

This national holiday has been celebrated on different days. Filipino nationalists declared independence from Spain on 12 June 1898, but it was not recognized by either Madrid or Washington. The U.S. granted the Philippines independence on 4 July 1946; initially this was the public holiday. During the 1960s it reverted back to the original date. On this day in June, speeches are made commemorating Filipino history and fireworks shows are staged after dark.

⁸⁰ Every Culture. “Yakan Religion and Expressive Culture.” No date. <http://www.everyculture.com/East-Southeast-Asia/Yakan-Religion-and-Expressive-Culture.html>

⁸¹ Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University. “Lami-Lamihan Festival.” No date. http://www.seasite.niu.edu/Tagalog/Cynthia/festivals/kasiyahan_tuwing_buwan_ng_abril.htm

Do's and Don'ts

Do remove your shoes when entering a home if the owners are barefoot.

Do remove your shoes when entering a mosque.

Do show deference to the elderly.

Do get someone's attention by pointing your hand downward rather than pointing with your fingers.

Don't use your left hand to pass or receive anything. Muslims associate the left hand with bathroom activities.

Don't speak in a loud voice as if you are ordering people around.

Don't draw human or animal likenesses. These are offensive to Muslims since only Allah can create living creatures.

Don't use profanities. Many Yakan understand some English.



Chapter 4 Urban Life

Introduction

Yakan live in the mountainous interior of Basilan Island. Historically, Basilan was also inhabited by the Tausug and Samal tribes who continue to reside along the coastal areas. Present long before the arrival of Europeans, all three tribal groups are believed to be the earliest settlers in the southern Philippine island group—known collectively as Mindanao, which is by far the largest island in the group. Basilan's two most important cities, Isabela and Lamitan, were established by the Spanish as fort settlements to extend their colonization effort to the Muslim south. Most of the island's Christian minority lives in these two cities.



© Richard Parker
Tricycles in Surigao City

Basilan's urban population, particularly Christians, have recently been vulnerable to kidnapping by the Islamic terrorist group, Abu Sayyaf. Ransoms from this increasingly common practice serve as a source of revenue.⁸² Moreover, the threat to foreigners has had a devastating effect on the local economy, since most visitors bypass the island because of concerns about their safety.⁸³ Tourism should be an important source of commerce and job creation. Yet it is negligible on Basilan, and will develop only when visitor safety can be assured. The obstacle was summed up by a Philippine government official trying to promote tourism: "How can there be progress if there is no law and order? Why will tourists go to Mindanao when it is not safe to go there? And how will peace come to Mindanao if there is no progress? It's a vicious cycle."⁸⁴

Health Care

Abu Sayyaf has targeted hospitals on Basilan Island. This has affected delivery of services in an effort to make islanders lose confidence in their government.⁸⁵

⁸² Philippine Daily Inquirer. Alipala, Julia. "Girl, 4, Abducted, Released in Basilan." 31 December 2008. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/regions/view/20081231-180729/Girl-4-abducted-released-in-Basilan>

⁸³ *Tourism and Development in Tropical Islands: Political Ecology Perspectives*. White, Alan and Rina Rosales. "Chapter 10: Community Oriented Marine Tourism in the Philippines: Role in Economic Development and Conservation [p. 239]." Stefan Gossling, Ed. 2003. Vermont: Edward Elgar Publishing. http://books.google.com/books?id=8OjrFT-XSNAC&pg=PA239&lpg=PA239&dq=basilan+island+tourism&source=bl&ots=GJjY5j4eAk&sig=p3MBxStkOQdlkAUNE9zm4y6pkus&hl=en&ei=vLyVSra1JpL-sgPC-ImBBA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6#v=onepage&q=basilan%20island%20tourism&f=false

⁸⁴ Inquirer.net. Cruz, Neal. "Tourism is Key to Mindanao Progress and Peace." 14 July 2009. <http://opinion.inquirer.net/inquireropinion/columns/view/20090714-215491/Tourism-is-key-to-Mindanao-progress-and-peace>

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, Armed Forces Press Service. Garamone, Jim. "Basilan: Before. After. After That?" 4 June 2002. <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=43788>

Exchange 24: Is there a hospital nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a hospital nearby?	eeneen neeyah beh hospeetal tapeet too oo?
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	aweh, shee tengngaane eeneen kawman

Moreover, health care in the Philippines is underfunded. This has caused a brain drain of medical professionals, both doctors and nurses whose fluency in English, the language of education, makes it easier to seek work overseas.⁸⁶



U.S. Navy Photo
Healthcare in Isabella

Exchange 25: Is Dr. Ahmad in, sir?

Soldier:	Is Dr. Ahmad in, sir?	eeneen shee doktol ahmad beh paasek bapah?
Local:	No.	gah

As a result, many residents do not receive regular primary care and possess limited self-diagnostic knowledge.

Exchange 26: Do you know what is wrong?

Soldier:	Do you know what is wrong?	ketawohan noo beh beng eeneh salah neh?
Local:	No.	gah ee

Transportation

Basilan Island is accessible by boat and air. While the city of Isabela on Basilan is only 8 km (5 mi) from Zamboanga city on Mindanao Island, strong currents have made boat passage slow and historically served to limit contact between the peoples on the two islands. Government services to the island are meager. As a result, Basilan is dependent on the army to maintain its infrastructure.⁸⁷ Abu Sayyaf, in turn, has repeatedly targeted infrastructure as a means to isolate the island from the rest of the country.⁸⁸

Exchange 27: Which road leads to the airport?

Soldier:	Which road leads to the airport?	eengeh eeneen laan eeyeh pejoodjat shee landeeng?
Local:	The road heading east.	eeyeh laan pejoodjat shee sheelangan

⁸⁶ Voice of America News. Bayron, Heda. "Philippine Medical Brain Drain Leaves Public Health System in Crisis." 3 May 2006. <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2006-05/2006-05-03-voa38.cfm>

⁸⁷ Philippine Solidarity Network of Aotearoa. O'Connor, Mary Ellen. "A Kiwi in the War Zone: International Women's Peace And Solidarity Mission To Basilan And Mindanao." August 2007. <http://www.converge.org.nz/psna/Kapatiran/KapNo29n30/Kapart29n30/art132.htm>

⁸⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, Armed Forces Press Service. Garamone, Jim. "Basilan: Before. After. After That?" 4 June 2002. <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=43788>

There is no rail line on Basilan. The first phase of a long-contemplated train line on neighboring Mindanao is scheduled to commence in 2009.⁸⁹

Exchange 28: Is there a train station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a train station nearby?	neeya beh eeneen teren estasheeyoon lapeet too oo?
Local:	None.	gah

Island residents lacking motorbikes can use the bus network, but service has suffered disruption during periods of violence.⁹⁰

Exchange 29: Will the bus be here soon?

Soldier:	Will the bus be here soon?	eeneen booshlayen beh teeyah peshongshong?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Car rentals require the renter to employ the services of a driver as well.

Exchange 30: Where can I rent a car?

Soldier:	Where can I rent a car?	eengeh koo mekee arkeela karoo?
Local:	Downtown.	see sooweedad

Gas is easily available for purchase in cities on Basilan Island, though not elsewhere on the island.

Exchange 31: Is there a gas station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a gas station nearby?	neeyah beh eeneen gasoleenahan tapeet too oo?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Car repair services are also available, but it's advisable to bring basic tools with you.

Exchange 32: Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?	neeyah beh hap awtoo meekaneekoo tapeet too oo?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

⁸⁹ Progress Watch. "\$800 Million Mindanao Railways to Start Before 2010." 18 July 2009. <http://cagayandeorodev.wordpress.com/2009/07/18/800-million-mindanao-railways-to-start-before-2010/>

⁹⁰ *New York Times*. Crampton, Thomas. "U.S. Aids Fragile Peace in Southern Philippines." 27 February 2003. http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/27/news/27iht-phil_ed3__4.html

Alternatively, cabs are available for hire.

Exchange 33: Where can I get a cab?

Soldier:	Where can I get a cab?	eengeh koo mekee eedoo taksee?
Local:	Over there.	beenla ee



Most drivers would be concerned about entering areas they feel are unsafe, which would probably preclude any trip outside the city proper. Carrying foreign passengers makes the vehicle a more attractive target for kidnappers.

Exchange 34: Can you take me there?

Soldier:	Can you take me there?	mekajaree boh oh noo koo pee eh?
Local:	Yes, I can.	aweh, mekajaree koh

Telecommunications

Cellular phone networks now provide coverage to most parts of the Philippines. City dwellers on Basilan Island are heavily reliant on their cell phones, regardless of whether they are students, self-employed merchants, or work for the government.

Exchange 35: May I use your phone?

Soldier:	May I use your phone?	mekajaree beh koo ngoosal telepono?
Local:	Sure.	aweh

Text message scams, particularly those involving loans are common in the Philippines, where most people lack access to credit.⁹¹

Exchange 36: What is your telephone number?

Soldier:	What is your telephone number?	eeneh eeneen teleponoo oombool noon?
Local:	My phone number is 556-7689.	oombool teleponoo koo eeneen leemeh, leemeh, enem, peetoo, enem, waloo, shee um

⁹¹ Arab News. Jacinto, Al. "Cell Phone Loan Scam Lures Many in Mindanao." 23 May 2006. <http://www.arabnews.com/?page=4§ion=0&article=82602&d=23&m=5&y=2006>

Restaurants and Dining

Lunch and dinner are large meals which may consist of many courses that are served together. Breakfast is a lighter meal, traditionally consisting of rice and fish. Fried eggs are usually served in restaurants as well.

Exchange 37: Are you still serving breakfast?

Soldier:	Are you still serving breakfast?	kah oo eeneen megpekakakan pee eenoomeen?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Coffee and tea, hot or iced, are widely available in the Philippines where both are locally grown. Civet coffee is a delicacy. It is made from beans eaten by a civet cat which are then fermented in digestion before being collected for roasting. Since only small batches are available, it's one of the world's most expensive coffees.⁹²

Exchange 38: I would like coffee or tea.

Soldier:	I would like coffee or tea.	mabayah koo kahawa atawa tee
Local:	Sure.	alhamdooleela

Hot chocolate is also a popular beverage along with water. When ordering water, make sure it comes out of a sealed bottle and not the tap.

Exchange 39: May I have a glass of water?

Soldier:	May I have a glass of water?	mekajaree ngamoo dabashoo boheh?
Local:	Yes, right away.	aweh, megtaoos

Sinigang is a well known hot and sour soup available from street vendors who may serve it as a quick meal or snack.



© eutan@skr.com
Sinigang soup

Exchange 40: I'd like some hot soup.

Soldier:	I'd like some hot soup.	mabaayah koo mengeh shabaw panash
Local:	Sure.	alhamdooleela

⁹² BBC News. Toms, Sarah. "The Philippines Taste for Civet Coffee." 11 April 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4896230.stm>

As Muslims, the Yakan do not eat pork. Meat, usually chicken, is mixed with taro or served with curry.

Exchange 41: What type of meat is this?

Soldier:	What type of meat is this?	eeneh kahantang sheenoombalee eeneen?
Local:	Chicken.	manook

Filipino cuisine is known for sweet, rich desserts. On Basilan Island, many desserts are made from coconut milk and fresh fruit served as a tapioca pudding.

Exchange 42: Do you have a dessert?

Soldier:	Do you have a dessert?	neeyah beh keh ew keenakan leemoo?
Local:	Yes, we have <i>panyam</i> .	aweh, neeyah keeteh panyam

When asking for the bill, make the request verbally rather than using your hands to signal someone across the room.



© Neal D. Johnson
Waitress at a restaurant

Exchange 43: Can I have my total bill, please?

Soldier:	Can I have my total bill, please?	mekajaree edoo koo leestahan kemon bayaran koo boosoong boosoong?
Local:	Yes, of course.	aweh, sebenal

There is no tradition of “no-host dinners” in the Philippines. The person who organized the dinner typically pays for the entire party.

Exchange 44: Put this all in one bill.

Soldier:	Put this all in one bill.	pebetaroon eeneen shee demboowah baayad.
Local:	Okay.	aweh

Upscale restaurants should have onsite restroom facilities.

Exchange 45: Where is your restroom?

Soldier:	Where is your restroom?	eengeh eeneen keseleeyas noon?
Local:	That room to your left, over there.	eeyeh beelek shee lawa noo beenlah ee

Shopping

Most Yakan buy goods in open air markets. They are usually open on a daily basis, since most residents lack refrigeration and therefore must buy food every day.

Exchange 46: Is the market nearby?

Soldier:	Is the market nearby?	eeneen tabooh beh tapeet too oo?
Local:	Yes, over there on the right.	aweh, beenlah ee eeyeh shee too oo

While most markets stock daily use items, there are crafted items of interest to visitors as well as cultured pearls.

Exchange 47: Do you sell hats?

Soldier:	Do you sell hats?	kah oo beh megdagang sarook?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Prices are not marked on store items; bargaining is the norm. Only engage the seller in protracted negotiations if you genuinely wish to buy the item.

Exchange 48: Can I buy a knife with this much money?

Soldier:	Can I buy a knife with this much money?	mekabeelee bahah koo lahoot dook see eeneen halgah seen?
Local:	No.	gah ee

Carry small bills; merchants may not be able to change large denominations because of the large amount of counterfeit currency in circulation.

Exchange 49: Can you give me change for this?

Soldier:	Can you give me change for this?	mekajaree beh koo oroongan noo sambee shee eeneen?
Local:	No.	gah ee

Nor will vendors likely accept U.S. dollars for the same reason.

Exchange 50: Do you accept U.S. currency?

Soldier:	Do you accept U.S. currency?	kaaw beh nabook sheen meeleeekan?
Local:	No, we only accept pesos.	gah ee kamee nabook soobey hadjeh seen pesos

Few store-bought items will be mass produced goods, so supplies will be limited. If the merchant senses more interest than stock on hand, the price will go up.

Exchange 51: Do you have any more of these?

Soldier:	Do you have any more of these?	neeyah peh beh keh ew meeshan eeneh eeyeh eeneen?
Local:	No.	gah

Peddlers may be eager to make a sale to a foreigner, who will likely pay more for an item than a local.

Exchange 52: Please, buy something from me.

Local:	Please, buy something from me.	boosoong boosoong beleeheen meeshan eeneh amban akoo
Soldier:	Sorry, I have no money left.	megtabeeyah gah neeyah sheen kapeen

If you are not a serious shopper, do not offer false hope by continuing to look over the goods. If you do want to buy, the seller will usually accommodate a request to examine the merchandise.



© Richard Parker
Fish market in Mindanao

Exchange 53: May I examine this close up?

Soldier:	May I examine this close up?	mekajaree beh payaman koo eeneen tapeet?
Local:	Sure.	alhamdooleela

Merchants usually keep long hours, providing a window of opportunity in case shoppers change their minds.

Exchange 54: How much longer will you be here?

Soldier:	How much longer will you be here?	mengah peeyeh ketahah pekeh ew petenah too oo?
Local:	Three more hours.	teloo oras peh

Beggars

Beggars tend to seek out locations where people congregate, such as transportation hubs and markets. On Basilan, they may be displaced by violence or be disabled; therefore, they are unable to earn a living.

Exchange 55: Give me money

Local:	Give me money	oroonganoo koo sheen
Soldier:	I don't have any.	gah neeyah shee akoo

Whether or not to give is a personal decision. While hand-outs may help an indigent person survive, they may also encourage families to send their children out to beg, rather than to attend school.

Chapter 5 Rural Life

Introduction

The Yakan are subsistence farmers. They cultivate rice and then plant cassava in the same field after the rice has been harvested. Copra, or dried coconut meat, is their cash crop; marketed through middlemen, it is the primary source of income for the Yakan.

Exchange 56: Where do you work, sir?

Soldier:	Where do you work, sir?	eengeh keh ew megheenang bapah?
Local:	I am a farmer, sir.	akoo eeneen megoo ooma bapah

While women are responsible for maintaining the home and men engage in plowing, both sexes tend the family farm plots once the crops are planted. Yakan do not adhere to the Muslim practice of female seclusion (*purdah*), which limits the amount of work women can do outside the home.⁹³

Exchange 57: Are you the only person in your family who has a job?

Soldier:	Are you the only person in your family who has a job?	ka oo hadjeh beh shee pameelya eeyeh neeyah heenang?
Local:	No.	dooma een

Rural Communities

Yakan settlements are dispersed and homes are clustered near the rice fields. It can be difficult for non-residents to determine where one settlement ends and another one begins.



© Jesse Gardner
Village in the southern Philippines

Exchange 58: Do you know this area very well?

Soldier:	Do you know this area very well?	ketawohan noo beh loogal eeneen hap teh ed?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

When a Yakan passes through another settlement he shouts out “*Palebeyku!*” (“We are passing by!”). This alerts residents that the passer-by is an unarmed friend who poses no threat to them.

Built with an open floor plan, Yakan homes are elevated on stilts of approximately 2–3 m (6–9 ft) in height to avoid rainy season floods. The Yakan have few domestic animals; their livestock may include a few cows, water buffalo, goats, and chickens, stabled underneath the home which is on stilts. Crooked wood is never selected for building materials, because the Yakan believe it resembles a dead corpse. Wood covered in vines

⁹³ Kings College. *Women’s History Resource Site*. “Purdah.” Arnett, Susan P. 1998. http://departments.kings.edu/womens_history/purdah.html

is also avoided, because the vines are suggestive of snakes climbing into the home. Finally, the number of stair steps leading up to a house must be odd, because odd numbers are associated with life; even numbers signify death.

Exchange 59: How many people live in this house?

Soldier:	How many people live in this house?	peeyeh keh aahan petenah shee loomah eeneen?
Local:	Seven.	peetoo

Crop Farming

Yakan believe that each day of the week affects some aspect of farm work and the overall agricultural cycle. Mondays (*Isnin*) are good for planting trees; laborers eat sugar to ensure the fruit will be sweet. Tuesdays (*Salasa*) are associated with air and wind; thus, tasks requiring one to move quickly are performed on that day. Thursdays (*Hamis*) are deemed best for water-related activities like crop irrigation.



Conversely, Yakan feel it is wise to avoid significant farming activities on Wednesdays (*Alabaa*), which are associated with stone, and on Fridays (*Jumaa*), which are thought to increase the risk of fire. On Saturdays (*Sabtu*), the soil is considered so firm as to make farming impractical.

While the Yakan eat more cassava (*kamunti kayo*)—a root crop—than rice (*palay*), they grow the latter with far greater care. The first seed is planted at the center of the field by an *imam*, who asks Allah to protect the rice crop as it matures.

The Yakan believe that rice seedlings mimic the social organization of the human world. The first *palay* head has the equivalent status of sultan of the field. As such, he is spoken to in reverential terms so that he will call on others to ripen and ensure a bountiful harvest.

Another ceremony is held seeking permission to harvest from the *palay* sultan. Ripening rice heads are tied together to prevent the rice from “running away,” and the harvest is carried out in silence as a form of respect. The crop is carried in baskets atop the harvesters’ heads, who then place it on the floor of their homes. No one is allowed to walk over the baskets or to sit on the containers. Spilled grains are carefully collected and the current year’s harvest is kept separate from the remnants of the previous one. The Yakan believe the new grains will look upon the old grains as ghosts, and never again enter the home in abundance if they are indiscriminately stored together.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ *The Yakans of Basilan Island: Another Unknown and Exotic Tribe of the Philippines*. Sherfan, Andrew. “Chapter 3: Courtship and Marriage [pp. 72–79].” 1976. Cebu City: Fotomatic.

Coconut Cultivation

Coconut cultivation, introduced by a Tagalog named Pedro Cuevas who became an honorary Yakan, is a major industry on Basilan Island. While rice is only harvested once a year, coconuts ripen in 2–3 months. Before the first coconut harvest of the year, an *imam* will perform a thanksgiving ceremony (*magduaa*). Afterward, the community enjoys a feast.



© Zack Lee
Fresh coconuts

The lowest coconuts on a tree ripen first—evident by the dark husks; located higher, the unripe coconuts are still green. At harvesting time, the dark coconuts are cut down and shaken. The sound of the liquid inside enables the cultivators to determine if it is ripe enough to make copra. However, unripened nuts (*beteng*) are edible and the juice is tasty for consumption.⁹⁵

The harvest is usually sold to the same middleman every year. If they need money to tide themselves over until harvest, the Yakan borrow from a money lender (*suki*). Since interest rates are high—over 100%—the Yakan farmers are typically in debt. However, it does not affect the Yakan’s sense of personal security, since they own land, which guarantees a subsistence baseline.

Exchange 60: Do you own this land?

Soldier:	Do you own this land?	ka oo beh tegdapoo eenen tanah?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Hunting

The Yakan construct relatively sophisticated traps to catch wild game.⁹⁶ One type of trap, (*niyas*), uses a trained decoy rooster whose crowing attracts wild roosters defending their turf. The decoy is leashed in the center of a square made of rattan loops, which form the perimeter and are suspended vertically at game height. As the wild bird runs toward the “intruder,” it becomes entangled in the collapsing noose—effectively trapping it.

Another type of trap (*leppas*) relies on a pressure-sensitive mechanism that is placed on the ground to catch birds. As soon as a bird steps on it, a piece of wood is released; it pulls a set of strings taut around the body of the prey, preventing it from flying away.



© Titam Copyright.com
Fishermen in Cebu

⁹⁵ Studies in Philippine Linguistics. Behrens, Dietlinde. “Coconut Cultivation Among the Yakan.” 1977. http://www.sil.org/asia/Philippines/sipl/SIPL_1-2_063-072.pdf

⁹⁶ *The Yakans of Basilan Island: Another Unknown and Exotic Tribe of the Philippines*. Sherfan, Andrew. “Chapter 4: Property Ownership, Agriculture and Food Gathering [pp.104–105].” 1976. Cebu City: Fotomatic.

The simplest type is a conical-shaped bamboo trap (*bubu*) used to catch freshwater fish in rivers. One end is only big enough for a human hand. The fisherman puts it into the water and waits until a fish swims in and becomes trapped, enabling it to be easily extracted.

Education

As recently as the mid 20th century, Yakan children were not formally educated. The extent of their studies involved learning to read the Quran.⁹⁷



Primary education in the Philippines does not require families to pay tuition. Yet parents must cover incidentals such as school maintenance and teaching supplies and, moreover, forego the child’s labor. For poor farmers this may seem a dubious investment.⁹⁸

Exchange 61: Is there a school nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a school nearby?	neeyah beh eeshkoowela tapeet too oo?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

In the past, some Muslims viewed public education as a means to assimilate their children into the dominant Christian culture given the Catholic Church has set up schools for children to convert the population. For the upwardly mobile, however, public education was a way to master English, the medium of instruction. *Madrassah* schools provide instruction in Arabic. In the wake of 9/11, there was an acknowledgment in the Philippines of the need to introduce Islam in government schools in order to attract Muslim students and undercut the appeal of a *Madrassah* education.⁹⁹

Health Care in Rural Areas

The Yakan have developed remedies that rely on plants they have collected locally and used as medicines. For example, the Yakan remedy for ear abscesses, prevalent among infants, is juice extracted from a *puhung* (wild tree) poured into the infected ear. Some plants are not recommended as treatment; children are advised not to eat banana leaves, which are believed to cause tooth decay.

Heart attacks are believed to be caused by evil spirits (*jinn*) who have permission from Allah to strike. Many Yakan feel that, in general, spirits cause most illnesses. Therefore, they are inclined to seek either exorcism in serious cases, or folk healer remedies rather than Western medical treatment.

⁹⁷ *Encyclopedia of World Cultures*. Vol. 5: East and Southeast Asia. Human Relations Area Files. “Yakan.” 1993. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale. <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/History>

⁹⁸ Bikoy.net. Palitino, Raymond. “The Tragedy of Philippine Education.” 2 June 2009. <http://www.bikoy.net/archives/2009/06/02/the-tragedy-of-philippine-education/>

⁹⁹ Reuters. “Catholic Philippines teaches Islam in state schools.” 21 March 2007. <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSMAN56365>

Exchange 62: Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	eeneen neeyah beh pegamootan tapeet too oo?
Local:	Yes, over there.	aweh, meen na an

At the village level, the underfunded national health care system—which has led to a lack of physicians in the area—emphasizes preventive care. The goal of national health care is to increase awareness of basic hygiene in the villages. In-patient treatment is only available in urban areas; this forces farmers who need care to travel far from their homes. This has proven too difficult for many: the proportion of Filipinos dying before they receive medical attention has risen to 70%.¹⁰⁰



DCID Image
Waiting in line at a clinic

Exchange 63: My arm is broken, can you help me?

Soldier:	My arm is broken, can you help me?	booktoon koo eeneen poh ong, mekajaree beh koo tabang noo?
Local:	Yes, I can help you.	aweh, kah oh tetabang koo

Rural Leadership

Village leaders are elected in the Philippines. In Basilan they preside over their communities in close consultation with an *imam* and the Muslim administrative hierarchy, headed by a Sultan, a Vice-Sultan (*Ladjamura*), and *Datu* (Tribal Chief).

Exchange 64: Does your leader live here?

Soldier:	Does your leader live here?	eeneen nakooraah noo beh patenah too oo?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

If the dispute is a civil matter, the village head refers it to the Agama Court, which has many local branches.

Exchange 65: Can you take me to your leader?

Soldier:	Can you take me to your leader?	mekajaree beh koo boh oh noo shee nakooraah noo?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

If it is a criminal matter involving bodily harm over which the Agama Court has no jurisdiction, the village head mediates the dispute himself in an effort to prevent escalation.

¹⁰⁰ *Washington Post*. Harden, Blaine. "In Rural Philippines, A Dearth of Doctors." 20 September 2008. <http://icedragon64.wordpress.com/2008/09/20/in-rural-philippines-a-dearth-of-doctors/>

Exchange 66: Respected leader, we need your help / advice / opinion.

Soldier:	Respected leader, we need your help / advice / opinion.	ampoon ampoon nakooraah soobey kamee ngamoo tabang / peetoowa / toogeeba
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Transportation and Lodging

The road network is rudimentary in most of Basilan and may be accessible only by motorbike in many places.

Exchange 67: Is there lodging nearby?

Soldier:	Is there lodging nearby?	eeneen neeyah beh petoolee an tapeet too oo?
Local:	Yes.	aweh



There are no government prohibitions against private hotels; residents living near sites of interest to visitors may invite travelers into their homes as a source of revenue. The threat of kidnapping by the terrorist group, Abu Sayyaf, however, is a deterrent to the development of a tourist industry in Basilan.

Landmines

Terrorists have used landmines to blow up military vehicles on neighboring Jolo Island where roads are swept regularly by mine detection machines.

Exchange 68: Is this area mined?

Soldier:	Is this area mined?	eeneen loogal beh see akoo?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Abu Sayyaf has planted landmines as a perimeter defense around their camps in Basilan.¹⁰¹ Freshly dug soil or mounds along roads and property lines are a strong indication that mines may have been laid.

¹⁰¹ Google Books. Landmine Monitor Report. "International Campaign to Ban Landmines [p. 428]." New York: Human Rights Watch. http://books.google.com/books?id=3C4qXoCq7nkC&pg=PA428&lpg=PA428&dq=basilan+landmines&source=bl&ots=XNXAwYItsA&sig=oBoYetmeurOeVKQfph2siok72uE&hl=en&ei=gJVKSoa-M4eOMaDB4LAC&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5

Checkpoints

Checkpoints are part of the transportation landscape in the southern Philippines. Drivers expect to see officials and their vehicles parked at check points.



Exchange 69: Is this all the ID you have?

Soldier:	Is this all the ID you have?	eeneen doo beh kesoolatan neeyah keh ew?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Although there is a national ID, they are not always issued to residents of remote communities.

Exchange 70: Please get out of the car.

Soldier:	Please get out of the car.	boosoong boosoong peloowas keh ew shee karoo
Local:	OK.	aweh

Nonetheless, they will likely be familiar with the checkpoint protocol. This includes having vehicle documentation to present to officials.

Exchange 71: Show us the car registration.

Soldier:	Show us the car registration.	pekeetehoon shee kamee eeyeh keshoolatan karoo noo
Local:	OK.	aweh

Chapter 6 Family Life

Introduction

The Yakan family is typically a two-generation household that may live next to non-kin neighbors in a small settlement. Usually only the immediate nuclear family, consisting of husband, wife and any unmarried children will reside together. When an elder parent or sibling is single in later adult years, they may be part of the household as well.¹⁰²



In contrast to more observant Islamic societies, Yakan homes are not divided into male and female spheres. Nor are responsibilities rigidly defined by gender. While men plow and hunt, woman can help out in the fields in addition to their household responsibilities.

Exchange 72: Does your family live here?

Soldier:	Does your family live here?	eeneen pemeelya noo beh petenah too oo?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Quarreling as a means to resolve family disagreements is discouraged. The Yakan believe inharmonious homes will incur the wrath of the spirit world (*jinn*) world or even Allah himself.

Status of the Elderly

Yakan treat the elderly with deep respect. The oldest male present in any social gathering is extended the right to direct guests, who await cues on when to enter the house, start eating, etc. Because of the Yakan's sense of bilateral descent, both spouses' immediate kin are accorded due consideration in the larger family structure.¹⁰³

Exchange 73: Is this your entire family?

Soldier:	Is this your entire family?	eeneen beh eeyeh kemon pameelya noon?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Children are taught to mimic the behavior of their elders. Paternal relatives who are senior members of the family are treated with great reverence. Maternal relatives, outside the mother's nuclear family, by contrast, are simply accorded the same respect due any elderly person. They are not considered family.

¹⁰² World Culture Encyclopedia. *East/Southeast Asia*. "Yakan: Marriage and Family." 2008. <http://www.everyculture.com/East-Southeast-Asia/Yakan-Marriage-and-Family.html>

¹⁰³ World Culture Encyclopedia. *East/Southeast Asia*. "Yakan: Marriage and Family." 2008. <http://www.everyculture.com/East-Southeast-Asia/Yakan-Marriage-and-Family.html>

Status of Women

The status of Yakan women is relatively high for a Muslim culture. Women are not secluded (*purdah*) and have a large degree of freedom of movement in daily life. Moreover, they serve as the teachers (*guru*) of children studying the Quran.¹⁰⁴ Yet, giving birth to children remains their paramount responsibility.



© Richard Parker
Elderly women on Mindanao Island

When a Yakan woman is expecting, her husband struggles to satisfy her every desire so their child will be born healthy. Pregnant women are never taunted by the community for their changing appearance, and pregnancy is the time when a woman enjoys the highest social status.

Exchange 74: Is this your wife?

Soldier:	Is this your wife?	eeneen beh anda noon?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

The wife is responsible for family finances. While she does not make major purchases without input from her husband, she controls the purse strings. In the event a man has more than one wife, subsequent wives come to the first wife to request money when they need to buy something for their children.

Marriage

Islam grants a man the right to have four wives. However, this is relatively rare among the Yakan. One reason may be that the man is required to get the permission of his first wife to marry a second one.¹⁰⁵ Another is cost; men with more than one wife must be financially able to support multiple households.

Exchange 75: Are you married?

Soldier:	Are you married?	kah oo beh leembeetan?
Local:	No.	gah

Upon marriage, newlyweds can live with either set of parents with the eventual goal of building their own home. It is customary for a spouse to seek permission from the other when leaving the house. For routine matters, the expected answer will be yes, though a husband is obligated to ensure his wife has all the things she will need, such as cooking fuel, to last the duration of his absence.

¹⁰⁴ Mountain Research and Development. "Philippine Ethnic and Muslim Minorities: Educating Children the Traditional Way." February 2006. http://www.mrd-journal.org/pdf/Arquiza_MRED26_1_pp24-27.pdf

¹⁰⁵ Naval Postgraduate School. Fowler, Dennis Bryce. Thesis. "The Moro Problem: An Historical Perspective [pp. 26–30]." June 1985. <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA159537&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

In the case of a man who went fishing without asking permission and came home to find his wife had gone to her parents in his absence, he went to his in-laws and struck her. For that he was fined by the *agama* court where Yakan disputes are heard.

Divorce

While civil divorce does not exist in the Philippines, Muslims can divorce if their marriage was officiated by an *imam* rather than registered through the government. *Talaq*, where the husband verbally repudiates the marriage in front of an *imam*, is the traditional form of Muslim divorce.¹⁰⁶ This is not an option for a discontented wife, though she can engineer her husband into divorce by refusing to fulfill her domestic functions.

Other types of marital dissolution include *khula*, where the wife purchases her freedom by repaying her husband's family for the money they spent on her dowry. In Yakan this payment is referred to as *tullak esseb duk lasa*, or "compensation for heartbreak."¹⁰⁷ *Qadi* covers divorce for reasons of mental and physical health. Property accumulated during the union will be divided equally, but that which was brought into the marriage will remain with the original owner.

When a couple divorces, the Yakan distinguish between female or male dissatisfaction with the union. Yet social isolation is a deterrent to divorce no matter how unhappy the couple. Men, and especially women, may find themselves marginalized within the community for having failed to maintain what is supposed to be a life-long union.

Childbirth

On the 13th day of the 3rd month after a pregnant woman suspects her condition, she undergoes a ritual known as *paglekkad*. This involves a midwife (*panday*) massaging the woman's abdomen. The number of fingers she uses reflects her estimation of the stage of the pregnancy. At the end of the massage, the midwife turns away and spits. This is supposed to scare *saitan* (Devil) and allow the woman to have a peaceful delivery.



© Elijah Casib Tan
Mother and infant

During the final quarter of pregnancy, sexual intercourse is limited to specific days of the week, a restriction which is believed to yield an intelligent, obedient and long-lived child. The timing of the birth is considered significant. If it is daytime, that portends a hard life since it is usually hot and most people are hard at work. A birth after dark will mean the

¹⁰⁶ *Islamic Family Law In A Changing World: A Global Resource Book*. Abdullah An-Na'im, Ed. "Part VIII Southeast Asia: Chapter 1: Social, Cultural and Historical Background [p. 255]." 2002. New York: Zed Books.

http://books.google.com/books?id=Hg0zCFM0fwkC&pg=PA255&lpg=PA255&dq=yakan+marriage+ceremony&source=bl&ots=XpuIDVJS4U&sig=KFn5eWS4EwJZ96tpXcizYQehnsM&hl=en&ei=YEVCS0KO C460Nfa54MAH&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=10

¹⁰⁷ Profiles of Philippine Cultural Communities. Ahadas, Roxas. "Yakan." 2002. Manila: National Commission for Culture and Arts.

child will have an easier life. If there is a storm that includes thunder and lightning, it portends greatness for the child.

A *panday* is summoned when the mother goes into labor. The father is not present for the delivery and feigns indifference to the fuss. At birth, the umbilical cord is severed with a non-metallic cutting instrument. Afterwards, it is burned with jackfruit and buried under a coconut tree. Later, if the child becomes ill, the remains are dug up and soaked in water to prepare a liquid drink, believed to have curative power, which will be fed to the child once.¹⁰⁸

In the first feeding, the mother puts a pillow into her newborn’s mouth to stimulate sucking. An *imam* puts his finger into the baby’s mouth and then the father follows suit to make the child obedient to him. If it is a boy, the mother will then give him her right breast. If it is a girl, she will feed from the left breast. This custom reflects the Yakan perception that the right side connotes strength while the left signifies weakness. A breast feeding mother is encouraged to take food with both hands so that her breasts will have equal nourishing capability.

When a baby is old enough to be taken to the homes of others, the host will have prepared a small amount of money as a present. Failure to do so is thought to put the host in heaven’s debt.

Childhood

The Yakan raise disabled children as they do normal children, believing each life has value. Similarly, an illegitimate child is not held accountable for the circumstances of his birth. He is encouraged to be a pious Muslim to offset his origins through the accumulation of merit.



© Janey A and Jake Zicker.com
Filipino family

Exchange 76: Are these your children?

Soldier:	Are these your children?	eeneen beh mengeh kaanakan noon?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Parents teach their children how to interact with others, encouraging actions such as sharing food. Mischievous boys are viewed as preferable to quiet ones because the Yakan believe they are more likely to exhibit bravery after they reach adulthood. If a male child develops a bad reputation for insolence and refusal to submit to authority, however, it will affect his ability to find a marriage partner later.

Exchange 77: Do you have any brothers?

Soldier:	Do you have any brothers?	neeyah beh keh ew kepongteena eehan lela?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

¹⁰⁸ *The Yakans of Basilan Island: Another Unknown and Exotic Tribe of the Philippines*. Sherfan, Andrew. “Chapter 2: Yakan Birth and Childhood [pp. 24–68].” 1976. Cebu City: Fotomatic.

Girls help their mothers with chores. If the community does not view a girl as hard working and attentive to her family, she will have difficulty finding a husband. Such socialization is considered more important than schooling by the Yakan.

During a child’s formative years, *pangadji ha lihal*, or home-based Quranic and values education, is emphasized.¹⁰⁹ Yakan children are not encouraged to pursue advanced study or join the military for fear it will take them far away. This might cause them to lose their Muslim faith and forget their heritage. Since the Yakan believe the dead return to their roots, burying a newborn’s umbilical cord under a coconut tree is thought to ensure the child will die in his homeland and not in some distant place.

Exchange 78: Did you grow up here?

Soldier:	Did you grow up here?	kah oo beh peshooleeg neh too oo?
Local:	Yes.	aweh

Naming Conventions

A newborn child is given a name immediately after birth. Later, there will be a naming ceremony (*pagtimbang*) led by an *imam*, and attended by close friends and family who may recommend permanent names that the parents are free to reject. Names of great people can be selected on the grounds the child will grow up to replicate the person’s success.



Traditional Muslim names are common including Mohammad, Abdulla, and Hassan for boys—and Hahliya, Fatima, and Saadiya for girls. Names are also derived from desirable attributes of the natural world. Males may be named after fierce or cunning animals. One such name, *Manabasal*, is taken from a poisonous snake. Females may be named for flowers and birds that symbolize qualities the family hopes the girl will exhibit. Names of deceased relatives are never selected for fear of disturbing the dead every time they hear the child being called.

“Yakan” can be placed before the name; the place of origin follows. Hence, a man could be known as Yakan Hassan Aisa of Lamitan, which would identify him as a Muslim to the larger world.¹¹⁰ Those who seek work in Christian-dominated areas may adopt Hispanic names due to fear of discrimination.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Mountain Research and Development. “Philippine Ethnic and Muslim Minorities: Educating Children the Traditional Way.” February 2006. http://www.mrd-journal.org/pdf/Arquiza_MRED26_1_pp24-27.pdf

¹¹⁰ *State and Society in the Philippines*. Abinales, P.N. “Chapter 3: New States and Reorientations, 1338-1764 [p. 45].” 2005. New York: Rowan and Littlefield. http://books.google.com/books?id=xiOQdEzgP9kC&pg=PA52&lpg=PA52&dq=philippines+muslim+names&source=bl&ots=PUyYFalFPJ&sig=V1E3GsZZaCPVknM3Je3WIVfWwc4&hl=en&ei=sJVCsvCyMJDGsQPKo-n5CA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6

¹¹¹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. U.S. Dept. of State. “2008 Report on International Religious Freedom – Philippines.” 19 September 2008. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48d5cbccc.html>