

CULTURAL STUDY OF BADJAO BUSINESS PRACTICE AND LEGACY

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Abstract: *The aimed of this study is to identify the badjao cultural practices as well as their cultural legacy through survey of their cultural heritage. Three main topics emanating from the identification of their culture which include traditional practices (n=3; 37.5%); cultural legacy (n=3; 37.5%); and business practice (n=2; 25%). The descriptive research design with qualitative and quantitative approach was employed to identify the badjao cultural practices as well as their cultural legacy. The qualitative nature of the methodology pertained to the description of the badjao cultural practices and legacy while frequency and percentage of each iconic culture and coding of such description produced the quantitative data of the study. The initial subject of this research is the badjao iconic culture available online, Sinama.org, a virtual library which is the home of the on-line cultural resources that contain full text of Sinama Literature and Development. The rationale for the selection of each subject culture is that it is physically seen and actively claimed for badjao cultural practices. The data obtained was purposively chosen from that online database which thereafter subjected to immense cultural study by the co-researcher himself, a badjao who lives in the island province of Tawi-Tawi. It has been observed that these badjao cultural practices and legacy have helped them easily be identified as friendly, mild-mannered, courageous, and peace-loving people. The significance of these cultural practices and legacy is observed to have been relevant to their economic needs. These cultural practices have been taken so seriously in consideration of the desire to promote their own traditional practices such as traditional performing art, traditional knowledge and traditional craftsmanship that in return boost their tourism business which is necessary to better shape up the lives of their future generation. Said tourism business practice has been born out from the dynamics of these traditional practices which has a potential impact towards a wider inclusive economic progress. Its cultural legacy is seen to have been functionally worked for social development. Therefore, the preservation of their cultural heritage is a very potent social and economic investment.*

Keywords: *Badjao Cultural, Traditional and Business Practice.*

Introduction

Hundred years before the coming of Islam, the badjao navigated the Sulu Sea, the main island of Mindanao Reo-Grande (part of Cagayan De Oro), and the seas between Malaysia and Indonesia. These marine areas were their habitual fishing ground that made them earned the moniker as the legendary guardians of the Sea. TabbaTaha (now Tubataha) is the longest reef in the Philippines that had been the fishing ground of the badjao during the golden age of their civilization.

The Sama Lepa Boat which is yearly honoured in Sabah and Tawi-Tawi as part of their local cultural festivity; the traditional performing art known as Igal (dance) which is commonly practiced in Tawi-Tawi and the rest of the Nusantara region (now BIMP: Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines) by the local themselves; and the traditional knowledge of Pandoga, which takes place of the navigational aid of our modern time, are some of their enduring traditions that this study intends to revisit. These and along with the traditional craftsmanship are their cultural heritage, sourced of their business strength and cultural legacy, that have been recognized by UNESCO and asked to be preserved as part of the intergenerational responsibility.

The objective of this study is to identify the badjao traditional and business practices as well as their cultural legacy. It also attempts to measure the significance of that lifelong enduring culture to their social and economic needs.

Literature

Badjao is an indigenous group of Austronesians residing in the stretches of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas and beyond (Jubilado, 2010). Although, they are not originated from the Philippines, Tawi-Tawi in Sulu Archipelago is their home place. The Ethnologue classification of their language are as follow:

1. Northern Sinama includes Tagtabunbalangingi, Tonquilbalangingi, Linunganmusa, Panigayanbalangingi, Landang-gua, Samadaongdong, Kawitbalangingi, Karundung, Pilasmanubal, Kabingaan.
2. Central Sinama includes Samakaulungan, Samadilaut, Musu, Laminusa, Balimbing, Bannaran, Bangaw-bangaw, Tabawan, Manubal, Silumpak.
3. Southern Sinama includes Simunul, Sibutu, Tandubas, Sitangkai, South Ubian, Languyan, Sapa-Sapa, Bongao, Sanga-Sanga, Pahut.
4. Sinama Pangutaran includes Pangutaran and Ubian North.

In the colonial notes of Fr. Francisco Combes in the 1700s, he identified the badjao of Baganian Peninsula and the La Caldera (now Zamboanga) as 'lutaos' or floating people. This historical account established the existence of badjao civilization in Zamboanga peninsular area during the Spanish colonial power in the Philippines. People speaking of their language are now found as riverine people of Subah Nipa and other Zamboanga peninsular areas such as Deyom Luuk, Sibuko and Sibugay. The badjao from Sibuko and Sibugay, however, are identified themselves as sama kalibugan.

In Sabah, the badjao is considered as a regional identity and being considered as well as the sub-ethnic group of sama. The Borneo-originated badjao is being called as badjao Kota Belud, a community of people that is very proximate to Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. In the Philippines, on the other hand, sama is considered as the badjao sub-grouping. In its island municipality of 'Capul' in Northern Province of Samar which is inhabited by Sama-Abaknon is badjao speaking people. It is inhabited by people known as samarenayos. In the adjacent island of Davao City which is Samal Island, it is inhabited by people called samalan or samalon. Like

the samarenjos, the people of samal island speak a language that is nearer to bisayan dialect than to badjao language. It appears that their language has been radically changed to fit their environment but their community can still be called badjao by reason of commonality in origin.

The badjao is separated from the 14 members of the bangsamoro ethno-linguistic tribes of the Philippines but linguistically there are one and the same. Study conducted in the past established an evidence of extended areas being covered by the badjao historical adventure. Figure 1 shows the areas in the Nusantara region (BIMP: Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines) which claimed to have been the dwelling places of the badjao (Nimmo, 1986).

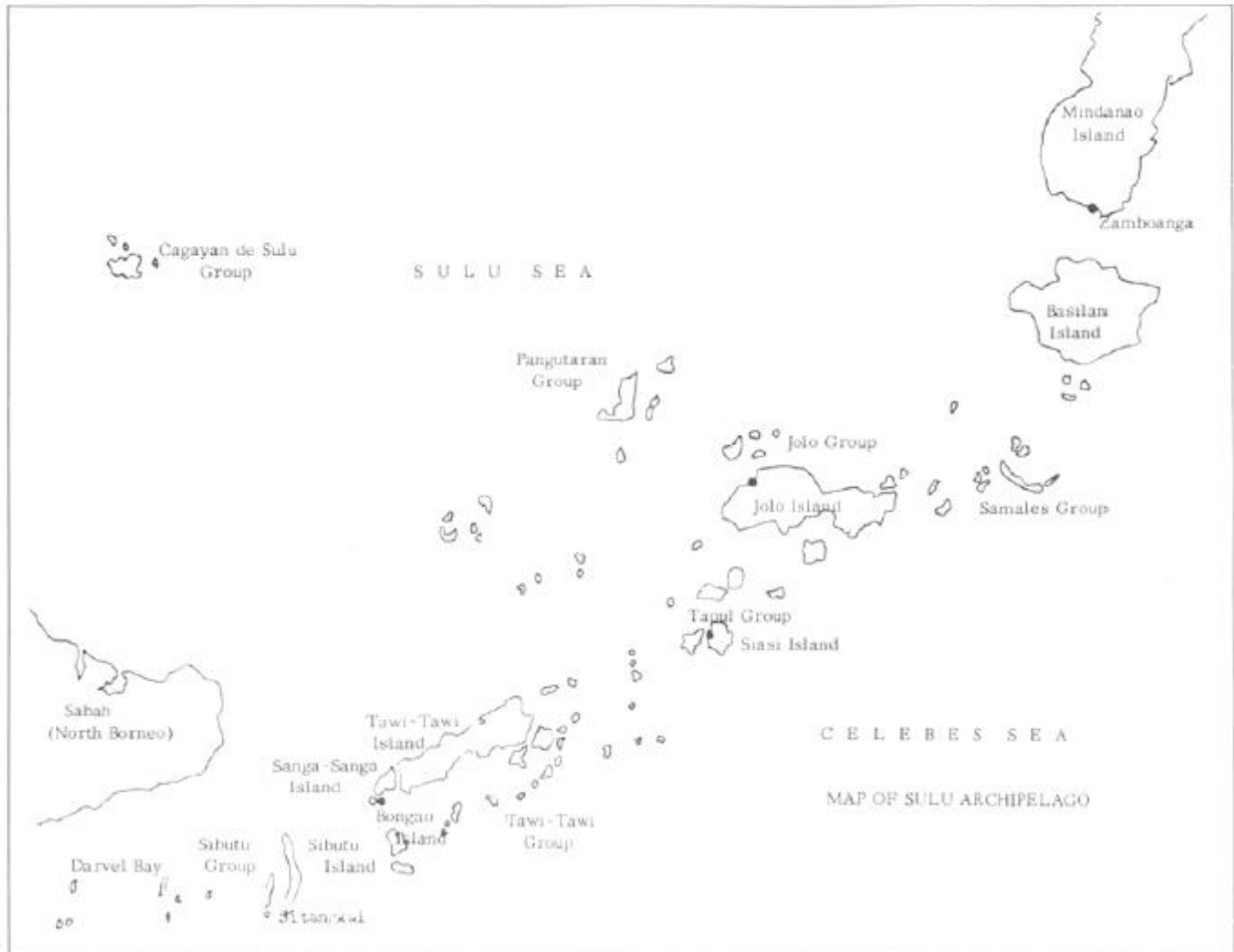


Figure 1. Map of Sulu Archipelago (Arlo Nimmo, 1986)

The US Bacon Bill was aimed to separate Mindanao and Sulu from the Philippines. Then Philippine President Emilio Aguinaldo and his National Supreme Council, however, decided to stage a protest against that Bacon Bill, stating that it was a blow to national integrity and they were petitioning for the rejection of such measure as a matter of justice. In 1921, the people of Sulu wrote American opposing the integration of Sulu into the Philippine Islands, stating among others, the treaty entered into between them and the sovereign United States of America. In their 1842 treaty, the United States of America was asking permit from Sulu for its scientific exploration in the Sulu Sea. Sulu Sultanate then was under the Khilafa Dar-ul Islam so the permit was also sought from Ottoman caliphate in Turkey. The north-eastern part of Sabah and Palawan Island, on the other hand, were never ceded to Sulu according to 1673 official history of the Kingdom of Brunei (Lazardi Wong Jogja).

In many territorial disputes of world sovereign states, no single historical account could be found that shows badjao active participation in such international political issue. In cognizance thereof, research trend should therefore be geared towards the study of their social and economic life instead. No full-blown research has ever been accomplished that comprehensively reports on their cultural practices much so of the latter correlation to business economy which has been inspired by healthy tourism activity through the years. A painstaking research of that nature will rescue their cultural practices and legacy from possible extinction. This long-felt need investigation will also help ensure their future generation of viable economic condition.

Theoretical Framework

This research investigates the cultural reality of badjao linguistic tribe that by analogy may utilize meso institutional analysis essentially designed for schools and societies. Brint (1998) acknowledged the important of institutional analysis as it shows how certain institution responds to external pressures such as social policies and agency in charge of it. Meso institutional analysis analyzes practices related to the realization of the institution’s purposes.

The cultural practices of badjao will be assessed in terms of their traditional practices and cultural legacy while their business practice will be in terms of its tourism and trading business activity based on the meso institutional analysis. The prospect of cultural and business practice for social and economic development will then be evaluated in term of its perceived impact.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual paradigm of the study.

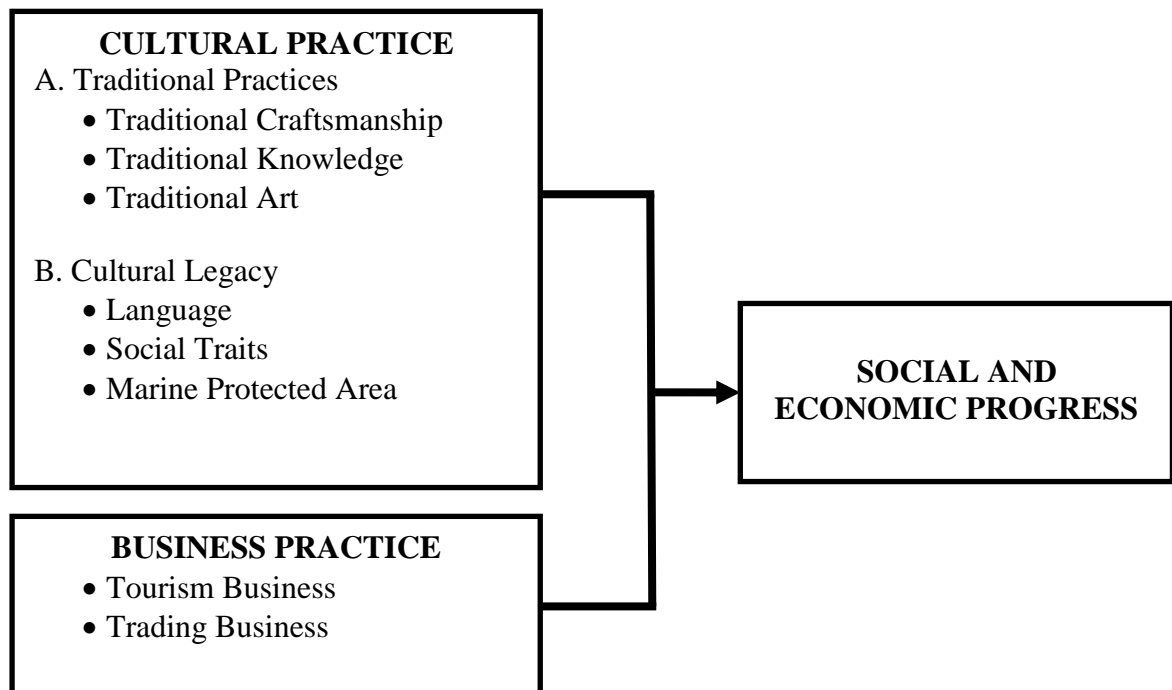


Figure 1. Conceptual Paradigm of the Study

The independent variables are cultural and business practices that were evaluated in terms of traditional craftsmanship, traditional knowledge, traditional art, language, social traits, marine

protected area, tourism and trading business. The dependent variable is their impact on social and economic progress.

Methods

The descriptive research design with qualitative and quantitative approach was employed in this study in an attempt to spell out the efficacy of the badjao cultural practices. The qualitative nature of the study pertained to the description of the badjao cultural practices and legacy while frequency and percentage of each iconic culture produced the quantitative data of the study. Table 1 shows the frequency of the cultural study in terms of traditional practices [craftsmanship (40%), knowledge (40%) and art (20%)], cultural legacy [language (50%), social traits (38%), and marine protected area (12%)], and business practice [tourism (50%) and trading (50%).

Table 1. Frequencies of Badjao Cultural Practices

Cultural Practices	Sample (n)	Frequency (%)
Traditional Practices (N = 5)		
a. Traditional Craftsmanship	2	40
b. Traditional Knowledge	2	40
c. Traditional Art	1	20
Cultural Legacy (N = 8)		
a. Language	4	50
b. Social Traits	3	38
c. Marine Protected Area	1	12
Business Practice (N = 2)		
a. Tourism Business	1	50
b. Trading Business	1	50

Figure 2 depicts the detailed distribution of the three (3) badjao's cultural practices. In traditional craftsmanship, it included tepo (mat) and lepa boat. Specialized skills are required to edifice these traditional mat and lepa boat as well as in coming up with reliable Pandoga. In addition, these badjao's traditional practices lead to their cultural legacy in terms of language (northern sinama, cetral sinama, southern sinama and sinama pangutaran-50%), social traits (courageous, friendly, mild-mannered, and peace-loving people-38%), and marine protected area (Tubbataha Reefs -12%). The badjao's business practice is equally divided between tourism and trading business.

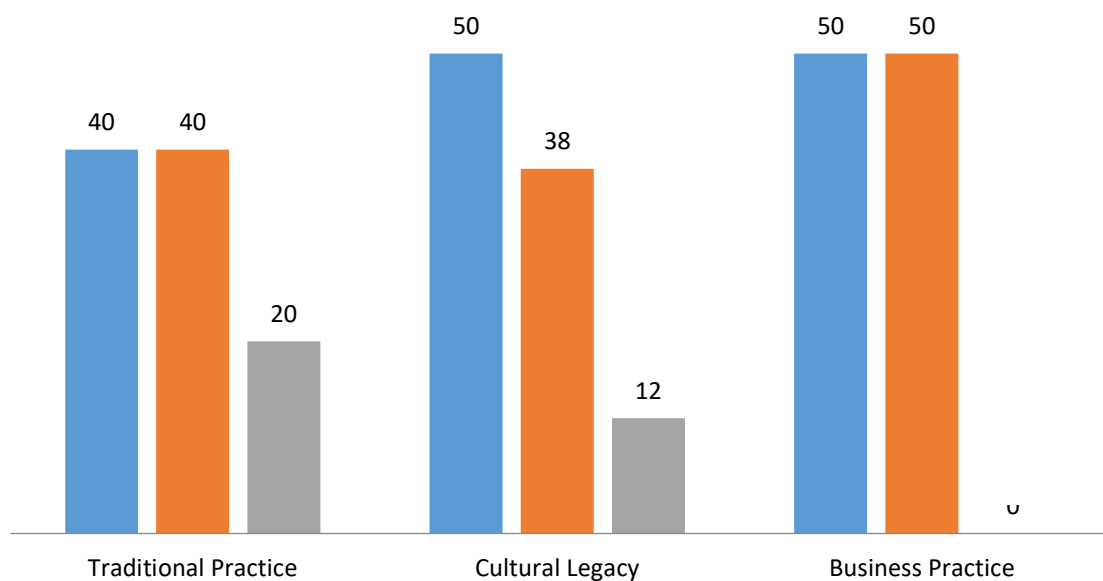


Figure 2. Frequency Distribution Of Badjao’s Cultural Practices

The subject of this research is the badjao traditional practices available online, Sinama.org. The rationale for their selection is that they are physically seen and actively claimed to have been impacted the badjao tourism industry. The data obtained was purposively chosen from the database of that virtual library which is the home of the on-line cultural resources that contain full text of Sinama Literature and Development. The records were searched using the following: “Sama culture”. Generally, practices and legacy were stood out and hereby chosen which thereafter subjected to immense cultural study by the co-researcher himself, a badjao who lives in the island province of Tawi-Tawi.

Problem Statement

There have been problems of cultural extinction of badjao heritage in the Nusantara region or Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Philippines (BMIP). The major problem is attributable to the lack of progressive motion to safeguard, restore and rebuild their cultural practices. This problem occurs when no one cares of the plight of badjao linguistic tribe despite the favourable impact of their culture to business tourism as seen in some part of their shared territories. A painstaking research of that nature will rescue their cultural practices and legacy from possible extinction.

On the other hand, the minor problem is seen to have been due to lack of cultural appreciation and attention in spite of a friendly request for proper attribution and preservation of badjao cultural heritage. No full-blown research has ever been accomplished that comprehensively reports on the badjao cultural practices much so of the latter correlation to business economy which has been inspired by healthy tourism activity through the years. A research study of their cultural condition has to be developed to iron out these emerging problems besetting them nowadays. In response thereof, a long-felt need study has to be commenced which results are expected of help to ensure their future generation of viable economic condition.

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion are designed to be topical. It is subdivided into badjao cultural study, their traditional and business practices as well as their cultural legacy.

Legal Basis of Badjao Cultural Study

In the study of Jubilado (2010), it identified badjao as an indigenous group of Austronesians that residing in the stretches of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas and beyond. Although, they are not originated from the Philippines, Tawi-Tawi in Sulu Archipelago is now the home place of this minority community. Pursuant to the spirit of the provision of article 2 of the Constitution of the Philippines that in order to promote the advancement and effective participation of the National Cultural Communities in the building of the new society, the state shall consider their customs, traditions, beliefs and interests in the formulation and implementation of its policies.

Badjao Traditional Practices

The badjao traditional practices are embraced in the field of traditional craftsmanship, traditional knowledge and traditional performing art.

Traditional Craftsmanship

Tepo (mats) is one of the original and best weaving products of the badjao. It is made up of dried pandan leaves cut into tiny strips, dyed for about an hour and then hand-woven into coloured traditional woven mats. It has been the traditional practice among the badjao women and elders to weave their own tepo for their own needs. In some instances, it has been offered in commerce for livelihood purposes. These mats are usually used as sleeping mats and prayer mats. It is also used for decorations which is to be framed and for souvenirs as well. Most of the best mats (Tepo) are weaved in the island province of Tawi-Tawi.

The lepa boat is the houseboat of the badjao residing in Sitangkai-Bongao, Tawi-Tawi and Semporna, Sabah. It made them known as the sea faring or 'sea gypsies people'. They use their houseboat to travel from one place to another and fish along the way for their subsistence. They are mobile people reaching as far as Sulawesi, Indonesia, Sabah, Malaysia and even Vietnam. Nimmo (1968) used badjao to identify the boat-dwelling population of Sulu, or those who occasionally still use the boat as living quarters, or those who have only recently abandoned the boat-dwelling habits.

The houseboat is one of the most beautiful traditional boats possessing an ancient type of architectural design that has uniquely designed sail. It is made up of hardwood such as yakal tree with carvings (okil) directly on the boat projecting hulls and prow. The lepa boat in Tawi-Tawi and Sabah is the traditional houseboat that has been used for livelihood by the badjao in the Nusantara region. This badjao culture is also used for entertainment in the Regata Lepa Festival in Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia.

Traditional Knowledge

The renowned expert builders of lepa boat hail from Sintangkai, Tawi-Tawi. This place is one of the mooring areas of the badjao lepa boats. It is of that human nature that some other traditional practices emerged momentarily. The navigational tradition of the badjao fisher folks of using the sea current, the wind and the celestial bodies such as sun, moon, stars, meteors, and others is something worthy of emulation. This knowledge is known to them as Pandoga that takes place of the navigational aid of our modern time. Through it, weather condition is determined with high degree of reliance upon the navigable of point in time. Consequently, they are regarded as the legendary guardians of the sea.

Traditional Performing Art

There exists a culture of badjao which is known as Igal (dance). This traditional performing art is commonly practiced in Tawi-Tawi and the rest of the Nusantara region by the local themselves during an important social occasion and gatherings such as community festivals, weddings and even their victory party celebrations reserved of that cultural performance. This particular badjao culture has now the trademark of the badjao linguistic tribe in the TV hit series show “Sahaya” of the Philippine local channel. It has also been used to entertain the guests and visitors in big event such that of the International Igal Festival in Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia.

Badjao Cultural Legacy

The badjao cultural legacy is seen to have been functionally worked for social, environmental and natural resources development. It is in perfect harmony with management of the Marine Protected Area (MPA).

Language

It has been told in Jahuran (2018) newspaper article that the badjao language is a cultural identity. This can be utilized to establish “Culture of Peace” that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) aimed to create in any part of the world. Saddalani (2015) contended that the Philippine values education is carrying on its back the difficult task of cultivating a shared culture and tradition of patriotism and nationalism on a foundation of common values amidst contending religions. The results of Nagahama’s research (2006), however, suggested for the universal values to be taught under the context of each region so that each value will be grasped more deeply and healthy nationalism cultivated in each region will aid in making the reality for the “Culture of Peace”.

The badjao language varies in character depending on their geographical affiliation. The origin of the badjao language is from the Borneo/Indonesia region (Jahuran, 2018). Ethnologue divides badjao language into four classifications based on mutual intelligibility. The four badjao languages are northern sinama, central sinama, southern sinama, and sinama pangutaran. These classifications are rarely recognized by badjao themselves who instead classify their language by the village or island where they have come from. Such different language deviations are by themselves wonder of linguistic creation.

Badjao language is widely spoken in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. As such, they are being caught to live a life under these three (3) sovereign flags. Nimmo (1968) identified the distribution of the badjao population to as far north as Surigao, Davao and Zamboanga on Mindanao Island, in almost all the major island groups of Sulu, Semporna, Sabah, and on numerous Celebes coasts. It has been observed that their language is almost a passport for affording state leniency upon their well-being wherever they go. In his state of union speech, Franklin D. Roosevelt (1941) identified four essential elements of the fundamental freedom in which people everywhere in the world should enjoy: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

Social Traits

Badjao is an indigenous group of Austronesians residing in the stretches of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas and beyond (Jubilado, 2010). They are the largest and widely dispersed people domiciled right at the centre of the rich marine biodiversity of the Coral Triangle of Southeast Asia particularly the Nusantara region which is surrounded by the two oceans, the Sulu Sea and Celebes Sea. Emerged from that life adventure and reality is the identity of them being a

courageous people. Nimmo (1968 and 1986) has explored on the implications of badjao migration and established their history in the Sulu archipelago of the southern part of the Philippines. Large population of them can now be found in the provinces of Sulu, Basilan, Zamboanga Peninsula in Western Mindanao, and Palawan in Luzon while some others have established their residents in Sabah, Malaysia and Sulawesi, Indonesia. Reason of their assimilation into such different places is the character of them being *mild-mannered, friendly and peace-loving people* which are well-appreciated by any sovereign authorities they are dealing with.

Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park (TRNP)

The Tubataha reefs are seen of marine wildlife reserves and of potential arsenal for the Philippine economy. Essentially, an environmental problem is a livelihood problem thus the above marine area has been declared as Marine Protected Area (MPA) that provides hope for shark conservation in the Coral Triangle, where many of shark populations are in a state of decline. Scientists commissioned by Tubbataha Management Office and Marine Megafauna Foundation have found incredibly high numbers of reefs sharks in Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park (TRNP). That numbers are higher than most other marine protected areas (MPAs) around the world which highlight the importance of large, well-managed marine protected areas for the conservation of reef-associated sharks and rays (LAMAVE Research Institutes Philippines, 2018). Unknown to history and science, however, that particular marine area had been the habitual ground and under the care and protection of badjao linguistic tribe since time immemorial. Evidence thereof is the reef name itself which is Tubbataha that was derived from the badjao language “TabbaTaha or TabbaMataha” which literally means in English language as the longest reef. To give justice to their Stone Age civilization, it is but proper to attribute such legacy as belonging to them. Jahuran (2018) published a note on the need for proper attribution of any of the badjao cultures.

Badjao Business Practice

The infusion of badjao business practice is stemmed from their cultural practices and legacy and it is being further inspired by healthy tourism and trading activity that take place in Sabah and in southern part of the Philippines.

Tourism Business

The iconic cultures of badjao are being capitalized for cultural tourism in the Regata Lepa and International Igal Festival held every April at Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia. Such cultural exposition brought them economic advantage which provides them a quality of life as seen in its three-fold economic effects, to wit:

- A. it enhances social cohesion for the badjao;
- B. it inspires local tourism and other social development;
- C. and it creates positive images that will enhance local investment climate.

The automatic effect of their tourism business is that it effectively shapes up the lives of their people. Said business practice has been born out from the dynamic of the badjao cultural practices and legacy. It has seen of potential impact towards a wider economic progress.

Trading Business

In the Philippines, Davao City and its neighbouring highly urbanized municipalities have been the trading destinations and ports of call for badjao sailors and traders since time immemorial. It is even a belief that the first durian fruit in that city were brought by badjao known as sama kabingaan traders from Sulu who regularly sailed the highseas through their kumpit or

merchant boat (oral tradition). The interdependence of these places has been born out from their enduring knowledge in business administration handed down to them from generation to generation. The importance of cultural education was emphasized in Saddalani's research study (2015) when it says, "No nation can ever claim of economic prosperity without investing much on human development".

Social and Economic Progress

The impact of the badjao cultural practices is observed to have been relevant to their economic needs as it boosts their tourism business necessary to better shape up the lives of their generation and generations to come. Their business practice is essentially a livelihood solution born out from the dynamic of these cultural practices and having potential impact towards a wider economic progress. Its cultural legacy is seen to have been functionally worked for social development that draws strength from an established principle of livelihood solution.

Conclusion

Great badjao cultural practices are observed to have been the source of healthy tourism activity attributable to the untiring desires of themselves to preserve their cultural heritage for enduring profitable business practice. The latter promotes social development which is necessary of them to live a decent and sustainable life. By recognizing their cultural heritage, it enhances their business practice that works for inclusive economic growth. Therefore, preservation of their cultural heritage is a viable social and economic investment.

Among of their traditional practices are embraced in the field of traditional performing art, traditional knowledge and traditional craftsmanship. Being friendly, mild-mannered, courageous, and peace-loving people are their emerging social traits. Their other traditional social practices (i.e. *pagkanduli* and *pag-umboh*) have not been dealt with in this study as it involves some serious concerns of religious issue which often springs religious controversy but its historical background provides deeper understanding of their cultures.

The results of this research expect to help the badjaos value and continue their cultural heritage. Through reiteration of their cultural identity, they will be expected to be empowered and motivated to find meaning in their life.

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