Community Profile

Name of Community : **The Born Again Badjao Community of Batangas City**

The Born Again Badjao Community is located at SitioCallejon II, Barangay Libjo,Batangas City, Province of Batangas, Philippines.

Satellite Map indicating the community's location:

Ethnicity

THE BADJAOS

The Badjaos are a Filipino Muslim Ethnic group called sea gypsies or group of "boat people". They originated from Zamboanga, Basilan, Jolo provinces, Tawi-tawi in the Sulu Archipelago in Mindanao, Philippines. They are called SamalLuwaan (outcast) or Samal Laud (people of the ocean). Their religion is Islam animism. They are the poorest ethnic group in Sulu depending only on fishing with arrow and diving coins tossed by ship passengers at the port, exchanging corals, sea shells or pearl for any food or money for their daily food and survival.

Badjao houses are built and stands near the sea which is made of bamboo and wooden scraps and coconut leaves. There is no furniture or rooms, just a single space for everything like washing, bathing, cooking, sleeping and used as toilet. Their staple food is cassava which is dried by pressing very tightly in clothes and cooked without oil and other sea products.

One Badjao household is composed or 2 to 3 families living together. Badjao men are expert wooden boat makers and spear fishers, while the women are weavers of sleeping mats called "banig" made from pandanleaves which is a native plant in the country.

Badjaos are 100% illiterate that kept them from acquiring basic services such as proper health care, education, community development, civil registration and all basic human needs and services. They have only 1 or 2 meals a day, that is why all children are severely malnourished and has very high mortality rate especially among infants.

There are no clinics, hospital, toilets, school, medicines, electricity, postal service and potable drinking water. There is no government institution nor NGOs that cater to the needs of these people. Badjaos are peace loving people, trustworthy in spite of being illiterate. They love to sing and dance the "IGAL"

The Badjaos are categorized as "the poorest among the poor" and the most primitive among the ethnic group in the Philippines.

The emergence of the cruelty and killings by the Abu Sayaf members and other Muslim rebels, the Badjaos who are considered as the lowest kind among the Philippine tribes, were forced to migrate to other places like in Batangas. Batangas became a suitable place for the Badjaos because it is near to the seas.

Religion: Islam- animism

Marriage : Monogamy

Education: Illiterate

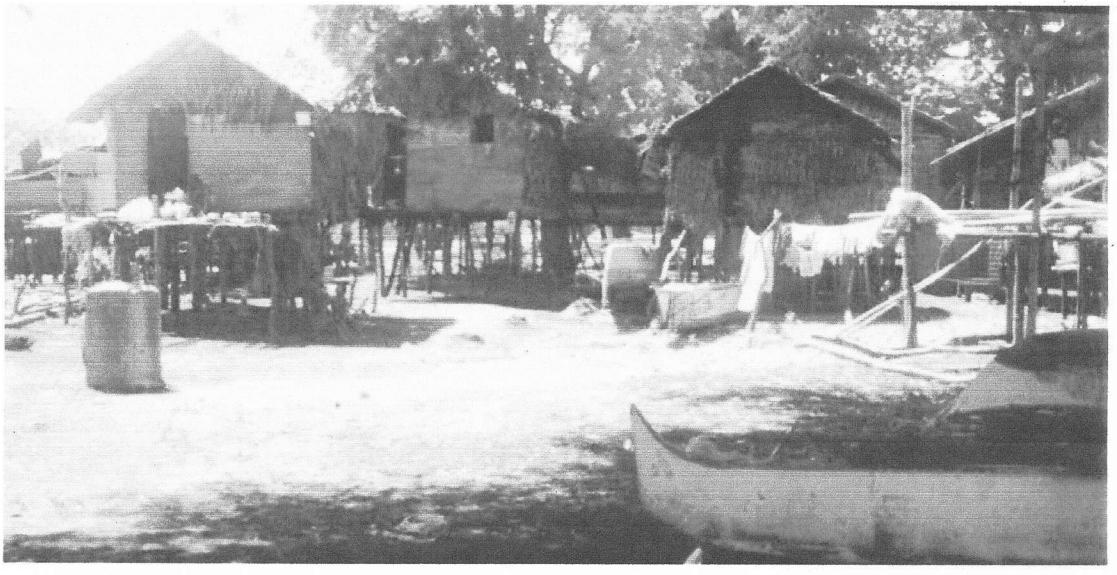
Employment : none. The people live by fishing, vending and barter trading, weaving

Migration: The Badjaos are migratory people in their natural state . They transfer from one place to another based on the availability of food source and clan security from tribal threats and war.

Pictures:

The undeveloped Badjao community in their first settlement in Batangas

Year 2000-2004



The tribe's houses and way of living, year 2000-2004

The community lived by the coastline of Malitam Island in Batangas City, year 2000-2004

Community Development

The community started its development when the people were converted to Christianity through the missionaries who arrived and influence their lifestyle. The development in the community and the people began when a powerful storm destroyed the island of Malitam and the tribe was forced to migrate with the missionaries in a nearby barangay in the main land of Batangas City, called Barangay Libjo in the year 2006. The tribe made the missionaries their leader in the community so that further developments will happen and maintained in the tribe.

Missionaries: Alberto T. Santiago andElenita F. Santiago

The following records the development of the tribe:

Population and Demographics

There are **34** families who are living in the Badjao community comprising of **79** adults—**29 aremales and 50 are females**; and **61** children, with the total number of **140 individuals**; **38** persons are engaged in vending and bartering cultured pearls, accessories, and delicacies; **4** are employed in private companies in Batangas City.

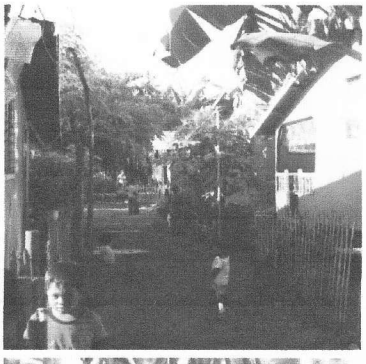
Among the children, 34 are presently enrolled in the elementary level in the barangay school; 4 are enrolled in the city's national high school and 1 are graduating in college in the city's national university.

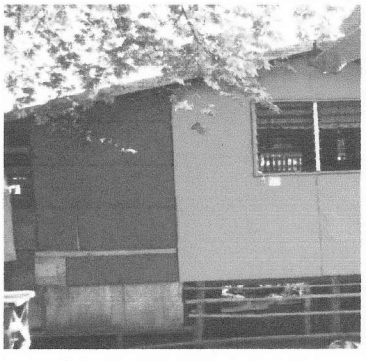
A family may consist of 4 to 12 children. The fertility rate among women are high but the mortality rate is low among children and adults. Common hazards to their existence is accident and sickness.

Development

When the tribe moved up in Barangay Libjo, Batangas City, it is where development took effect in full blast. The people built the community in garbage dumping site in the barangay owned by a former Municipal Vice mayor who lent the land to the tribe. The Badjaos together with the missionaries cleaned up, rehabilitate and cleared the dumping site and put up their homes there.

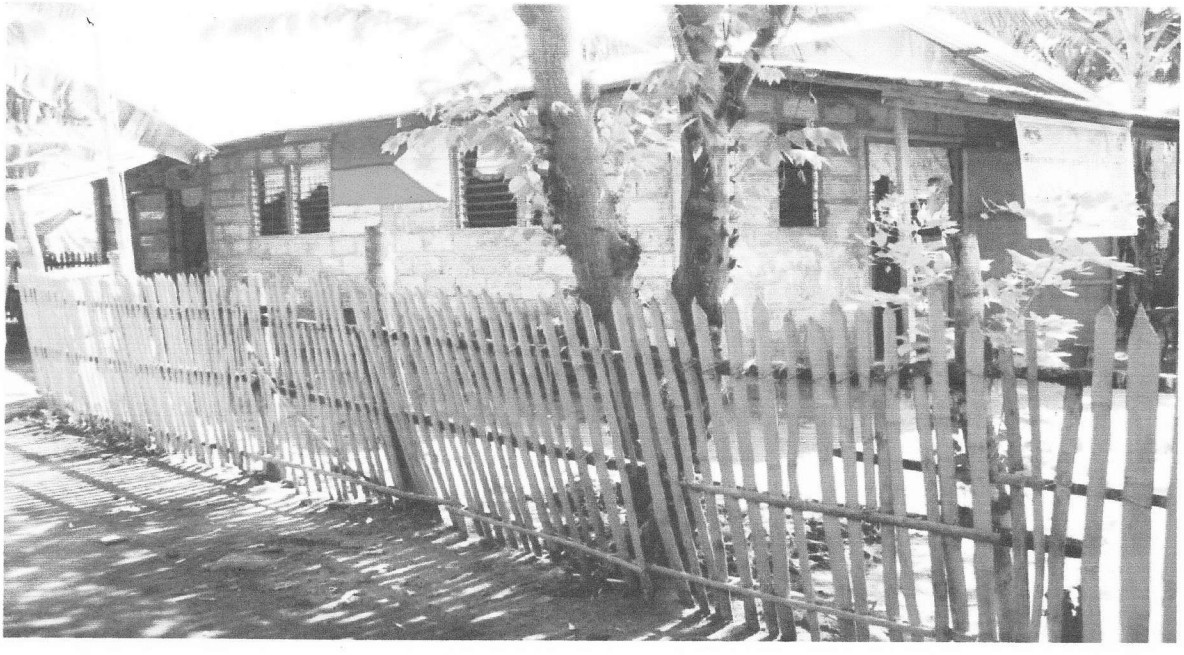
Pictures of the community in the present:





The people also built a church, and a school for literacy learning. The children were taught how to read and write and later, the community was connected to the Department of Education through its agency Alternative Learning System, the non-formal education branch of Dep-Ed, wherein the children and young people were prepared to enter formal schooling. And by now, the school-aged children are studying in the nearby schools, 2km to 5kms away from the community. The people are engaged in bartering and vending cultured pearls and accessories, fishing and selling food, delicacies by putting up a sari-sari store, or a by-stand stall in-front of their houses. Begging for alms was eliminated, so as the diving for coins in the bay as tourist attraction in the city.

There are transformations in the areas of spiritual, and traditions. Christianity influenced them to shun animism and the marriage among kins.



The literacy building in the community which was once the ALS Center

The church inside the community

Health

The community follows a strict rule of cleanliness inside the community which includes keeping the houses and the surrounding clean. Each house has its own toilet. The people practice proper garbage disposal. They created a small dumping site at the back of the community where they tend their garbages. When the people get sick, they now know how to avail the services of the government hospital and the nearest barangay health center in the city. Those who are employed in private companies enjoy the benefit of government health insurance like the PAG-IBIG. The Barangay Health center monitors the health pregnant women, lactating mothers and the little children by providing pre-natal, post natal and newborn check-ups as well as early childhood vaccine. Generally speaking, the Badjaos are not that health conscious, though they are already in a well-off community compared to other Badjao communities. The money they earned in their vending are goes to the food of the family.

Feeding program as part of the health program in the community

Infrastructure

There is no known means of transportation in the community. Even the road that leads to the community is a 2km dirt road from the barangay main road. The people has to walk from the community to the main road to access a public transportation to the market or to the city.

Agriculture

The land wherein the community lies is not suitable for farming. Only trees can grow on the land like coconut, banana, and mahogany. Vegetables rarely survive in the soil. This is due to the fact that it used to be a garbage dumping site of the city. The fertility of the soil was lost because of the chemicals from Shell Refinery nearby being dumped there years ago. The air also from the refinery pollutes the atmosphere in the community.

Availability of Technology

The only sign of technology in the community is the presence of a personal computer owned by the mission and the missionaries used for communication, clerical work and study aid for the students in research purposes.

The Badjao learners were given a chance to learn and operate computers.

Employment

Only four (4) members of the community are employed in private companies owned by the Tagalogs. The rest of the working group thrive on selling cultured pearls and accessories. These vendors can reach as far as the southern and northern part of the Luzon, and stay in those places for weeks or months, then return again to the community when their goods are sold.

Picture of some of the Badjaos in the community