

Life Pattern of Intermarried Aetas and Lowlanders in Barangay Sta. Juliana, Capas, Tarlac

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Abstract— This study was conducted to find out the life pattern of intermarried Aetas, a social minority locally called “*kulots*” which means, those with curly hair, with locally called, “*unats*” or those with straight hair or lowlander residents of the Village or *Barangay* of Sta. Juliana, Capas, Tarlac, Philippines. With the end of developing an approach towards an improved quality of life and development in the community, this study particularly looked into intermarriage couples’ family and married life, behavior towards education, business practices and livelihood pattern, political life and participation, religious life and general aspirations in life. The descriptive case study method was used in this research, employing at the same time indigenous and integrative (quantitative and qualitative) research methodologies in gathering salient information. Thirty couples randomly picked and who have been married for at least five years before the conduct of this research, 2009, served as respondents/source of data.

The study found out that there is an observable shift on life pattern of intermarried aetas (*kulots*) and lowlanders (*unats*) in terms of marriage and family life and settlement, compared to the aetas’ traditional family life. The *unat* family life was found to be the dominant and likely pattern to prevail among intermarried couples. This is being reinforced with the propensity of their children to associate more with their *unat* relatives of either parent. In terms of education, the couples and that of their children shared the importance of acquiring higher level of formal education. Likewise their relatively high level of aspiration and motivation towards this end was evident considering that more than 50% of their children at least reached high school level. Their permanent settlement, 83%, - Aetas used to lived a nomadic life - in their respective village influenced their economic life. A proof to this is that, all of them have a defined land area, about one hectare, to cultivate making use of ordinary farm implements and farm animals for production basically to address their subsistence requirements. They were also found to be politically involved since all those of legal age were registered voters, and, majority of them exercises suffrage. What is quite unique, as observe, was they still maintain a considerable degree of loyalty to their tribal leaders. In terms of spirituality and religiosity, all the respondents have embraced Christian life and the rituals, e.g., church wedding, baptismal rites, rituals during the holy week, etc., associated with it as a part of their lives. This is also true among pure Aeta couples/families. This shows that animism as part of the Aetas’ religious tradition has already been supplanted and that the obliteration of their traditional religious beliefs and practices is not remote. Their aspirations

in life are generally tied with basic ones like adequate food, an improved housing to most of them, clothing and access to education. Preoccupied with these concerns, they are not so much involved on the socio-civic activities in the village.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is one society with so many ethnic and minority groups. In places where there are minority groups, it is quite a remote chance of finding intermarriage between for instance, a minority like the Aetas (commonly called “*kulot*” because of their curly hair) and lowlanders (or “*unat*” or those with straight hair). The case of Barangay Sta Juliana in Capas, Tarlac is more of an exception to this general observation as there are considerable number of intermarriages between the “*kulots*” and the “*unats*.” The Aetas being a minority group are socially, politically and educationally suppressed. Like any other minority groups, they too are marginalized. They have limited or no access of the government services and only minimal job opportunities are available for them. This being the case, only a very insignificant number of this group is employed by the formal economic mainstream. If ever there are, they are usually relegated to odd jobs/positions. This is true in other institutions, like in the military, where they are treated as “assets.” In the government, one has yet to see an Aeta or even a Kulot-Unat mestizo holding an appointment of employment in spite of the numerous development interventions that had been developed and implemented by government and NGOs to address the generally-viewed miserable life of the Aetas. The intermarriage phenomenon between the *kulots* and the *unats*, though quite intriguing, is worth looking into as it could be possible that intermarried couples could serve as a social mechanism in influencing the other members of this minority group in the effective implementation of programs and projects which are intended for them to elevate their standard of living. Whether or not intermarried *kulots* and *unats* could serve as such toward this end remains a question as there are no data, so far. An empirical look into the educational, economic, political, social and religious life pattern of intermarried *kulot* and *unat* could therefore provide some baseline data to development planners and implementers. This is the very essence of this social research.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Generally, this study aimed to find out the life pattern of intermarried *kulot and unat* couples in Sta. Juliana, Capas, Tarlac.

Specifically, it sought to provide data for the following:

1. Describe the family life pattern of intermarried aetas and lowlanders along educational, economic, political and religious life aspects.
2. Determine the respondents' level of involvement in social and civic activities in the locality.
3. Identify their parameters of a happy life and the degree by which these parameters contribute to such.
4. Draw implications from the finding of the study to Planned Change and Project Development.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research used a descriptive case study method in gathering pertinent data on the life pattern of the respondents. In conducting the research, methods of data collection such as questionnaire, interview and observation were employed. A questionnaire was utilized in getting substantial information needed in the study. An interview was also done to answer some salient items which were not clearly answered by the respondents in the questionnaire. Moreover, a direct observation on the way of the life of the respondents was done to better understand the data gathered.

The respondents in this research were the aetas and lowlanders of Barangay Sta. Juliana, Capas, Tarlac who have been married or in cohabitation for at least five (5) years or more. This study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year 2009- 2010 at Barangay Sta. Juliana, Capas, Tarlac, Philippines.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

TABLE I.

Type of Intermarriage	Frequency	Percentage
Husband (kulot)- Wife (unat)	16	53.33%
Husband (unat)- Wife (kulot)	14	46.67%
Total	30	100%

Majority of the cases of the respondents had an intermarriage wherein the husbands are kulots and the wives are unats. This shows that more male aetas are inclined of marrying female lowlanders as compared to a male lowlander marrying a female aeta. This observation is likewise shared by community leaders. A reason that led to the intermarriage of kulots and unats was their co-existence in the community. The *unats* live, mingle and socialize with the Aetas, thus, led to the exposure of both group to one another. This existence and exposure of kulots and unats attract and influence them to intermarry.

TABLE II.

Years Number of Years	Frequency	Percentage
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Married	Frequency	Percentage
5-10	11	36.67%
11-15	6	20.00%
16-20	4	13.33%
21-25	4	13.33%
26- and above	5	16.67%
Total	30	100%

A great number of the respondents had five to ten years being married. It does not mean however that the practice is new as data would show that this had already practiced for a long period of time, as some of them had been married for 26 or more years. The data also show that intermarriage in their group is increasing. Brought about by this intermarriage comes acculturation and amalgamation. *Kulots* and *unats* have been exchanging and adopting their practices, beliefs, and behaviors because of their continuing contact with one another. Its is evident though that the kulots were more acculturated with culture of the unats as most of them are now practicing the way of life of the unats. Rarely one finds among the couples practicing their ancestral beliefs, rituals and traditions like the *anito* (gods and spirits), the practice of wearing *bahag* (g-string), the practice of aeta dance, dowry and wedding.

TABLE III.

Number of Children	Frequency	Percentage
1-2	7	23.33%
3-4	10	33.34%
5-6	5	16.67%
7-8	7	23.33%
9 and above	1	3.33%
Total	30	100%

A great number of the respondents have only three to four children. These are the respondents who were able to practice family planning which was a government program promoted in the village. The use of contraceptives and their knowledge of natural family planning enabled them to prevent unwanted and unplanned children. This case is more particularly applicable among the new generation of intermarried kulots and unats. Some of them still give in to their traditional practice of taking herbal plants that could prevent pregnancy and sometimes induces abortion.

TABLE IV.

Settlement in the Community	Frequency	Percentage
Temporary	1	3.33%
Semi- Permanent	4	13.33%
Permanent	25	83.34%
Total	30	100%

Evidently, the general observation and expectation among aetas as nomads, is now a practice of the past among the respondents. This is because a great majority of had permanently live for a long period of time in the community. As a manifestation, a good number of their dwellings was

made of semi- concrete baseline wall, with native or wooden walls, with galvanized roof or cogon, with a distinct kitchen, dining, bedrooms and appliances. The type of house and the presence of these housing features or amenities signifies that aetas, whether a husband or a wife, is influenced by the unats' way of life.

TABLE V.

Marriage and Family Related Practices	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1. Practice of Dowry	11	36.67%
2.1 Type of Marriage		
a. Church Wedding	15	50.00%
b. Civil Wedding	15	50.00%
2.2 Residence after Marriage		
a. living within or near the domicile of husband or husband's kin	23	76.67%
b. living within or near the domicile of wife or wife's kin	4	13.33%
c. living not within or near the domicile of both	3	10.00%
3. Decision Making in the Family		
a. Father	14	46.67%
b. Mother	2	6.66%
c. Both	14	46.67%
4. Relatives whom their children associate more		
a. Husband's Relatives	9	30.00%
b. Wife's Relatives	10	33.33%
c. Relatives of Both Sides	11	36.67%
5. Practice of Birth Control	27	90%
6. Responsible in Taking Care of Children (Child Rearing)		
a. Father	2	6.67%
b. Mother	18	60.00%
c. others such as relative or eldest child	10	33.33%

Only a minimal number of the respondents practiced dowry giving (traditional aeta practice before marriage). Though 36.67% of them provided a dowry to their parents-in-law, still, the kind of dowry they provided was just a voluntary giving of a small amount of money or domesticated animals like cows, carabaos, goats, pig and etc. and not as demanded by their in-laws. This only means that dowry among the aeta respondents, was not observed in its strictest practice. Though there were some who practiced the giving of dowry, none of them practiced the traditional aeta wedding celebration or ritual. Fifty percent of the respondents had a Christian Church Wedding and the remaining fifty percent of them had a civil wedding. The unats' way of wedding celebration was dominant among the respondents. Majority of the respondents live with the nearest kin of their husband after their marriage which is the common residence pattern in the Philippine society.

Likewise, patriarchy is the dominant family authority pattern. Among the respondents, all of the fourteen *unat* husbands were the decision makers in the family of the intermarried *unat husband – kulot wife*. In the case of *kulot husband – unat wife*, there were two unat wives who were the decision makers and the remaining fourteen kulot husbands and fourteen unat wives practice a sharing of power in decision making of the family. This shows that, even in patriarchal families and patrilocal residence, the unats were those who served as decision makers. It could be that the level of education, being more expressive, assertive and vocal when it comes to family concerns why the unats, whether a husband or wife were more influential than the kulots.

Most of the respondents' children socialize and associate themselves with both of their parents' relatives. However, it was observed the tendency where the children more often turn to their mother's or father's relatives who are unats. The closer association of their children with their unat relatives exert greater influence among the children the unats' way of life. Majority of the respondents were practicing both natural and artificial birth control. Most of them were using pills, herbal plants and rhythm method. The use of pills and their knowledge on rhythm method were provided and lectured by social workers in their community. Evidently, this new knowledge or awareness was effective, for majority of them have ideal number of children in their family. Majority of the respondents, the mothers were the ones who were taking care of their children. This was not surprising, for mothers around the world, are known to be responsible in rearing their children. Moreover, the eldest child or some relatives were also helping in rearing the children aside from the mother.

TABLE VI.

Educational Attainment of Husbands	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
High School Graduate	1	3.33%
High School Level	5	16.67%
Elementary Graduate	5	16.67%
Elementary Grade Level	18	60.00%
Uneducated	1	3.33%
Total	30	100%

Majority of the male respondents had attained only elementary grade level. Though most of them wanted to finish their education, economic reason, limited access, and their lost their interest are some of the reasons why they failed to do so. Furthermore, during their younger years, they need to work and help their families in farming. Also, the income of their family was not enough to support their education. Likewise, they had no access on public schools where they could study because the schools were located far away from the vicinity. Unlike now, wherein there is a public elementary school within their vicinity. That is why their children have a higher level of educational attainment than their parents.

TABLE VII.

Educational Attainment of Wives	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Vocational Graduate	2	6.67%
High School Level	11	36.67%
Elementary Graduate	6	20.00%
Elementary Grade Level	11	36.67%
Total	30	100%

Most of the female respondents had attained elementary grade and high school level. It was observed that the female respondents who reached high school level were the unats. This was because their families value education and that according to them, they were not strictly required to help in farm unlike their brothers. This gave them the time and opportunity to study though the schools were distant from their homes.

TABLE VIII.

Highest Educational Attainment of Children	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
College Graduate	1	3.33%
College Level	1	3.33%
High School Graduate	6	20.00%
High School Level	9	30.00%
Elementary Graduate	1	3.33%
Elementary Grade Level	12	40.00%
Total	30	100%

Majority of the children of the respondents are studying in elementary, high school and college. But data reveal that among the families of intermarried kulots and unats, there were twelve or forty percent of them whose children had only reached elementary grade level. But a great number of them had children whose educational attainment was high school level. Again, due to economic reasons, there were times wherein they need to make a decision of not sending their children to school. Families whose some of their children had finished high school and had reached college level were those whose children were provided with scholarship by non- governmental organizations. If not because of the scholarship, they could not afford sending their children to school. That is why most of them looked for a foundation and NGO's that could serve as benefactors of their children. Because they really wanted to send them to school and educate their children. For they believe that education is the best way to make their children's escape the miserable life they have at present. As a manifestation of the great value of education to intermarried kulot and unat couples, they see themselves as agents whose duty and responsibility is to make their children finish their studies. And educating their children was a pressing concern of each parent because they do not want their children to become ignorant. Furthermore, they wanted their children to land on permanent jobs. Part of their desire is for their children to become literate and have a brighter future. They do not want

their children to experience what they are experiencing at present. And they believe that education is a mechanism in solving their problem. Such is the reason why, even they only have limited knowledge on the subjects being studied by their children, they do assist them in their studies. They help their children learn easily the basic things they had learned when they were still studying. They helped their children do their assignments and request their eldest children who reached higher level of education to assist and tutor their younger siblings.

Intermarried kulot and unat couples also tried to save money which was allotted for the education of their children. But due to their meager and unstable income, their savings were sometimes being used in their farm supplies and sometimes on the basic needs of the family. But as much as possible, they want to allocate an extra amount for the schooling of their children. For they, too, believe that education is wealth. That once they were able to send their children in school and finished a higher level or degree of education, this meant a lot to them and considered as a major accomplishment as parents.

TABLE IX.

Source of Living/ Livelihood	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A. Farming	21	70.00%
B. Construction Worker/ Laborer	4	13.33%
C. Others (Tour Guide, Vendor)	5	16.67%
Total	30	100%

Majority of the respondents were farmers. Husbands support the needs of their family through the earnings they had in farming. Respondents who were involved in farming were being helped and assisted by their wives and their children in soil preparation and crop cultivation, in planting, in harvesting and other farm activities. Wives whose husbands were construction workers/ laborers, and tour guide work as vendors. Others were plain housewives who were raising their children. It is notable that other than these sources of living, almost all of the respondents have farm animals and livestock such as cow, carabaos, goats, pigs, chickens, ducks as additional source of income. Majority of the respondents, whether kulots or unats, complement each other in farming including their children.

TABLE X.

Farming Practices as to Number of Hectares of Land presently Till	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
a. less than a hectare	2	9.52%
b. one hectare	9	42.86%
c. more than a hectare	10	47.62%
Total	21	100%

Since most of the respondents were farmers, great number of them tills more than a hectare. This means that they have enough fields to farm to earn for a living. Though

majority of them do not have an ownership of the land they till as these are owned by other people and some were military reservations.

TABLE XI.

Farming Practices as to Use of Farm Irrigation	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A. Yes	0	
B. No (rainfall)	21	100%
Total	21	100%

Though most of the respondents were earning a living from farming, majority of them do not use any way to increase their harvest or increase their number of crops in a year. This was because they only rely on rainfall, that is why they could only till their soil properly during rainy seasons. They have no irrigations which would enable them to do second and third cropping.

TABLE XII.

Farming Practices as to Main Crops	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
a. Gabi	18	85.71%
b. Kamote (sweet potato)	15	71.43%
c. Palay (rice)	21	100%
d. others (fruits, vegetables)	21	100%

Because of the lack of water supply to irrigate their crops and since many of the practice upland farming, majority of the respondents found an alternative way of cropping aside from planting palay (rice). Majority of the respondents were also planting fruits and vegetables aside from palay to support their family consumption needs. They eat what they harvested and sometimes sell their other crops. Due to lack of water supply, after the harvest of their palay crops, they also plant kamote (sweet potato) and taro (gabi) which do not need as much water as that of palay. From these crops, they derived meager income to finance their family needs.

V. POLITICAL LIFE OF RESPONDENTS

All of the respondents including their children of legal age were registered voters and regularly practicing suffrage. They believe that being a registered voter was a form of recognition of the government of their existence and of their political right. Only rare of them who were involved or engaged in local elections. But for them, their non-participation in seeking a political position was not a manifestation of their lack of political interests. Given the chance that they have the money and resources to use in their political campaign, they would surely run for a public office. That is why some them, though not officially elected, were political leaders and chieftains in their respective communities or sitios in Barangay Sta Juliana.

As voters, majority of them, share the common sentiment among electorates into supporting political candidates who have good platform for them and for their communities; leaders who could provide their emergency needs; and those who could provide them favor in times when they need it. As

voters, they were independently making decisions who to vote. The head of the family, usually the father would tell the voting members of the family of whom to vote, but that was only an option and not compulsory. But in most cases, as a family of voters, they support the political candidate who just recently helped them in any form or kind of help or assistance as their way of showing their gratitude to the person.

TABLE XIII.

Religious Practices as to Sect Affiliated	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Roman Catholic	15	50.00%
Protestant (Methodist)	13	43.34%
Iglesia ni Cristo	1	3.33%
Others (Aglipayan, Saksi ni Jehovah)	1	3.33%

Majority of the respondents were affiliated in the dominant religion in the country, the Roman Catholic Church. Also, a great number of them were Protestants or Methodists, this means that even the aetas were already converted in the religion of the unats. And the practice of their aeta rituals and beliefs have somehow been supplanted with biblical one's. This signifies that the unats were very influential to the aetas as manifested in the conversion of their religion.

TABLE XIV.

Religious Practices as to Rituals Performed/ Attended	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Mass/ <i>Samba</i>	30	100%
Church Wedding	15	50.00%
Baptism	18	60.00%
Burial	30	100%
Pabasa/ Senakulo	10	33.33%

Evidently, as most of the respondents were Christians, all of them or one hundred percent had attended a mass or church service and burial practice. While sixty percent of them had attended Christian baptism when they had their children baptized and when they served as godfather or godmother. Not all of them were able to let their children be baptized because of economic reasons. To them, baptism is a way of bringing children in the Kingdom of God and should be celebrated with sumptuous foods as a form of thanksgiving. Fifty percent of them had experienced attending church wedding, especially the couples who had a Christian church wedding, which is the case of many of the younger couples. While least of them had performed or witnessed pabasa and senakulo which commemorate the sacrifices of Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind.

VI. VIEWS ON RELIGION

Majority of the respondents viewed religion and their religious activities as ways of asking God for help or favor for a prosperous life for the family. Through religion, they were able to comfort themselves especially in times of

trouble and hardships, such as when a member of the family was sick or had a financial problem. This also gave them hope in facing their future. Through the religious activities, they were able to have experience getting associated or acquainted with other people. They were able to experience being together as a family which strengthened their bonds and closeness. By attending mass and prayers they were able to communicate to God the desire of their hearts and bring salvation in their lives.

A. *Level of Involvement on Socio- Civic Activities*

Majority of the respondents had moderate degree of socio- civic involvement in their place. They only attended socio- civic activities that concern them and their family. For majority of them needed to attend their farming activities because this is their means of livelihood. There were times wherein they had free time and attended meetings which were called by their chieftain, barangay captain or any politician, though they did not consider this as a much concern, they also participated and cooperated. However, at times when their presence was needed and they were tasked in the implementation of a project or program in their community, the respondents whether kulots or unats, were found to participative. There were also times wherein they also lost interest to some programs or projects extended to them due to lack of support and continuity of the program or project initiated by educational institutions, NGO's or LGUs.

B. *Aspirations and Happiness in Life*

Majority of the respondents considered themselves happy if they were able to provide the basic needs of their children. Because of the economic hardships that they were experiencing, the provision of their basic needs was deemed the most important matter to them. Moreover, the acquisitions of home furniture and appliances also made them happy. For these indicate that they were economically elevating. But what they truly aspire is to be able to send their children to school and educate them. They could patiently afford sacrificing having a decent home, beautiful clothes and delicious foods for the sake of their children's education. For them, the achievement and educational attainment of their children is what brings them the real happiness and contentment in life.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

In general, the life pattern of intermarried aetas and lowlanders in Barangay Sta. Juliana, Capas, Tarlac, was found tilted toward the lowlander's way of life. This is particularly true in terms of their family/marriage and religious life. Though there are great similarities in terms of economic and production practices when compared with the lowlanders, the intermarried families' economic life pattern was still awkward as traditional farming practices are still predominant and that their standard of living was still behind. This is attributable to their limited access to means of production and other factors like poor education and even low level of motivation. As a consequence thereof, the families of intermarried couples in the village of Sta. Juliana had a relatively shallow political participation and

involvement in socio-civic activities. It is interesting to find out that their aspirations in life are not far different when compared to ordinary families and that is the provision for education and other basic needs for their children. It is evident that the continued intermarriage of Aetas and lowlanders could eventually lead to the total obliteration of the cultural pattern of Aetas.

A. *Implications of the Study to Planned Change and Project Development*

With the life pattern of intermarried kulots and unats being almost the same with the lowlanders, the following could be considered:

1. Development interventions intended to help alleviate the life of minority group could be formulated and implemented tapping this sector - intermarried couples – as initial partners. In the process, they could serve as mechanism of influencing the other minority (Aeta) families in the execution of any development interventions;
2. Programs that are aimed at improving their skills if and when introduced should strictly take into account the opportunities in the community, the resources, and the jobs that are available nearby. This is to ensure the utilization of such skill/s which, subsequently, could entice others into becoming more motivated in their socio-economic endeavors; and
3. The eventual acculturation of the Aetas into the social mainstream brought about by the practice of intermarriage offer some signal for development thinkers to review the usual models/approaches being applied on interventions intended for indigenous communities/minority groups. This is essential since such approaches and models may no longer be appropriate or are already obsolete or worse, could be offensive.

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