

**In Memoriam :  
Mamitua Saber, 1922-1992**

*Mindanao State University, Marawi*

MA. DELIA CORONEL

OBITUARY

**D**R. MAMITUA Saber, Dean of Research and professor of Mindanao State University in Marawi City, died Friday, 31 January 1992, and was buried the next day in solemn Muslim rites on the ancestral property of the royal family of Saber. He was seventy years old.

Dr. Saber, one of the founding fathers of MSU and a member of the Board of Regents, devoted his entire professional life to the service of the university. He held at one time or another nearly all of the major administrative positions at the school, including Head of the Sociology Department, Assistant Dean, Dean, and Vice President. He was the first Vice President for Research and Extension of the University System, and concurrently held the position of Dean of Research and Director of Museums. He was to be awarded the position of professor emeritus at the 1992 commencement ceremony in April, the first person at the university to be so honored.

Well known internationally, Dr. Saber represented MSU at a number of congresses and seminars abroad with his scholarly papers. He was known in national academic circles for his well-researched and well-written articles, monographs, and books, and it was he who initiated the university's research journals.

Dr. Saber founded the University Research Center at MSU in 1962 (at which time the Center was known as the Institute of Research for Filipino Culture). He pioneered the establishment of the Department of Sociology and the Department of Anthropology, and was central in the establishment of the MSU-Filipinas Foundation Inc. Ceramics Development Center. He also started a museum of Muslim arts, which, under the name of the Aga Khan Museum, is the most-visited location on the main campus.

The above-mentioned University Research Center is perhaps Dr. Saber's most important and influential legacy. The Center was created to further the main purpose of MSU's location in the heart of Moroland: to conduct research on "native culture, the sciences, philo-

sophy, arts, and literature" (section 2, RA 1893, which authorized the creation of MSU). To accommodate its expanding scope of operations, the Center was reorganized in 1967 and its name changed from the original Institute of Research for Filipino Culture. In recognition of Dr. Saber's outstanding contribution to the development of the Center and to MSU as a whole, the Board of Regents approved a resolution in March 1992 further renaming the Center as the Mamtua Saber Research Center. The actual renaming took place on 18 March 1992, on what would have been Dr. Saber's seventy-first birthday; the formal unveiling ceremony was held on 13 April 1992, the day of the university's twenty-seventh commencement ceremony. Ambassador Lourdes Quisumbing (Philippine representative to UNESCO) and Mrs. Orfia Sabia presided at the unveiling of the marker. The Center maintains its commitment to the study of the indigenous cultures of the lowland Filipinos, the Muslims, and the highland tribes of Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan. It also publishes a number of important research journals, including the *Mindanao Journal* and *Mindanao Art & Culture*.

Dr. Saber was a graduate of the Pontifical University of Sto. Tomas with a degree in journalism. Later in his career he received M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in sociology from Kansas University on a scholarship grant; his major theses were "Marginal Leadership in a Culture-Contact Situation" (M.A., 1957) and "The Transition from a Traditional to a Legal Authority System: A Philippine Case" (Ph.D., 1967). He began his service in the government as a clerk (translator-researcher) at the National Library from 1939 to 1943, subsequently moving to various university positions. He also served in the Amanah Bank and the Philippine National Red Cross. He was married to Orfia Alicer of Tanauan, Leyte. They have eight children, most of whom are also connected with MSU.

Dr. Saber helped organize the Marawi Sultanate League in 1950, and was *Radia-sa-Marawi* (heir apparent to the Royal House of Datu sa Marawi). He was the first Maranao to be listed in the international *Who's Who Directories* in five countries: England, France, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Singapore.

#### FOLKLORE-RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Dr. Saber published voluminously on a wide range of topics, both scholarly and popular. Among his scores of books and articles are many that are directly or indirectly related to the subject of folklore and anthropology in the Philippines. The following is a brief selection.

- 1938 The one hundred two children of Loksamama and Lok-sababai. *Philippines Magazine*.
- 1940 Three wives. *Philippines Magazine*.
- 1941 The bluffing sultana. *Oriental Art and Culture Magazine*.
- 1942 How the angels built Lake Lanao. *Philippine Mid-Week Herald*.
- 1948 Pituimanes and the feathered-ghosts. *The Varsitarian*.
- 1942 *Radia Mangandiri: A Lanao version of the Indian Ramayana*.
- 1949 Moro chess. *Sunday Times Magazine*, 17 July.
- 1960 Problems of community development among cultural minorities. *Philippine Sociological Review* 3-4.
- 1964 Some observations on Maranao social and cultural transition. *Philippine Sociological Review*.
- 1969 Muslim Filipinos in unity and diversity. In *Man and Culture in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan*. Quezon City: Commission on National Integration.
- 1973 *Maranao folk art: Survey of forms, designs, and meanings* (with Dionisio G. Orellana). Study series no. 10. Marawi City: Preliminary Edition.
- 1975 The following contributions were in *The Maranao*, which Dr. Saber edited in conjunction with A. Madale (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House):
- Henpecking wives.
  - The chaste lady who outwitted sinners.
  - Magical and curative practices.
  - Four Maranao folktales.
  - Marawi City: From a *kota* to a metropolis.
  - Pangamong*: An ancient confederation.
  - Problem of community development among cultural minorities.
  - Mindanao State University: Center of preservation and change.