

Torogan - Royalty House

MARANAO, LANA DEL SUR PROVINCE, NORTHWESTERN MINDANAO ISLAND, SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. *The most imposing and regal of vernacular Philippine architecture is the torogan of the Maranao. Its exteriors are so ornately decorated with the classic okir design motifs that four of these houses in the past served as models for artisans in decorating artifacts that they produce. This made the okir motifs very conventional, thus creating the Maranao identity in art.*



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The classic "S" form of the naga motif of the Maranao, carved on a panolong, an ornamental floor beam end extension of the royal house, torogan.



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A TOROGAN is built for a *sultan* or *datu* who holds the highest rank in a community. It is an ancestral-communal house where he resides with his closest relatives. It is a multi-purpose building which functions as a meeting hall when the sultan or the datu calls for a conference. It also serves as a social hall for community gatherings like weddings, coronations of datos and *ba'i a labis* and clan gatherings on the death of a member of the royal clan. It is also a place for settling family disputes. Aside from these functions, the *torogan* also symbolizes the rank and leadership of the occupant and owner.

A torogan is a stiff-roofed building decorated with seven or more *panolongs* at the front and sides. These are not found in ordinary houses in a community as they symbolize power, rank and leadership. The panolong is a beam-end or a prow carved with a combination of floral and *naga* (dragon) designs. It is also used to decorate *lamins* (room atop the torogan especially intended for a daughter or maiden), mosques and bancas. The wall sidings and other parts of the house are also decorated with *okir* designs. There are no bedrooms in a torogan except for one called a *gibbon*, which is constructed only for the sultan's daughter.

One can determine the number of families residing in a torogan by the number of *kolambo* (canopies) hanging there. The kolambo serves as a protection from the cold and a shield from mosquitoes. The sultan's bed is located at the *sendigan* (place of honor) and is always far from the entrance of the house. Other families

occupy the other parts surrounding the sultan's sleeping area to protect him. His bed is always elevated and is called a *panggao* in recognition of his being the head of the royal clan. Chests serve as dividers for every family bed and are also used as headboards. Valuable things are kept in the chests.

In the past, slaves also lived there, in the kitchen or under the torogan. They serve the needs of the family, maintain the household, operate the kitchen, care for garments and other tasks. Male slaves work in the field and fish to add to the income of the sultan. The community used to pay tribute but this has changed.

A torogan also has a *paga*, an elevated bedroom which is the hiding place of the daughter in the absence of a gibbon. It also serves as a utility room during big gatherings. The ladies responsible for the *pembamaan* (chewing ingredients) prepare these in the paga. A *bilik* is an emergency hideout for the daughter when unexpected guests come. It is located at the sultan's *kaolonan*, the back of the bed's headboard.

The *lana* (yard) of a torogan is where affairs that cannot be conducted in the house are held. Weddings, *kandato*, *kambaye* (coronation of princesses) and *kalilang* are held inside the torogan. Sports like *kasipa sa manggis*, *kasipa*, *kangogorowa* and *kanggarotaya* (tug-of-war) are held in the lana.

Hadja Mo'fida Binolawan M. Tawano



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