

sity for new models to provide the pattern for future development should be

high on the priorities of thinking men of today.

Promissory and Dept Aspects of the Folk Ritual in Misamis Oriental

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One of the most important but least-studied aspects of Filipino rural life is the folk-ritual system.¹ Yet in the writer's opinion the success of plans to develop the Philippine agricultural economy in the face of the national "population explosion" depends, to a large extent, upon a keen understanding of and an appropriate adaptation to this ritual system. This paper will discuss the debt and promissory aspects of several more important types of rituals in Misamis Oriental all of which have some

connection with crop production. The data presented is the result of a year of field study in this province.

Systematic and Legal Aspects of the Ritual System

Human activities connected with economic sufficiency, self-preservation, general welfare and begetting of kind are closely intertwined with ritual performance. The people are equipped with systematized practices to meet the problems attendant on their daily activities such as fishing, farming, hog and cattle raising. Sickness, accidents, or community epidemics are readily avoided or overcome by ritualism.

Most people believe in the existence and rights of "spirits" (*mga ginlilinan, dili ta parehas, inkantados* and others). Some believe that they were the first invisible creatures who sinned against God and were consequently punished and exiled. Whatever the universality of this "punishment" concept, almost all the folk believe that these "spirits" occupy every corner of this earth. Here, they have assumed the right of ownership and perhaps the duty also of protecting their respective habitats. Thus, the "spirits of the sea" own the sea, the fishes and the plants that grow therein. The "spirits" are believed to protect their

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¹ Folk rituals generally include four significant divisions and parts. First, the introductory prayers done before the chicken is slaughtered, and aimed at informing and inviting the spirits to the offering. Secondly, the spirit meal offered which consists of cooked rice, boiled chicken (saltless), tuba, water, cigarettes, tobacco, biscuits and cheap wine (*Kulapo*). Odd-numbered plates hold these ritual objects. Cigarettes, tobacco, and biscuits are always served in odd numbers. Thirdly, the *Pamalabag* during which the supernatural animals, like dogs, cats and chicken of the spirits, are fed with feathers, entrails, food, and viand. These unseen animals are very ferocious and must be fed lest they attack the people. The spirit masters are also offended if their animals are neglected. Fourthly, the conclusion of the ritual in the form of *throwing* little bits of each of the food offering out of the window for the bashful invalid, blind, and deaf spirits. The spirit latecomers also get a share. Lastly, water is poured on the ground to signify the end of the meal—the washing of the hand of the spirits.

properties from intruders, especially the impolite adventurers.

Rituals as Acknowledgement and Signs of Respects for the Spirit Owners

Although the "spirits" are conceived of as owning (*tag-iya*) the lands and trees of their habitats, men may use these properties providing they duly acknowledge the rights of the "spirits" and show corresponding respect. This conception of the "supernaturals" and their rights compels the people to perform appropriate rituals before and after making use of the land and other fruits of nature. The people strongly believe in the superiority, power, sensitiveness, and dangerousness of the "spirits." Unexplainable sickness, sudden death, or destruction of crops, livestock and property are considered as punishments for any violation or transgression of the "spirits" rights.

Before Use of Land.

The *Pananghid*. Permission to clear a virgin forest for the first time for *kaingin* or *sakum* purposes is first politely secured from the "spirits" who dwell in the particular forest. This is done by performing the *Pananghid* ritual a few days before the actual cutting of trees. Aside from securing the permit to clear the forest, the ritual is also aimed at giving the "spirits" a chance to vacate the area. Non-performance of this permit-seeking ritual may result in physical deformities, sickness, or accidents to the *kaingeros* or to their families.

The *Patadlis*. When a piece of land is plowed for the first time (*bungkag*) the *Patadlis* ritual is performed. The "spirits" residing in the land are informed of the ground breaking by means of the plow. This (*primerong samad*) calls for the *patadlis* ritual for two reasons. First, to ask permission from the "spirits" to plow the ground, and secondly, to

avoid any harm or destruction to those "spirits" who may be roaming the field, while the ground is being plowed. The plow, the work animal, and the farmer are the three important ritual objects during the observance of this *Patadlis*. Chicken blood is smeared (*padugo*) on the plow, the work animal, and the ground to signify due recognition of the "spirits."

The *Mag-Ibabasuk*. Rice and corn planting in a newly cleared and burnt forest is marked with a *kaingin* sowing ritual called *Mag-Ibabasuk*. This is necessary to renew the permit secured during the forest clearing ritual, to inform the "spirits" of the sowing, and to implore their help for an abundant harvest. Failure to honor the "spirits" during planting may result in the farmer's death, accidents to his family, and/or invasion of insects or other wild animals on his crops. The *Mag-Ibabasuk* comprises three parts. First, the *Padugo* or *Daga* ritual, the part during which the seeds (to be sowed) placed at the center of *kaingin* are smeared with chicken blood. The blood on the seeds is the tag or label showing due respect to the "spirits." Secondly the *Padugo* on the measuring ganta, the *kalutan* flooring (a table and altar-like structure) and on the *salanga*, a pole with spread top which holds some soil. This second chicken-bleeding-rite is meant to honor the "spirits" of the above-mentioned ritual objects. Thirdly, the meal offering for *Ibabasuk*, the "spirits" in the vicinity, nearby forests, and all the "spirits" of big stones, rivers, hills, and mountains. Appropriate prayers go with the different parts. A promise to give the "spirit" their share of the expected crops is an integral and indispensable part of the planting ritual.

OLD LAND. The acres of land that are presently tilled around Misamis Oriental are no longer *ihalas* or wild

due to the fact that they have been repeatedly farmed. Permission from particular "spirits" to work the land is not required anymore. Continuous farming of old pieces of land presupposes the granting of the permit (by the "spirits") to the original tillers in the past.

Although the permit to work an "old piece of land" is no longer necessary, the farmer must continue acknowledging the "spirits" right of ownership over the land. Farmers must not cease to pay due respects to the unseen owners of the land who control the quality and quantity of the crops. Respectful acknowledgement of the "spirits" existence and rights are generally expressed during the planting and harvesting seasons.

The *Padugo*. The practices of dripping chicken or any four-legged animal's blood (*padugo*) on the grains before sowing is a way of paying respects to the "spirits." Non-observance of this sowing rite will not earn the farmer punishment from the "spirits." The *padugo* is disappearing.

The *Panaad*. During the planting or sowing, a majority of the rural folk silently promise (*Panaad*) the "spirits" their share of the future harvest in the form of a meal offering. The *Panaad* which is solemnly made by the farmer himself must be faithfully carried out. Some of the farmers perform the *padugo* and at the same time make a promise (*panaad*) of a meal offering (harvest ritual). A few of them practice neither the *padugo* nor the *panaad*. But they consider the observance of a meal offering during harvest a necessary tribute to the "spirits."

The Irreparability of the "Debt"

The folk's concept of the spirit world coupled with their belief that the "spirits" control the quality and quantity

of crops strengthen their feeling of dependence upon the "spirits." For any harvest realized, farmers feel and believe they owe the "spirits" a "debt." The writer believes that the "debt" meant here by the farmers is the "debt of gratitude" (*Utang kabu-but-on*) which cannot be paid, if not hard to repay. A farmer (the "master of ceremonies" during his harvest ritual) when interviewed after a harvest ritual performance said: "Kung utang pa nga mabayran, nabayran na." (If this were a debt that can be repaid then it would have been paid by this ritual. But it is not such a debt.) This implies that the debt incurred by the farmer from the "spirits" is not an ordinary debt, one that can be paid back by exact amounts.

The debt becomes more binding and exacting if the farmer during planting promises (*panaad*) the "spirits" a meal offering at harvest time. "Spirits" expect fulfillment of the promise. Failure to carry out the promise will arouse anger from these supernaturals. If for reasons other than economic, a promised offering is not made, the "spirits" will demand payment (*bayad*) of the debt. The payment is exacted (*paningil*) in the form of accidents, sickness, or destruction to the farmer, his household members, property, or work animals. Punishments which are proportional to guilt are "debt" warnings and reminders from the "spirits," meant to activate the farmer into making the offering which was long overdue.

Harvest Rituals. The harvest rituals for rice and corn staples are ways of living up to a vow or promise made during the planting season. These are called *undas*, if for upland rice, and *tilaw*, if for wet agriculture. Corn harvest rituals are called *lagti*. Among the agricultural rituals practiced in this area, the harvest ceremonies are the

most important and widely practiced. Aside from being a thanksgiving offering to the "spirits" (for the new harvest) it is also a seasonal "payment" (bayad) of the "debt of gratitude" incurred from them. It is also a means of acknowledging the existence and rights of the supernaturals. "Spirits" demand and collect their share (*bahin*) of the harvest because they own the land. Thus, people must give them top priority. A new crop cannot be tasted, eaten, or given away to neighbors or visitors unless the necessary ritual is performed. This is a ritual inhibition especially when the crops are carried across rivers or streams. Strict observance of this tabu is a must. Non-conformity results in death or accidents to the farmer and/or his family. It may at the same time result in the complete destruction of his crops or properties.

The necessity of fulfilling the obligation to perform the harvest ritual is grave when the land is "used to" or *anad* to such practices. Thus, farmers who newly work a piece of land which is "used to" rituals continue the practice to avoid punishments from the "spirits."

Health Rituals

As mentioned, punishments for unkept promises and for trespassing on the "spirits" rights and properties, whether intentional or unintentional, can affect the health of the people. A sick person usually undergoes a "sickness analysis rite" either in the forms of *Bala*, which is done by looking at the shapes of melted alum, or by finger measurements called *Dangaw-dangaw*, or through pulse analysis called *himulso*. Pulsebeats are of four varieties. Natural beats indicate a purely physiological ailment. Slow and irregular pulse beats show sickness caused by *kalag* or the souls of departed relatives. Rapid but

irregular pulse beats prove that an ailment is caused by the "spirits." An alternation of both slow and rapid pulsations indicates an ailment caused by people (*buyaganon*) having black tongues. A medicine-man-ritualist called *seruhano*, *baylan*, *mahibalo*, and *dakuon* officiate at these practices.

Human ailments are either purely physiological, psychosomatic, or supernaturally caused. When the medicine-man finds out that sickness is caused by "spirits" (*gui-uban-ubanan*) he immediately intercedes with the supernaturals. Ailments or diseases which are supernaturally caused are frequently punishments for unkept promises, obligations, or any deliberate or indeliberate violation of either the personal or property rights of the "spirits." For both cases, cure depends upon a heartfelt promise of a meal offering (*maglamisa*) to the "spirits" concerned.

A patient is observed for three days. If his condition improves, it reinforces the analysis of the ritualist and at the same time indicates the effectiveness of the ritual treatment. The promised offering must be immediately carried out. Delay, negligence or forgetting a promised food offering may result in the patient's relapse or death.

Childbirth Rituals and the Female Line

Folk practices and observances carried out to facilitate pregnancy, childbirth, and growth of infants are often systems of fulfilling family promises or petitions to the "spirits" who control fertility. All the daughters and the female descendants of a woman who was safely born into this world through the observance of the *ami-mi-sol* ritual assume the obligation to continue observing the same practice during pregnancy.

Performance of the amimisol during the conception and delivery of first born babies automatically stamps on the mother an obligation to repeat the same observance during succeeding pregnancies. An expectant mother who fails to meet her "amimisol obligations" will surely lose her child. A mother who safely gives birth through the observance of the ritual incurs a debt from the "spirits." Out of gratitude and of sincere belief in the efficacy of the fertility ritual, a repetitive performance of promises takes place during the expected pregnancy. All female descendants are obliged to pay the debt incurred during their respective pregnancies. The debt incurred from the "Amimisol spirits" is serious; promises are made as expressions of gratitude and as pleas for continuous assistance in the future. The amimisol is a family observance but it runs through the female line only.

Community Protection Rituals

When a community is affected with a calamity or an epidemic, the folk explain this as punishment from the "spirits." Punishments are imposed due to failure of the members of a community to keep their promises. Debt from the "spirits" is incurred by the residents for the non-fulfillment of promises. Yearly community practices called *Panahud* or *Pangampo* are analogous forms of debt repaying rituals. However, these rituals are also precautionary measures against any forthcoming sickness or a calamity.

Strange signs or omens observed within a locality usually alert people about an approaching disease. A big and queer-looking piece of driftwood or a log that floats against the waves in an open sea stands for the rolling ship of the "spirits" who bring disaster. The arrival of an extraordinarily beautiful

and fair-complexioned lady marks the introduction of a disease into the community. Folks also rely upon meaningful dreams of any of the ritualists of the place. People believe that unusual dreams are message carriers, especially concerning sickness or epidemics. A community prevents approaching diseases through a meal offering and prayers through a meal offering and prayers to the "spirits."

January and February are the usual months during which these ritual obligations are met. The people as a social group contribute in cash or in kind for the food offering. Almost all the ritualists in the area headed by a principal and two secondary baylans officiate at the ritual performance which usually takes place along the seashore or by the riverbank. Ritual prayers are petitionary in nature. The group of ritualists celebrating the Panahud or Pangampo request the "spirits" to depart and to get their toll from other distant and densely populated communities. The "master of ceremonies" further tells these supernaturals to eat and bring with them everything that is served. "There are our yearly payments" "Kini among tinuig nga bayad", the principal ritualist says while throwing coins and brass rings. At the end of the Panahud, the principal ritualist scatters some *linupot*, a combination of viand, cigars, biscuits, betel-nut and buyo leaves wrapped in smoked banana leaves. The cessation of an epidemic, the disappearance of omens and signs, or a re-dreaming of a positively meaningful event means a thorough supplication of the "spirits." Once begun, the obligation to perform the Panahud is perpetual.

Rituals for the Protection of Domestic Animals

The practice of asking "permission" and showing respect also extend to

asking for protection; fertility and good health for their domestic animals (*mga buhion*) who use the fields and fruits of the fields of the "spirits." Cattle, carabaos, hogs, and chickens have their respective "spiritual owners and protectors." Rural folks earnestly believe that the "spirits" are responsible for good health, rapid multiplicity, and freedom from accidents of animals. This mental outlook makes them feel indebted to the concerned supernaturals. Non-observance of the *Pamahandi* ritual for domestic animals will lead to their destruction or death. Out of gratitude, people feel a compulsion to offer at least one animal yearly to be shared by the "spirits" who keep watch over their animals. Gratitude is commonly expressed by making an explicit promise of offering a big meal yearly for these supernaturals. Failure to offer the "spirits" their "yearly share" will result in their wrath. "Spirits" collect (*maningil*) what is due them. Non-fulfillment of a yearly obligation results in accidents, destruction, or unexplainable deaths to either the owner, his family and/or his animals.

Probable Connection with Resistance to New Farm Techniques

The folk rituals make use of and operate in an environment of the traditional techniques. The new agricultural and health techniques *often do not* harmonize so well with old techniques. Therefore these are resisted by the deeply-rooted rituals.

Conclusion

The ritual system is self-sustaining. It is not only perpetual but significantly a closed system. Appropriate rituals are performed for petitionary or precautionary purposes. Favors asked may be either personal, familial, or community-wide. When favors are granted and no troubles arise, rituals must be ob-

served to express gratitude. Non-performance will earn the person or the community concerned punishment from the "spirits." Fear of the "spirits" wrath compels a person to submit to ritualism.

When troubles or calamities (accidents, sickness or unexplainable deaths) affect individual persons, the community or their livestock, the folk conceive these to be punishments from the "spirits." The "spirits" are punishing individuals or social groups either because of infidelity (failure to keep promises) or trespasses on the properties and rights of "spirits." Therefore, rituals are carried out to stop the punishments and appease the supernatural beings concerned. Non-performance will surely earn immediate and worse punishments.

The rituals probably have a second function besides the manifest function of appeasing the "spirits." Very probably, they also serve to relieve the farmer of very deep anxieties regarding the quality and quantity of his crops, regarding his and his family's health, and regarding their property.

The rituals are socially enforced. Relatives, friends, neighbors, and *compadres* urge the head of a household to comply with his ritual obligations and also perform other beneficial rituals. The kin members advise and promote the performance of rituals to avoid the wrath of the "spirits." The people do not want to take chances. They strongly believe that nothing is lost if they follow these folk practices. If they don't, they not only suffer the consequences, they also *miss* out on some of the benefits derived from them.

The rituals are hindrances to health and agricultural development at present, but, perhaps, ways of using the rituals can be developed to promote rather than block progress.

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Magahat Marriage Practices

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The institution of marriage is world wide. It establishes the accepted relations between husband and wife, parents and children, and their respective relatives. Among the Magahats of Southern Negros, the alliance formed by the two families is more important than the marriage itself. The *dagdag* (bride

price or dowry) is one important demonstration of this fact. Thus, marriage by capture is relatively unimportant because it brings little, if any, of the benefits that are to be obtained from the kinship alliances of normal marriages.