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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.

In this paper, details will be devoted to the ways in which the Magahats enter into marriage, and how they may get out of it, if they so desire. In order to understand Magahat marriage it is necessary to grasp this basic principle expounded by Professor E. Adamson Hoebel:

Marriage constitutes an alliance between two kin groups in which the couple concerned is merely the most conspicuous link. Everyone learns, sooner or later, if he does not know it now, that when he marries the one and only, he marries not only her but all her relatives as well. Brides, of course, have the same experience. (Hoebel 1959: 303)

The Kagun and Marriage Negotiations

The *kagun* (go-between) is a person considered to be very prestigious. Normally, he is old. He need not be a *pangulo* (headman) but he must possess a high social standing in the mountain area. He is known to be "wise" and is a versatile conversationalist. In every Magahat settlement, there is always one kagun who is called upon to do the negotiation when the need arises. Ordinarily, the parties involved in a marriage discussion employ a kagun. In some instances, however, the fathers serve in order to avoid unnecessary payments in kind for the kagun's services.

Wife selection is both a family and an individual affair. It is individual in the sense that the Magahat young man considers his own feelings as much as he can. This consideration should not be construed to mean courtship and romantic love are prerequisites to marriage because that is not the case. It is a family affair because even if the young man has chosen a girl, his parent's and kinsmen's views determine

the final choice. The boy's parents enumerate the advantages and disadvantages that can be brought about by such union. When the advantages are in their favor, the negotiations will proceed, otherwise the young man gives up the girl of his choice and takes the one that his parents may select for him.

When a girl has been selected, four to six male relatives of the young Magahat, his parents, and a kagun, proceed to the girl's settlement. They may carry with them food and about ten gallons of tuba, a popular alcoholic beverage made from the flower of a coconut tree and which has been purchased from the coastal barrio. This preliminary visit is to sound out the girl's parents. This is locally known as *pamalaye* which literally means "a house visit to ask for the hand of the girl." The hospitality of the host is shown by offering *malam-on* (a for chewing delicacy made of betel nut, betel leaf, tobacco, and lime) to the visitors. Tuba and food brought by the visitors are also served.

While this is being done, a conversation about varied matters transpires. The talk may be about the last wild pig hunt or the number of cavans of palay they were able to harvest from their *kaingins*. During this informal conversation, care is taken not to mention the real purpose of the visit. But the girl's father is not to be fooled by all this. When the proposal is made by the kagun, the girl's father pretends not to have heard him at all; instead he talks of a topic very much unrelated to the proposal. He makes many excuses and pretends that he is very sleepy and begins to yawn.

However, the boy's kagun determinedly drives his point home; he insists that they have come to ask for the hand of the girl in marriage. The

girl's father, knowing that he has exhausted all his excuses, tells his visitors to leave and to return on a day he sets aside—in order to give him enough time to inform his relatives about the marriage proposal. After this, further conversation is useless. The girl's father next requests a piece of split rattan from his wife; when this is handed to him he ties as many knots as he desires. —In one particular case where I was an onlooker, there were fifteen knots. The knots correspond to the number of nights that the visitors have to wait. In this instance, the father has told his visitors to return on the fifteenth night. —When they leave, the food and tuba which have not been consumed are not brought back by the donors. It is considered bad manners to do so.

Within the waiting period, both sides are busy. The girl's father sends a messenger to inform all their kin. On the boy's side, all the relatives are also informed of the appointed day. When the boy's relatives learn of the marriage proposal, they immediately procure gifts and deliver them to the boy's parents. As each night passes, a knot from the split rattan is untied until only one knot is left. On the agreed day, the young man's parents, relatives, and close friends proceed to the girl's home, this time in increased numbers. The relatives and friends accompanying the party, help carry the presents and food consisting principally of cooked rice and meat. Tuba is carried in big bamboo containers.

Upon arrival, the persons carrying the food and tuba do not go up to the house. The kagun, the boy's parents, and the relatives with presents ascend the stairs after the proper amenities have been observed; this consists merely of the announcement that they have arrived as agreed upon. The first thing

they do after they have been requested to sit down is to chew the *malam-on* as is customary. The kagun then opens the conversation by thanking the hosts for their hospitality. Immediately after this, mats are spread on the floor and the marriage proposal is resumed. Both parties sit on the mat facing each other.

The Dagdag or Bride Price

The boy's kagun summarizes everything that took place during the first visit. He tells them that they are all prepared to meet whatever requirements the girl's parents would want to impose on them. Since the most important item in a Magahat marriage proposal is the *dagdag* or bride price, the girl's father immediately summons all his relatives and they huddle together to determine the *dagdag*. Each of the relatives turns over to the girl's father a short stick. Since there are eleven of them, there are eleven sticks. The girl's father throws the eleven sticks on the mat and announce that each stick corresponds to one gift. Thereupon, the boy's kagun requests the girl's father to enumerate the eleven gifts they need. The following items were mentioned:

- One *agong* (Chinese brass gong)
- One *bodiak* (spear)
- One *pinangdan* (spear)
- One *songil* (spear)
- Two *kalis* (dagger)
- One *malingkabao* (dagger)
- One *talibong* (big bolo)
- One sash for belt (red, white and black color combination)
- 100 silver pesos or its equivalent in coins
- 20 pieces of *patadiong* (women's clothing to be made into skirts)
- One gold necklace

After an enumeration of the gift items, the boy's party immediately put down on the mat all the gifts they have brought. The girl's father carefully examines each item to be sure they are acceptable. If they are, the father nods as he picks up each item. Sometimes, the needed items are not included among the gifts brought that day. The boy's kagun immediately assures the bride's parents that the missing items will be delivered as soon as they return to their settlement. This promise is usually accepted by the girl's parents.

Among our primitive contemporaries in South Negros Island, the formal payment of a bride price is the normal and most usual procedure of getting a wife. Bride price is common among the Negritos, Bukidnons, and other cultural minorities in South Negros. But such a practice must not be interpreted to mean that women are mere commodities to be sold to the highest bidders. According to Hoebel (1959: 302):

A commercial element necessarily colors the institution, for after all, a family with five daughters to "sell" and one son for whom a bride must be purchased is economically better off than the family with one daughter to sell and five sons to be provided for. But women are not fluid goods in a free market.

The dagdag demanded by the parents is proportional to the prestige, beauty, and the work capabilities of the woman. When the bride price of a woman is high, the members of the settlement consider her as belonging to the upper bracket of the economic and social scale. There are many other factors involved in a dagdag but the most important factors are *collectivity*, cohesiveness, and alliance of the kin group. An individual in Magahat society does not stand alone. The social position of a person in the Magahat settlement is determined by the number of kinsmen he can look

up to. Marriage is not the concern of the marrying pair alone because the group to which each belongs has its stake in the affair.

When the dagdag and other arrangements have been finally settled by both parties, the mat is cleared off the floor and the food which has been prepared by the boy's party is brought up to the house to be eaten by all present. The drinking of tuba follows. The parents of the marrying pair stay in a separate place, busily eating and conversing. Both fathers address each other now as *balahi* (co-father).

There are other things involved in the giving of the dagdag. Some families do not require much. For some, it is enough to receive money for the bride price and then for the girl's parents to buy the items they want distributed to their relatives. However, if the full amount requested cannot be given at once, it can be paid by installment. In all marriages, a feast usually follows the coming to terms of the parties involved. The feast serves to unify the boy's and girl's relatives.

The Marriage Ceremony

When everyone has eaten, the floor is cleared of everything. A mat is spread on the floor and the bride and groom are summoned by the *babaylan*.—The *babaylan* is also a medicine man, a local priest, or a headman. In the area cited above, a *babaylan* is always an old man. Women are disqualified from this role.—The couple then sit on the mat facing each other. As soon as the bride and groom are in this position, the *babaylan* asks for a plate of rice with viands. This is placed between the groom and the bride. The *babaylan* then instructs the boy to roll with his hands some of the contents of the plate. He feeds this to the girl. As soon as she has

swallowed the food, the girl does the same thing for the boy. In the meantime, all those present are eagerly watching this performance. When all the food on the plate has been consumed, the babaylan covers the couple with a white blanket. He holds the boy's head with his right hand and the girl's with his left hand. In this position, he shouts: "So and so are now husband and wife." With this, the marriage ceremony comes to an end. Dancing and eating follow next. In very isolated places where a babaylan is not available, the girl's father holds the bride and groom either by their heads or by their shoulders and announces that they are already husband and wife. After this, all those present eat and then dance.

Magahat society imposes a check on premarital experience not because they view such activity as evil but rather because economic and other social interests have top priority over sex.

Other forms of Marriages

One of the cheapest (but by no means easy) ways of obtaining a wife without having to undergo the requirements of the dagdag is by the observance of *pan-gagad* whereby the groom serves the girl's parents in lieu of paying the dagdag. In some societies this is known as suitor service. The groom is allowed to stay in the girl's house under close supervision by the girl's parents. Everyday, he performs tasks assigned to him. Here, industry, initiative, and the ability to do any work assigned to him are carefully observed. Should the girl's parents discover that he would not make a good son-in-law, he is told to go home.

Marriage by capture is still practiced by the Magahats. This practice, however, does not exempt one from paying the dagdag, because even if the bride is captured the customary dagdag is still de-

termined by the usual procedure. — Capture may be resorted to by an interested man, aided by two of his male relatives, so that the girl that he likes does not fall into the hands of another. The three of them, armed with bolos, spears, daggers wait in hiding for the girl. When she passes by, the man who loves her grabs her by the hands; the two other men trail her with their spears and bolos pointing at her back. They then move on to the boy's house. If the girl's father learns of the abduction, he will try to overtake his daughter's captors. If they are overtaken, a fight ensues. It is not uncommon to find cases of death and continuous feuding or vendetta as a result of such procedure. However, if the girl and her captors reach the house before her father overtakes them, the father returns home and notifies his relatives about the incident. Sometimes a fight occurs if there is no mediator. Oftentimes, through the advice of some cooler-headed relatives, a go-between from the girl's father is sent to the boy's parents to ask for the dagdag. In one case, the girl's father demanded ₱50 in silver coins as bride price. The amount was given but an additional sum of ₱8 was demanded as a penalty for the unusual procedure in which the boy took the girl. This type of penalty is locally termed *kahuya*, literally meaning "shame."

Marriage by capture eliminates the trouble of negotiations. It is also cheaper since it does not involve extra preparations of food during the period of the marriage proposals. Although quite risky, the procedure is adventurous. Since marriage is an alliance between kin groups, capturing a wife does not establish good interrelations in the long run, because of the improper procedure taken by the boy. From the groom's point of view, it may give him a status symbol and better prestige because of an unusual ability, but as far as the whole settle-

ment is concerned, he is labeled *bastos* (no good).

When the *dagdag* and the *kahuya* are paid, the boy's father sends a messenger to the girl's parents, their children, and relatives within the settlement that can be contacted immediately, to ask them to attend the feast. When they arrive, a live pig is killed in their presence and the meat is cooked. In addition, a live chicken is also killed to indicate that hard feelings are already forgotten by both parties. When the food is ready, the two families jointly eat and drink. The bride and groom stay in the center of the room where a mat is spread for them and the eating ceremony is performed to officially indicate that they are now married.

It is not uncommon to find a married woman being admired by an unmarried man. If the married woman falls in love with this unmarried admirer, they make arrangements for an elopement. Although many primitive groups do not give much weight to romantic love, the fact is that all primitive groups in Southern Negros also have passionate likes and dislikes. Elopements take place in every known society. When the family opposes or blocks an eagerly desired marriage with what it considers an undesirable partner, and is about to pressure an unwilling member, elopement is the only way out.

When a man elopes with a married woman in a Magahat settlement, a feud is sure to result. However, there is a prevailing custom whereby if this should happen, the former husband can demand from the eloper twice the amount he has given to the girl's parents as *dagdag* plus an extra amount of ₱8 as *kahuya*. If the eloper fails to double the amount for the *dagdag*, the former husband can kill the eloper without any fear of revenge or retaliation.

If a woman deserts her husband to live with another man, the woman merely pays back her former husband twice the amount of the *dagdag* he paid for her. The amount of ₱8 as *kahuya* is also paid. This procedure where the woman doubles the *dagdag* is known as *ubay*.

A case of unfaithfulness on the part of the wife has been recorded by the writer. One night, while the husband and wife were sleeping, her admirer came as pre-arranged. The wife went away with him. When the husband woke up the following morning, his wife was no longer there. Armed with spear and bolo, he requested his brother who lived nearby to accompany him in recapturing his unfaithful wife and her suitor. They did not follow the circuitous route taken by the wife and her lover; instead they took a shortcut and waited, hidden, for the two. As his wife and suitor passed by, the husband hacked the suitor with his bolo and stabbed him with his spear. The suitor died instantaneously. The brother held the wife with one hand and the husband began to wound her, starting with the right wrist. With the first wound, the husband uttered, "This wound is for the bracelet I gave you." Then he wounded another part saying, "This wound is for the dress I bought you." There were as many wounds as there were articles for the *dagdag* the husband had given.

As related by the informer, the woman had wounds all over her arms all around the neck, the body and legs. After tallying the wounds with the *dagdag* items, the husband gave one final blow and killed her. The two bodies were left on the spot where they had been ambushed.

The husband then informed the parents of his wife that their daughter had run away with another man, that he had caught up with them, and killed them.

The father, upon knowing this, immediately took his spear and bolo, placed a red turban around his head and went down the coastal region to *magahat* (kill) as revenge for the death of his daughter.

A form of child marriage is practiced among the Magahats. A contract for marriage is arranged in infancy by the parents who guarantee the *dagdag* and the other goods that will be given later. This practice is confined to the upper class Magahats, however. Throughout their childhood, the boy and girl take turns in living in each other's parent's home until they have reached the age of maturity and are ready for the marriage ceremony. When this comes, the *dagdag* is determined and the boy's parents comply with the request. A marriage ceremony, as described before, is performed, together with the usual feast and merry-making.

The only restriction on marriage is made on the basis of relationship. Marriage is forbidden among relatives. A man would not be permitted to marry cousins on his father's and mother's side. There seems to be no prejudice against a woman marrying a man younger than herself or a man marrying a woman younger than himself. A man may marry a woman from his own settlement provided there is no existing blood relationship.

As a rule, the Magahats are monogamous but a man is not forbidden to have two or more wives provided he can afford it. Where a man wants two or more wives, it is customary that he must first secure the permission of his first wife. The first wife becomes the mistress of the house. —In the Magahat settlement I found nine persons with two wives each, and one with three wives. In the case of secondary wives, I found that these were related to the first. Many of the the men with two wives had

married the younger sisters of their first wives, or in the absence of sisters, a woman related to the first wife was the next choice.

It is the duty of the wife to provide the fuel and water for cooking and drinking. It is the duty of the husband to provide viands and do the heavier work in the *kaingin*. Generally, the married couple are happy. Respect, understanding, and kindness prevail in their married life. Any household activity that does not require much physical activity is handled by the wife. Wife faithfulness is a remarkable trait among the Magahats. For the unfaithful, the remedy is death.

Rules of Residence

A newly married couple almost always have a home of their own in a small clearing or *kaingin*. A home is more than a house. The rules of exogamy imply that a man and woman always come from separate conjugal families and separate households. The Magahat practice of residence is patrilocal or virilocal which means that the newly married couple resides in the settlement of the husband. This practice does not deprive an occasional newly married couple of the choice of staying at the wife's residence. But as a rule, a woman after marriage belongs to her husband's local group. There is nothing, however, to prevent a newly married couple from taking up their residence in a new clearing, if they wish. This provides for independent establishment of residence without too much reference to the prior location of the husband's primary conjugal family. This condition indicates the practice of neolocal residence, which indicates in effect, an absence of restrictive rules of residence. There have been a fair number of cases in which the newly married couple left the husband's parents' residence for a

more isolated place in the forest to avoid guards who are always pestering the Magahats to vacate the forestal areas. The further they are from government agents, the better their livelihood.

Conclusion

Let us consider first the Magahat marriage ceremony which is simple and easily understood. Here, the bride and groom are required, before the public, to feed each other. Everywhere in the Philippines, this public demonstration is considered as an expression of love, affection, and detachment. It is sufficient for our purpose to understand that the "plate-eating" ceremony by the bride and groom exhibits feelings of unity. By marriage, the boy and girl have become officially considered as one and they serve as a bridge for both kin groups to become allies in whatever pursuits they may wish to undertake. The ceremony brings clearly to the newlyweds and to the audience or spectators the idea that the two are entering into a new social role and status which they must forever maintain.

The spectators, by their presence, give their approval to the union that was performed before them. The officiator or babaylan who conducts the ceremony is the active representative of the settlement; he assumes his role as a public officer, not as a private individual. By custom, the marriage ceremony is a matter which concerns not only the married couple; but also serves as an announcement to the whole community that the man and woman are now considered husband and wife. —A couple who live together without the proper Magahat marriage ceremony are considered outcasts.

The dagdag or bride price that has been received by the bride's parents are symbolic of the goodwill that the

groom's folks have toward them. The dagdag has the functional effect of cementing the links between the two groups—the bride's and the groom's people. Among the Magahats, there is always existing disruptive tendencies such as disputes, quarrels, feuds and fights. Intermarriage imposes a check on these conflicts and the dagdag tends to put forth a pacifying or tranquilizing effect in this direction. The dagdag involves a number of relatives in a network of economic obligations and expectancies. As Professor G. P. Murdoch has aptly stated:

A bride-price is more than a compensation to parents for the loss of a daughter who leaves their home when she marries. It is commonly also a guarantee that the young wife will be well-treated in her new home. If she is not, she can ordinarily return to her parents with the result that her husband forfeits his financial investment in her. (Murdoch, 1949:21)

Finally, marriage is the normal means of establishing a nuclear or elementary family because the relationship of husband and wife forms the base of the family structure. This fact is strongly supported by Professor Murdoch when he said:

Marriage is a socially sanctioned relationship between a man and a woman involving economic cooperation and residential and sexual cohabitation. The culturally patterned norms of this relationship regularly specify who may and may not enter into it, how it may be established and terminated, and what each partner may and may not do within it. As a relationship, marriage is to be distinguished sharply from the family, the social group within which it is typically embedded. (Murdoch, *et al.* 1950:84)

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Child-Rearing Practices in the Cebuano Extended Family

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Introduction

Filipino society is undergoing a shift from a traditional to a transitional community. Although still largely rural in orientation and in locale, the Filipino family is heading towards urbanization. But while the effects of change are inevitable and sometimes undesirable, some traditional patterns and practices have remained. Time-honored observances continue to identify and to preserve Filipino indigenous culture even while new practices absorbed through education and easier means of communication are finding their way into Filipino life, producing a distinctive blend which may yet characterize the Filipino of tomorrow. The enculturation process is going on.

Of all situational determinants that have momentous effects on personality formation, none are more clear-cut and certain than those that derive from participation in particular family units.¹ It is commonly accepted that family life is a situational determinant par excellence.

¹ Franz Alexander, "Educative Influence of Personality Factors in the Environment," *Personality in Nature Society, and Culture*, eds. Kluckhohn, Murray, Schneider (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), p. 421.

The great interest of psychoanalysis and wider fields of personality research in this primary social unit is premised on the relation between personality formation and the child's early intimate relationships in his own particular family. Parental attitudes, authority patterns, child-rearing practices, composition and structure of families, number, sex and sequence of children, ethno-regional differences, socio-economic stratification, profession or occupation of parents, — are but few of the manifold variations among families within every particular society or culture.

Purpose of the Study

This paper is written with the realization of the scantiness of material on Filipino family sociology and on Filipino child psychology. The field is ripe for investigation and promises to be of value to educators and social scientists. Dr. Guthrie's monograph, *The Filipino Child and Philippine Society*, is an effort to view the Filipino child in his own setting, but it succeeds only partially because of the natural limitations of time and the lack of

² George M. Guthrie, *The Filipino Child and Philippine Society* (Manila: Philippine Normal College Press, 1961).