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Anak Ti Digos

Ilokano Name Changing and Ritual Kinship

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Vanoverbergh has long maintained that, "All over northern Luzon, among Christians as well as among pagans, . . . the Negritos alone excepted, the custom of changing the name of a person at the time of prolonged or dangerous sickness is almost universal, . . ." (1936: 113-114) Thus, among the pagan Isneg the most important reason for name changing was the sickness of a child usually brought about by its being, ". . . pestered by the spirits." (Vanoverbergh 1936: 106) Similarly, in the Christian Ilokano province of Ilocos Sur name changing is practiced as part of the curing rites associated with spirit-caused illness and changes of form brought about by a child's sickness. (Nydegger 1960: 254) Neither author, however, noted any relationship between such name changes and the social organization of the group practicing them. In this paper we will discuss sickness-caused name changing among the

Ilokano of Barrio Suba, Ilocos Norte and relate it to the ritual kinship configuration found in Suba.¹ Specifically we will describe and discuss a ritual configuration based on curing brought about by a complex of pre-Christian practices which we have termed the *Digos* rite.

The *Digos* rite is named after the central element in the complex, a bath given to a sick child by a person who assumes a limited responsibility for the child. The whole configuration² is composed of six parts: (1) a persistently sick child, (2) a diagnosis by a *herbalario*, (3) the bathing rite, (4) the temporary changing of the child's name, (5) an offering of candles to the dead, and

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² Our use of configuration and related terms is derived from the work of H. G. Barnett.

(6) the assumption of a ritual kinship relationship between the involved families.

The Child

Subans utilize both rational and magical approaches towards illness. When rational means fail they unhesitatingly turn to magical means. This reliance upon traditional practices generally indicates that they are faced with an indeterminate illness most likely caused by any one of a number of ill-defined spirits, or *anito*.³ Such illnesses are treated by local practitioners who go under the title of *herbalarío* or *particular*. Many of these persons are specialists in diagnosis and it is to such a practitioner that a persistently sick child will be taken.

The Diagnosis

The herbalist, in most cases, practices both diagnosis, *Talado*, and divination relating to theft and loss. Diagnosis takes the form of interpreting the reactions of substances floated on a liquid. The materials used depend upon the diagnostician, some preferring to use coconut oil and sugar cane wine while others use rice and water. In either case the divining materials are prayed over and the cause of the illness determined. If the child has been sickened by spirits and the *digos* rite is called for, the herbalist will be able to tell the child's parents the name of a person who has recently dreamed about the child. Such dreams often involve the caressing of the child or the saving of it from disaster. The necessity of divining the dreamer's name comes from the belief that people do not often remember their dreams. Consequently, they cannot seek out the parents of the child. Thus, the request for the ritual bath and its ensuing relationships must come from the sick child's

³ In certain illness the causal spirit is well known; for example, *caiba-an*, or unseen dwarf spirits, bring about eye troubles while *saero*, or unseen beings cause skin diseases.

parents. Such requests are seldom refused. Both of these strictures, the direction of request and the near impossibility of refusal, are found in all other forms of Suban ritual sponsorship.

The Bath

The person requested to bathe the baby does not mention anything about dreaming of the child before the bath is given. If they desire, and remember their dream, they may talk of it later. The bath proper is prepared by boiling two kinds of leaves *dungla* and *bayawas*, in a pot that has twenty centavos, or less, in coins placed in it. Along with the bath a *golgol*, or ritual head washing may also be prepared. A common *golgol* that can be used at this time is made up of water, burned rice straw, and sugar cane wine. Ritual head washings are not limited to the *digos* rite, however, but are a standard feature of Iloko crisis-rites in general. Indeed, one informant reported that the *digos* bath itself can be made of water, burned rice straw, wine and money thus combining two bathing elements that others keep separate. Finally, one more variable practice may be added to the bath and the head washing. If the sponsor desires it, a spirit-offering, *atang* may be prepared and offered for the sick child. In this case a simple *atang* consisting of boiled glutinous rice, a hard boiled egg, and a glass each of sugar cane wine and water would be set up in the sponsor's house in front of, "... your picture of Jesus," i.e., near the family shrine or altar if they have one. As is the case with *golgol*, spirit-offerings are not limited to the *digos* rite, but are utilized widely during sickness, rites of passage, harvesting, and at any other occasion when spirits have to be propitiated.

Name Changing

After the cooled bath has been poured over the child a new temporary name

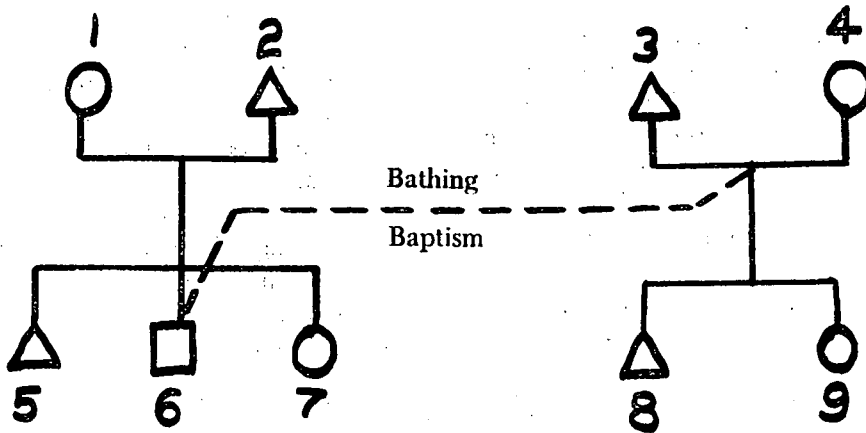
will be given to him or her. The name used will be that of one of the sponsor's grandparents, or parents, so long as they are dead. The child will use this name for anywhere from three days to several weeks. Following this temporary usage he will then take up his former name.

The Candle Offering

After the name change the money from the bath will be used to buy candles that will be offered up in the town church. These may be burned either by

the child's parents or by the sponsor. When they are burnt the person offering them dedicates them to the person whose name the child took or to the recent dead of the sponsor's family. When asked why they offer candles informants will quickly state that it is the custom. Further inquiry will elicit, however, more meaningful answers. These would include the ideas that the grandparent invoked will help the child, or that the dead relatives have been making the child sick. They do this if they feel that their descendants have forgotten about them.

FIGURE 1
Referential Terminologies for Ritual Kinship through Bathing (digos) or Baptism (buniag).



Digos

- 1-3 Compadre/Comadre
- 1-4 comadre/comadre
- 2-3 compadre/compadre
- 2-4 comadre/compadre
- 6-3 ama ti digos/anak ti digos
- 6-4 ina ti digos/anak ti digos
- 5,6,7-8,9 kabagis ti digos/
kabagis ti digos

Buniag

- compadre/comadre
- comadre/comadre
- compadre/compadre
- comadre/compadre
- ama ti buniag/anak ti buniag
- ina ti buniag/anak ti buniag
- kabagis ti buniag/
kabagis ti buniag

Ritual Kinship

When all of the rites have been completed the participants will have become parts of a distinct ritual kinship con-

figuration. This subsystem of relationships parallels in most respects the ritual coparenthood configuration that is the Suban variant of *compadrazgo*. The major

relationships involved are those between the bather and the bathed child, the bather and the child's parents, and the child and the bather's children. The *digos* terminology and the terminology of baptismal *compadrazgo* are given in Figure 1. The terminological and structural isomorphism displayed by the two configurations is equally apparent in the behavioral practices associated with each network. Basically both subsystems are posited on a principle of reciprocal help which is sanctioned by kinship ties and the positive attitudes held towards them. Both feature a respect-prestition relationship between sponsors and sponsored, although this feature is much less developed in the *digos* configuration. Finally, neither seems to regulate marriage in that the operative relationships do not act as an impediment to marriage in the Roman Catholic sense of the word. As for the relative importance of *digos* vs.

buniag relationships in the Suban social system, *digos* relationships are not common nor emphasized even when they do exist. This is because the *digos* rite is performed for only a few children, and in special circumstances, while baptism is for all children who are born to Subans. Both, however, demonstrate the Suban proclivity for handling all person-to-person relationships, in any area of their culture, in terms of a kinship model whose prototype is the nuclear family.

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A Preliminary Study on Alienation

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As a socio-psychological concept alienation is very useful. A growing interest in alienation by contemporary sociologists is bringing about a corresponding increase in empirical studies on alienation. Though it is a popular concept, alienation is often loosely defined. Different authors have defined it in a number of different ways, the popular ones being "powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement."¹ Of these numerous definitions given to alien-

ation, there is however a common feature, i.e. man's feeling of the lack of means or capacity to eliminate the discrepancy between his definition of the role he is playing and the one he feels he should be playing in a situation.² The idea of alienation is broad but attempts nevertheless have been made to relate this concept to specific situations.

One version of alienation comes from Emile Durkheim who wrote about the condition of relative normlessness in a

¹ Melvin Seeman, "On the Meaning of Alienation," *American Sociological Review*, XXIV, No. 6 (December, 1959), 783-790.

² John P. Clark, "Measuring Alienation Within a Social System," *American Sociological Review*, XXIV, No. 6 (December, 1959), 849.