

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE MALAUEGS: RECOGNITION OF THEIR CULTURAL IDENTITY AND INTEGRITY

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Abstract:

This study on the social life among the Malaueg reflects on their present cultural beliefs and practices occurring among the residents of the indigenous cultural communities, particularly the Malauegs of Rizal, Cagayan represented by four barangays namely: Gaddangao, Illuru Norte, Gaggabutan East and Duyun. It focused on the life cycle: conception, birth, childbirth, child rearing, adolescence, courtship, marriage, death and the educational implications of these beliefs and practices.

Result of the study reveals that the Malaueg are people with rich cultural heritage which can shed more valuable facts about the aborigines. No researcher perhaps is likely to discount the details of their beliefs and practices served for survival and existence through the years.

Some of the major beliefs includes pregnant woman should undergo paddal if she suffers from unexplainable discomfort; serve walin for their dead relatives whom they believe are witnessing the delivery; burning of braided cloth known as amlang to drive evil spirits; mothers usually heat a kuwid and massaged to the breast of their daughter so the breast will not grow bigger and many other practices on their entire life cycle.

It is undeniably observe in the study that the Malauegs cling to the old Malauegs social order or world views as reflected in their cultural traditions and practices are relevant and applicable to their daily needs and problems, thus found to be functional to their lives. For this, majority of the Malauegs ignore or oppose the concepts of social readily available and adopted by the young population. Further, these beliefs and practices have influenced their lives for all these years. Thus the people have kept them prevailing and untainted throughout the years.

With this cultural beliefs and practices kept intact, the Malauegs remain to exist as part of the national society but with their own identity and integrity, their structure and their traditions.

Keywords: Malaueg, indigenous, cultural communities, cultural beliefs, social life

1. Introduction

A nation, that is culturally diverse such as the Philippines, consists of a series of subcultures. These sub-cultures found in cultural societies share some of the core values of the nation state but are often interpreted differently. Sub-cultures have values that are alien to national cultures. Also, some of the national values and behaviors do not reflect any of the characteristics of the sub-cultures.

Being a pluralistic society, studying every segment of the sub-culture is necessary for the writing of a true national history. In doing so, a cursory glance into the social life of a cultural community has been considered as a vehicle in understanding indigenous cultures. In fact, group solidarity and identity spring from the practices adhered upon by the members.

Along this premise, the study on the social life of the Malauegs is primarily conducted in order to understand this segment of their culture and to help preserve their practices for posterity before they are completely modified or disappear into the majority culture.

The Malauegs are the ethno-linguistic group found mainly in Rizal, Cagayan. Originally, they are people by Kalingas who came from the provinces of Apayao and Kalinga. These people were known as Irrayas and the Spaniards found them savage and insolent. But when they were converted to Christianity, they became meek, humble and obedient.

Malauegs are dark in complexion, of medium height and with big body built. They derive mainly their income from agriculture and fishing. They willingly offer stranger a good night rest and let him use the newest and cleanest blanket, newly sewed pillow and dressed chicken for viand which the head of the family would usually say "*pasensyan mu laman ya native nga annu*" which means "this is what we can offer for viand". They are religious and go to church during Sundays and holidays of obligation.

The Malauegs have developed a culture of their own. These people should be aware that their ways of life are unique and distinctly their own which in a way has something in common with other ethnic groups in the country.

In this light, the *Pantayong Pananaw*, as a concept to understand the "The Social Life of the Malauegs", calls for the recognition of their cultural integrity by allowing them to adhere to their customs, religions, beliefs, traditions and practices and to assert their character and identity as people. By virtue of such recognition, they distinguish themselves (*sila*) from other cultural community and the Filipino majority.

The indigenous concept of *kami* (Malauegs) is a prelude to the concept of *pantayo* as they are given the right place they truly deserve in the mainstream Filipino society. Recognizing cultural diversity among the different ethnic community showcases the rich and colorful heritage of the Filipino people. Such diversity brings a national unity viewed by the different cultural groups (*pantayo*) to be distinctly theirs.

In search of the real Filipino culture and identity, there need to be a study on indigenous people because they retain the customs of their "ethnos". Therefore, they bear the "unadulterated" Filipino culture. The recommendation seeks to reconstruct a national culture that puts together all the indigenous cultures within the framework of national unity to truly represent the entire Filipino society.

The history of the Philippine Indigenous People reveals that the official attitude of the state towards these communities has undergone three stages, namely: civilizing, integrating, and recognizing. The first stage is the result of the politico-military pressures during the Spanish and American regime. The second stage is more focused on the integration efforts of the state.

A more vigorous effort is further seen with the ratification of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which shifted the official attitude of the state into recognition. This recognition is enshrined in Article II section 22, Article XII section 5, Article XIV section 17 and Article XVI section 12 of the Philippine Constitution and was further operationalized in Republic Act No. 8371. The indigenous peoples Rights Act or R.A 8371 is the latest official statement on the legal status of the Indigenous Cultural Communities or Indigenous peoples within the Philippine body politics.

To uphold the cultural rights of the Malauegs, a study on their social life was pursued in order to document their traditional beliefs and practices and its educational implications. Education should study the culture of the people they serve and from there evolve educational policies. If the school is responsive to the needs of the people it serves, it is imperative to study its culture and develop curricular offering that are relevant to the ways of local life. To be an agent of change, one must be well versed with the culture of the people he works with.

The study on the social life of the Malauegs will surely help in their existence as a cultural community to come up with a civilization of their own. Cognizant to this, the researcher felt it is necessary that a study be conducted to find out the extent to which the Malauegs of Rizal, Cagayan adhere to existing beliefs and practices.

The present emphasis on the preservation of culture makes it imperative for the study of folk heritage. The collection and preservation thereof will pave the way to the study, appreciation and absorption of the Filipino tradition.

It is assumed that change is inevitable and like any other cultural community, the Malauegs are also responding to cultural changes. Hence, there is a need to evaluate the emerging beliefs and practices of the Malauegs in order to determine the extent of the vulnerability to changes brought forth by modernization.

Statement of the Problem

This study ascertained the beliefs and practices of the social life of the Malauegs. Specifically, it answered the following questions:

- I. What are the beliefs and practices of the Malauegs on: a) Conception; b) Child Birth; c) Child Rearing; d) Adolescence; e) Courtship; f) Marriage; and, g) Death
- II. What are the educational implications of these beliefs and practices?

2. Methods and Procedure

Research Design

A combination of anthropological and historical research methods was used in this study to document the “Social Life of the Malauegs”. These research methods were substantiated by psychological techniques like *pakapakapa* approach considering that the researcher is unfamiliar with the research environment and its people. Thus, during the first part of the immersion, the data collection was done through *Pagmamasid*, *Pagtatanong*, *Pagadalaw*, at *Pakikisangkot*.

Ethnographic interviews were conducted to key informants who are knowledgeable and willing to narrate and discuss matters related to their social life while case analysis was undertaken to elaborate the applicability of these beliefs and practices to the lives of the Malauegs. Case study was also conducted to highlight and clearly demonstrate every aspect of their social life.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in the province of Cagayan. It was delimited to the town of Rizal where the Malaueg folks are settled. Four barangays were chosen as the venue of the study namely: Gaddangao, Illuru Norte, Gaggabutan East and Duyun.

Rizal is located southwest of Tuguegarao City, which is approximately 6 thousand kilometers from the city. A travel to this town entails trekking 46 kilometer rough road from Tuao to Rizal. It will take one and one-half-hour from Tuguegarao to Tuao while another 1 ½ hour ride- will bring you to Poblacion Rizal.

Respondent and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was employed in this study. Key informants were taken. It considered residents of Malaueg ancestry and those who adhere to Malaueg’s beliefs and practices on conception, child birth, child rearing, adolescence, courtship, marriage, and death, aged 15 years old and above, possess an uncontested knowledge of Malauegs beliefs and practices and who were willing to narrate, discuss and share these practices to the researcher.

For the purpose of Case Analysis, concerned natives with sample experiences on these beliefs and practices were interviewed to document the traditions they practiced.

Research Instruments

The researcher used a Structured Interview Guide as the primary tool in gathering data. The interview guide was formulated in English and was translated in Malaueg knowing that this is their native tongue. To ensure clarity and comprehension on the part of the respondents and easy data collection on the part of the researcher, an interpreter was hired. The open-ended questionnaire consisted of the following: (1) The beliefs and practices of the social life of the Malauegs on: conception, childbirth, child rearing, adolescence, courtship, marriage and death; (2) The educational implications of these beliefs.

Focus Group Discussion was also used to ensure comprehensive collection of data. Video camera and pictures were used to document fully the community and the informants, while tape recorder was used to record accurately the information in verbatim.

Gathering Procedure

Permission was sought by the researcher from the Municipal Mayor and barangay officials to conduct the study in their municipality and barangay. Prior information and free consent were also considered for each respondent. The researcher immersed for a certain period of time in the research area. She personally lived, observed and interviewed the respondents. Interviews were held anywhere and wherever the respondents feel they are most convenient.

Analysis of Data

Thematic Analysis was used to analyze the data. The data given by the key informants were analyzed by noting the trend of the story.

3. Results and Discussion

An individual is born, grows, develops, matures, ages, and dies. He undergoes successive changes and adjustments from conception to senescence. He must pass through fixed stages in the life cycle (Encarta, 2003). Thus, the beliefs and practices of the Malauegs were organized according to the following topics:

a. Conception

On practices related to conception, a woman is cautioned not to look to unpleasant incidents, satisfy her food cravings by all means, avoid eating twin bananas and avoid despising somebody with defects. More importantly, the pregnant woman should undergo paddal if she suffers from unexplainable discomforts. Pregnant women are also advised to bring pointed objects, garlic and salt every time they go out at night to protect the baby from evil spirits and lastly, a pregnant woman should be in good terms with everyone especially with her neighbors to avoid difficulty during delivery.

b. Birth

Child deliveries take place in the home with the aid of mappagana/ paltera or midwife. During delivery, the Mallauegs still cling to the following beliefs and practices: they serve walin for their dead relatives whom they believe are witnessing the delivery. They burn braided cotton cloth known as amlang to drive evil spirits, the house ladder is being inverted and call family members and neighbors whom the pregnant woman offended to put a sign of the cross to her belly to hasten delivery. The mappagana/ paltera also pulverize phosphorus of 7 match stick and mix in a glass of lukewarm water for the mother to drink in order for her to perspire and make the baby move out easily. Before cutting the umbilical cord, the mappagana/ paltera stretches this if it reaches only the baby's forehead. It is believed that the baby grows wise, if does and if it only the baby's mouth, become voracious. The placenta is cut with the use of Ilap. The father takes the prerogative of either to hanging it on the highest branch of a tree or burying it beside a newly planted tree. It is a traditional practice among the Malauegs to place the baby on a bamboo winnowing basket, with the baby, it is heat over the fire and the baby is tapped three times to frighten him/ her. Doing so makes the baby alert, active, daring and witty. After giving birth, the mother is advised to stand under the flame of aningat (mangassub) so that the wound inside heals easily. She is advised not to take a bath in an open area and also advised to boil seven different kinds of leaves that are distasteful to evil spirits during her first bath.

c. Child rearing

Most Malauegs breastfeed their babies. Bottle feeding is done when the mother goes to work. When the baby sleeps and is left alone, pointed objects or water is placed under the kassun to protect him/her from evil spirits. During the first bath, a live spider is placed in the water so that even the baby climbs, he/ she will not fall easily. Water of young bamboo is also mixed with lukewarm water so that even if the baby perspires he/ she will not suffer from body odor. Before the baby starts to eat, they let the baby taste sukalati first so he will have a good appetite. If the baby is a girl, they apply mikat maratuba on her lips so that she will not become a voracious eater. Paboda and Padumak is also a practice among them if the baby suffers from a lingering sickness.

d. Adolescence

Before reaching adolescence period, young boys are expected to undergo circumcision and should not let his penis be seen by a woman just after circumcision. A girl is advised to take a bath and wipe her face with the underwear over after removing the first blood of her first menstruation. When mappatilan comes among young girls, mothers usually heat a kuwid and massage to the breast of their daughter so the breast will not grow bigger.

e. Courtship

Traditionally, it is the initiative of the boy's family to do courting. They send a maddalubasa as a go-between to the girl's family. With him is a saripit signifying their intention for their interest to that young lady. Upon the acceptance of

the saripit, the man starts to do the Mangatugangan or bridal service. A man and a woman who fell in love with each other will inform their parents but still, the man should do the bridal service. But now, Mangatugangan is already disregarded since courtship is takes place without the knowing of their parents.

f. Marriage

On marriage, the Malauegs still cling to planetariu, they see to it that the day of marriage should be on either of the following dates: 5, 8, 10, 15, 18, 20, 25 and 28. These dates are considered to be lucky and no wedding day is set when there is no moon. The ritual of Mappararian giving of Tadug, Gala, Palanglang and Pakolkol are still prevalent during wedding days.

g. Death

When a person dies, a widow/ widower not related to the family members are asked to bath the body of the dead person. Malloto is an old practice where the members of the family gather together and a widow with a black cloth will Comut them. With this, you are not allowed to touch the widow/ widower to avoid suffering from babaltong.

During burial, the coffin should not touch the door or ladder. The folks usually carry the coffin of the dead person. If the widow/ widower happens to pass by wangag or uweg, kawkawan na se adi magaw-awwang. When the dead is about to be laid in the tomb, the family members are not allowed to look rather, they have to leave the cemetery. After 9 days of mourning, the whole family goes to the wangag to take a bath and let the wet clothes float to drive misfortunes away. (Meanug)

The Malauegs share common beliefs and practices in the different stages of their social life. It is through education that some beliefs and practices have waned in the civilization. However, some practices could be curbed and refined through acculturation and integration in the curriculum. This is to keep pace with the rapid advancement in Science and Technology.

This study on the social life among the Malaueg reflects on their present cultural beliefs and practices occurring among the residents of the indigenous cultural communities, particularly the Malauegs of Rizal., Cagayan represented by four barangays namely: Gaddangao, Illuru Norte, Gaggabutan East, and Duyun. It focused on the life cycle: conception, birth, childbirth, child rearing, adolescence, courtship, marriage, death and the educational implications of these beliefs and practices.

The Malauegs are people with rich cultural heritage which can shed more valuable facts about the aborigines. No researcher perhaps is likely to discount the details of their beliefs and practices served for survival and existence through years.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, these conclusions can be drawn:

1. Most of the Malauegs beliefs and practices are superstitious while others have scientific basis.
2. Most of the Malauegs beliefs and practices are similar with that of the other ethnic groups and some have become products of acculturation.
3. It is undeniably observed in the study that the Malauegs still cling to the old Malauegs social order or world views as reflected in their cultural traditions and practices. This implies that their cultural practices are relevant and applicable to their daily needs and problems, thus found to be functional to their lives. For this, majority of the Malauegs ignore or oppose the concepts of social life readily available and adopted by the young population. Further, these beliefs and practices have influenced their lives for all these years. Thus, these people have kept them prevailing and untainted trough out the years.

With these cultural beliefs and practices kept intact, the Malauegs remain to exist as part of the national society but with their own identity, their structure and their traditions.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations are offered:

1. There should be value clarification so that the desirable beliefs and practices will prevail and those deterrent to development should be avoided or minimized.
2. Old folks of the Malaueg community should continually instill among the youth the beliefs and practices for preservation and posterity.
3. Social Studies teachers should inculcate into their students the value of the uniqueness of same beliefs that are not deterrent to human and social development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The conduct of this research would have not been possible without the support of the Cagayan State University and its officials headed by University President, Dr. Urdujah A. Tejada and Campus Executive Officer of the Carig Campus, Engr. Arthur G. Ibanez. The continuous review of this paper from the graduate school have made this publication possible. A sincere message of thanks goes to the University and Campus officials for Research. The researchers are also grateful to all the experts from the field who have helped the researcher finish this study and the officials of the local government unit of Rizal, Cagayan.

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