

Values of Igorot Culture: An Experience

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To finance our education, my parents chose to live in the farm to take care of a small citrus orchard and piggery. It was when we all finished our studies that the citrus also declined together with the strength of my parents. Still they preferred to stay in the farm to take care of several pigs. I often told my mother to lessen the number of pigs since we already finished our education but my mother would tell me that they have to raise pigs because my salary would not be enough to buy pigs when my father dies. This is because my father is sick. As a typical Igorot, he is used to hard working. Frustrated of doing nothing due to his health, drinking liquor and smoking became his hobbies in the farm. His sense of sight and hearing and internal organs were affected but he did not complain of pain. He refused to go to the hospital because he cannot admit that he is sick.

It is our culture in Bontoc that seriously sick parents are transferred from one house to another of married children for a ritual called "*sangfu*." A pig would be butchered and old men would pray "*mangayta*" for healing. The house where the sick parent dies is where the wake will be handled. It is believed that that the owner of the house will be more blessed. In earlier times that child is compensated with more inheritance. Often times, my married siblings invited my father to stay in their houses for even just two days for them to perform *sangfu* but my father did not agree as it is just a waste of pigs. At one time, my mother was alarmed because my father cannot stand and is hallucinating. Thinking that he is dying, my mother summoned my brothers, sister and some elders for a rush "*mangmang*" (pig offering) in the farm. After the *mangmang* they brought him to the house of my eldest brother. A *sangfu* was performed and after a few days his health improved. He can already recognize his visitors and he can hear their stories. Visitors came to see him day and night. After five days, he was transferred to the house of my elder sister where another *sangfu* was performed. Again visitors came day and night bringing with them food. The visitors would bring with them "*chayake*" (glutinous rice) cooked in different ways, cookies, bakery bread, cakes, drinks or soup. The food will be eaten by the family and the next group of visitors. I observed that the groups were either composed of *sitiomates*/neighbors, families, cousins or friends. I also observed that elder groups visit at night while younger groups visit during day time. The elderly people work in the fields during daytime thus they can only visit during night time. During the visit, the visitors would tell stories of their childhood, issues in the town or anything that would make everybody laugh. After a few weeks, my father's health improved and they went back to the farm. My father lived for another 2 years before he finally rested.

An Analysis

The improvement of the health of my father was due to the control of liquor and cigarettes. He used to drink one and a half (1 1/2) or 500 ml. of liquor and two packs of cigarettes daily but when he was in the house of his children, he was given 50 to 100 ml. of liquor and a few sticks of cigarette per day. I also believe that the power of prayer including the prayers of the elders during the *sangfu* helped in the healing of my father.

The practice of transferring the sick to houses of children, the performance of *sangfu* and visitation of the sick by groups may be viewed as a waste time and resources and these may not be practiced in the next generation and may even be lost forever but the values of cultural traits such as sharing, caring, praying for the sick and the solidarity, unity, cohesiveness of relatives and community folks is what matters most that should be preserved.

Terms:

Mangmang – It is a common Bontoc ritual where a pig or chicken is butchered.

Sangfu – It is a special ritual for the healing of the sick. A pig is butchered and several old men say their prayer in the form of "Mangayta."

Mangayta – Prayer recited or sung by elders.