

RITES AND RITUALS OF THE SANGIL

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Introduction

The name Glan was derived from the word *magalang* meaning sharp. Glan was once a favorite hunting ground for wild deer by Muslim warriors, sea pirates and traders. Since when hunters meet they see to it that their bolos, arrows and other tools are always sharp and ready for use in any eventuality, the place was called *magalang* which was later corrupted or shortened to *galang* and then eventually Glan.

Glan is one of the municipalities of the province of South Cotabato and is situated in the southernmost part of the province fronting the Saranggani and Balut Islands. It is bounded on the north by the municipality of Malapatan; on the south by the Celebes Sea; on the east by the municipality of Jose Abad Santos of Davao del Sur; and on the West by the Saranggani Bay.

Before the coming of the Christian settlers from Cebu, Glan was covered with virgin forests and tall cogon grasses. The place was inhabited by a few ethnic groups, mostly Bilaans and Muslims. The creation of agricultural colonies by the Philippine Commission Acts Nos. 2254 and 2280, enacted in 1913 during the administration of Governor General Francis Burton Harrison brought the first set of Christian settlers to Glan in 1914. On July 25, 1949, President Quirino issued an Executive Order creating the Municipality of Glan.

Presently, Glan is basically dependent on agriculture. The municipality is one of the major corn producers of South Cotabato. There is a steady increase in the land area devoted to coconut production since copra has been a major peso earner of the residents.

Fish production also follows an upward trend. The bordering waters - the Celebes Sea and Saranggani Bay are endowed with fish resources. This makes fishing another important industry of Glan. Fish is usually marketed in the fishing port of General Santos City.

In the southern part of Glan, the barangays of Pangyan and Burias, there live the tribal groups called Sangil. They are residing along the coast of the Celebes Sea and are scattered in the different sitios of Kimandal, Kimangayao, Tamparan, Nakolil, Calipagan and Pangyan proper. Most of them are living along the seashore for they engage in fishing. Others are found in the hillsides near the sea where they engage in farming. Some own small stores.

Origin of the Sangil

Sangihe or *Sangi* is an island in Indonesia northeast of the Celebes Sea. It is also known as Sangir or Sangil Island. Its neighboring islands are Ternate and Celebes. The inhabitants are called Sangil. This group of people came to the Philippines by sea. When they observed that it was good to stay here in the Philippines, particularly in the coastal area in the southern part of Mindanao, they decided to stay permanently.

Economy

The Sangil are a hard-working people. Many Sangil have their own farms which they cultivate and plant with coconuts, rice, corn and other crops. Some Sangil women weave mats for a living. Others sell fish or tend their sari-sari stores in the barangay. Affected by economic instability, the Sangil are challenged to look for better jobs in order to earn more. Many of them go to other places, like the city, to look for jobs.

Religion

The Sangil, being followers of Islam, are classified as Muslim. They follow the teachings of the Qur'an. The word "Muslim" means one who submits his whole life to the will of "God". A

Muslim wants to follow the will of God in his daily life. The Sangil are very loyal to their religion. They go to church (mosque) to worship on Fridays. Friday according to them, was the day of rest of the prophet Mohammad. The priest who conducts the ceremony is the *Imam*.

Dress and Ornaments

The Sangil call their clothes *lako*. The ordinary *lako* for men is the *korito* (pants) made of *sinipak*. For the women, the costume is called *banyakot* (blouse and skirt). Their ordinary skirt is also made of *sinipak* cloth. For special occasions and for church wear, the men wear *Juba*. *Juba* is a one piece white suit with long sleeves. Women wear the *sublay* and *kandang* (malong). *Sublay* is a long-sleeved blouse without a collar. The men wear *kopla* (head cap) and *purong* (turban) on their heads while the women wear the *timburong*.

The *datu* of the Sangil is called *colano*. The *colano* wears *dinangga* and *tinatapan*. These are made of *karinuang*, a special kind of cotton. The *colano's* clothes are decorated with precious stones for identity. He also wears *sinasarahibuang* on his head. He carries a *karis* (kris) on his side.

The jewelries worn by women are *witing* (earrings), *waka* (bracelets), *Singkil* (anklets) and *singsing* (rings). The *colano's* clothes are decorated with *tambuko* (golden buttons). The traditional clothes of the Sangil are a long-sleeved blouse and a pair of pants.

Sangil Wedding

Before the arrangement for a wedding is made, three persons negotiate in behalf of the boy. The boy starts serving the parents of the girl and this is called *mamanugang*. While he is serving in the house of the girl, he is observed by the girl's parents as to how fit he is to marry their daughter. If the observation is favorable, the man is told to bring his parents to ask the consent of the girl's parents. Here the arrangement for the dowry is made by the *wajel* (negotiator).

The *sunggod* (dowry-giving) is done before the *kawing* (wedding). This is in the form of cash or kind. The dowry may consist of animals like a horse, cow or carabao, or anything of value, like gongs or plates. Part of the dowry, in the amount of P100.00, which is called *Kawa*, is given to the *wajel* to show that the proposal for marriage is being accepted. Another amount of P100.00, called *leng*, is given to the *wajel* to show that the arrangement for the wedding is final and nobody else may ask for the girl's hand in marriage. The final plans and arrangements for the wedding are made by the parents and relatives of both the bride and groom.

The dowry is paid according to one's social status: the *Colano* (*datu* or rich man) pays P1,000.00, the *Rajah Muda* (nobleman) P700.00, and for the *Lang* (servant class), any amount will be accepted provided it is not less than P300.00.

When the date for the wedding has been set, three days before the wedding, the bride is put inside the *kuwambo* (mosquito net). Maids attend to her and bring food while she is inside the *kuwambo*.

On the day of the *kawing*, the relatives of the groom arrange and beautify the bride while the relatives of the bride do the preparation of the groom. They do this to show their consent of the union. The *Imam* conducts the wedding ceremony. Four candles are held by four men in the place where the wedding ceremony is to be conducted. The girl sits first then the groom is brought to the house of the bride. Before entering the house, the groom washes his mouth, face, hands, arms, ears, neck, then feet. He does this to show that he is clean and pure. When he enters the house, the *Imam* announces the start of the wedding ceremony. He asks people around if anybody opposes the wedding. If so, it will not be continued.

The *Imam* says the prayer for the wedding ceremony. As he utters the prayer, he holds the right hands of the bride and groom. He covers their hands with a handkerchief. Then he turns the bride around three times. After three turns he takes the right thumb of the groom and presses it on the forehead of the bride. By pressing the right thumb of the groom on the forehead of the bride, it is believed that their marriage is recognized by their God. Then the groom sits

on the right side of the girl. The parents tell the bride and groom to kiss the hands of the elders. This marks the end of the wedding ceremony.

A *kanduri* (party) follows the ceremony, after which the newly-married couple returns to the *kuwambo* of the girl. They stay there for three days with attendants who assist them. After three days, the *Imam* bathes the couple. This serves as a blessing for them. When they have taken a bath they go home to live as husband and wife.

Healing the Sick

According to the *tabib* or *mangungundang* (healer), some sicknesses of a person are caused by *karingong sitan* (bad spirits) or *karingong malaykat* (ghosts). (Other illnesses are caused by men or some other natural things like the wind.) In such cases, the *mangungundang* performs different rituals in healing the sick person. One ritual is to offer a white chicken to the spirit that has caused the person to get sick. The healer prays and asks the spirit to heal the sick person. In another form, the healer wipes the blood of the chicken on the affected part of the patient's body after which he utters a prayer. The healer believes that red blood signifies courage and that this can cure the illness of the person. Those present during the healing ceremony are also smeared with the blood of the chicken in order that they will not be affected by the *matudo* (illness) of the sick person.

In the other cases, the healer employs spiritual healing. Feeling the pulse of the patient he determines the kind of sickness. Then he prays the *du-a* (prayer direct to God).

Other healers use an egg to tell the cause of the *matudo* of the sick person. The egg is placed on a saucer with coconut oil. The healer prays the *du-a* while letting the egg stand. Then he applies folk medication. He may use medicinal plants like the leaves of the *alum*. The leaves of the *alum* are dipped in a glass of water to be drunk by the patient. Sometimes, the healer prays the *du-a* over the water and the same water is rubbed on the affected part of the body.

Another common way of healing the sick person among Sangils is by the use of *liya* (ginger). The healer blows on the ginger to drive the *karingong sitan* (bad spirit) or *karingong malaykat* (ghosts) out of the sick person and allow him to get well.

On Death and Burial

The Sangil bathe and wrap the body of the dead person with white cloth. They do not use a coffin. The burial ceremony is conducted by the *Imam* or *pandita* and he performs the prayer for the dead. The *Hatib* says "Bang" before the body is lowered into the grave, announcing to all the things around that this man is to be buried. The *Imam* or *pandita* pours water on the grave times. This is called "turking". After the burial, a *kanduri* is performed.

There are other beliefs associated with death and burial: the bereaved family is not allowed to cook squash for it is thought to be mixed with the blood of a witch which will cause them to get sick; if a cat jumps over the dead body, the dead will rise; a mirror is placed beside the dead body so that, if the witch or bad spirit sees its reflection on it, it will be afraid and go away; in the "turking" ritual when the water touches the dead body, it is believed that the soul will rise to heaven when it feels the coolness of the water; a stone placed on top of the grave, approximating the position of the heart of the dead person, marks the place where the soul passes when it goes out of the grave to ascend to heaven. Usually the clothes of the dead person are given to the *pandita* who performs the burial ritual. Here the *pandita* offers a prayer for the soul of the dead person. If he fails to offer a prayer, he will be disturbed, because the soul will always come to him.