

T'BOLI SOCIALIZATION

Zenaida F. Cardinal

Division of Labor

Adolescent T'bolis of Barangay Edwards are trained to help, assist, and work for their families. Despite their young age, they assume responsibilities given by their parents according to their capacities. A boy (*logi lomi lemnok/sawang logi*) assists his father in some manly work, while a girl (*libun lomi lemnok/sawang libun*) assists her mother at feminine tasks. The different sexes perform different tasks; there is no overlapping of work.

The boys gather firewood while the girls are responsible for chopping it. The boys do not help the girls, for it is degrading on their part, as boys, to do so. Boys dig holes for planting seeds while the girls do the actual sowing. After the boys have prepared the hole they are free to sit or rest in the shade. They will never dare help the girls.

Boys work in the *kaingin* together with their fathers. Since this is considered heavy work, girls are free from doing *kaingin* work. Working in the *kaingin* is not an easy task because the T'bolis do not use modern means of farming, like working with tractors, carabaos, or cows. T'bolis prefer to work on hilly areas rather than on plains or valleys. They have no permanent farms for planting. After several harvests from the same area, they will seek another hilly place to farm. Hunting was the favorite hobby or occupation of T'boli boys in the olden days.

Hunting was also their fathers' occupation. Boys were trained to hunt. Many actually preferred hunting to working in the *kaingin*. Hunting wild pigs, deer, and monkeys was an important source of livelihood. They used bows and arrows (*melek*).

Cooking and maintaining cleanliness at home are purely feminine tasks. If girls cannot cook for some reason, the boys would

wait for their mothers or other female relatives to do the cooking. They prefer to remain hungry rather than cook their own meals or those of their family.

Laundering and ironing were not very common activities among the T'bolis in the olden days due to the fact that they had very little clothing. In many cases, they had but one piece of clothing which they used daily. They were not used to changing clothes, for they wore them until they rotted before getting new ones. Generally, the girls did laundry work if it was truly necessary. They used *klutay* (from some kind of tree) as laundry soap. This kind of tree is now rarely found except in the remotest places or mountains. Ironing was rarely practiced. But, if ever they did ironing, they used a *saki*, a shell from the ocean which was not easy to secure.

Adolescent girls are taught by their mothers to weave, embroider and sew. They weave abaca fibers dyed in different colors. The finished material is called *t'nalak*. They embroider T'boli dresses using abaca as thread and brass needles.

Weeding is strictly for girls, never for boys. It is considered unpleasant to see boys doing weeding work which is considered light work. After preparing the *kaingin*, the boys believe they have done their part. It is up to the girls to plant and weed. Planting and harvesting are still the work of the girls. They boys are not supposed to plant and harvest. Instead they prepare or put up shade where the girls could rest.

Fetching water is done by girls. A wife carries the *kubong* (a bamboo container) and the husband follows the wife without carrying anything. He just accompanies the wife for security reasons.

Pounding rice is entrusted to the girls. The boys might pound rice if they want to but they are not required to do so. If boys want to help in pounding, it is alright with the girls, but the girls will not demand that they do so.

A girl stays at home with her mother most of the time. Together they do the laundry, mend clothes, gather vegetables from

the fields, cook the meals and work together during the planting and harvesting seasons.

Ordinarily, adolescents do all the work required of them by their parents but the *Dnatu/Libon Boi* are exempted from these kinds of work. *Dnatu/Libon Boi* is the son/daughter of a Datu and his first wife. *Dnatu* is considered a prince and the *Libon Boi* a princess. They have servants to look after their needs. They also occupy a position of authority in the family, second only to their parents.

Menarche

During menstruation, girls tend to be secretive, shy, and do not tell anybody, not even their mother, when they are menstruating. During their menstrual period, they shy away from people, especially from the opposite sex. Menstruating girls have no special clothing for their menstrual period other than their *lowek* or *patadyong* which is made of *t'nalak*. Bathing is not strictly prohibited. Menstruating girls can take a bath at their option, but they have to bathe at dawn or in the evening so nobody will see them. T'boli girls do not shampoo their hair nor take sponge baths.

They are not allowed to go out in the gardens planted with onions, *gabi* and beans. They believe the plants will wither if they go near them. They may not eat liver or blood, lest they suffer from a heavy flow of blood. They do not eat papaya to avoid whitish blood. They may not plant anything because they believe that the plants will not grow. They can do light work and do not totally refrain from working. If they are used to work, they can still do their usual work but they are careful not to strain themselves. Menstruating girls squat while eating to avoid more flow of blood and making a mess on the floor.

Social Behavior Between Sexes

Adolescent boys and girls have very limited social interactions with other people. Adolescents have the opportunity to meet during weddings, deaths, harvest celebrations, and when transferring to a new house. However, they are not permitted to mingle in any activities whatsoever. On special occasions the adolescent boys

sit together, while adolescent girls sit among themselves or with their parents.

It is the same with dances. Boys dance with a group of boys, and girls dance among themselves. There is a T'boli dance called *smigon* in which a boy dances to the music which he plays on the *hegelong* (guitar). A girl may dance at the same time but does so at a discrete distance from him.

Group games among T'boli adolescents are not very common. The boys play among themselves. So do the girls. The boys play bow and arrow games. The girls use the swings and slides. Vines are used for the swings and banana stalks are used as slides.

A girl is not permitted to go out on dates or go out alone without a chaperon. The girls go out in groups with their mothers or with female relatives, while the boys go out in groups with their fathers or male relatives. Girls cannot converse with adolescent boys or with anyone of the opposite sex except for brothers. Conversation with the opposite sex is not even extended to cousins or to other blood relatives to avoid temptations and problems. A girl is closely guarded by her parents because she is considered valuable property. Parents can claim a big dowry from a man interested in her. Parents can demand money or any valuable property once their daughters are ready for marriage. If the daughter should insist on going her own way and go out with the opposite sex without her parents' permission, this could be a cause for quarrels, and sometimes result in wars among families.

Beliefs about Food

The T'bolis have several food *lii* (taboos) which are passed on from one generation to another. Individual families and different sexes differ in their food *lii*. Generally, adolescent boys follow the food *lii* of their father while the girls follow the food *lii* of their mother.

Some families religiously follow their food *lii* till death, but other families believe that once they are married they are free from some of their *lii*. Most follow their *lii* until they die. There are several

food *lii* for single adolescent girls and boys. For instance, they cannot eat the wings, tails and legs of fowls and other animals. If an adolescent boy eats the wings of a fowl when he constructs a house it is believed that the post will be built crooked while girls who do so would not be able to weave straight. If one should eat the head of a fowl, especially the brain, he will have running ears; if he eats the tails of fowls, he will have bad breath. (*motot*); if he eats the feet he cannot stay long in his home; he will always want to roam around. Adolescent girls should not eat the tails of pigs, unless they want to have a very small pony tail which is ugly to look at. They may not eat eggs or they will have many children, like the chickens which lay plenty of eggs. Eating twin bananas is also forbidden to unmarried adolescent T'boli girls for fear of having twin babies. T'bolis believe that twin babies are a sign of bad luck. They are apt to kill the babies or one of the babies to avoid misfortune in the family.

Blackening the Teeth

Another unique practice among adolescents is blackening the teeth. T'bolis have a very special way of blackening the teeth. The father or an elderly person can perform the blackening of the teeth of adolescent boys or girls. It is believed necessary to blacken the teeth to make them look different from the animals. Blackening the teeth adds prestige and beauty, besides making their teeth strong and healthy.