

CULTURAL PRACTICES OF COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE AMONG INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The study was to determine the cultural way of Courtship and Marriage practices of Aeta Magbukun in Abucay Balanga City, Bataan. This is a qualitative study which employs ethnographic type of research. The informants were the 10 indigenous Aetas who have experienced the traditional way of courtship and marriage of their community. The findings revealed that most of the participants experienced courtship under the supervision and control of the parents or the elderly members of the family. Aeta man serves to family of Aeta women. The courtship is also done through the communication and conversation of both families to further engage the couple into marriage. It is also said that the span of the courtship lasts up to years that includes the service and getting favor of the guy. Aeta men show their respect and sincerity to the family is not just seen by the act of it but is also seen on the gifts and presents that are given to further prove that they are really into the girl. This also reflects the eagerness of the boy to get the girl's attention and the favour of the family. The presents given by the Aeta man also show their respect to each other especially to the girl to enjoy the span of their marriage. Marriage of these minorities revealed that practices they perform is very serious matter because it's a union of two families of the same tribe. Conversation gives importance for the family ties of the both party. Marriage is an act of man and woman for an instinctive desire for permanence promise of continuity in patriarchal family lines with deep religious, social, and institutional significance. They have also retained some of their traditional beliefs and practices on courtship and marriage all throughout the life stages of the Aetas in the rural communities, their old beliefs and practices had been influenced by modernization. It simply shows that the Aetas, are also susceptible to accept changes that may affect their way of life. Their traditional cultural practices that deeply rooted in their beliefs were difficult to neglect since it has already been part of their tradition for years.

Keywords: Aeta Magbukun, Marriage, Courtship

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INTRODUCTION

The Aeta Magbukun of Bataan in Luzon, the Philippines remain one of the least known and documented Indigenous tribes. They retain primarily subsistence hunter-gathering strategies to supply their basic needs. They also strive for recognition of their ancestral connection with, and rights to inhabit their ancestral forest domains, which is threatened by the expansion of agriculture and urban development by non-Aetas, primarily the majority Tagalog population. The chances of knowing the cultural ways of courtship and marriage of Aeta people are being forgotten little by little in the society these days. Their diverse ways of expressing of how they do things like these are often being forgotten by the young people of today not unless if they are studying the subject itself of social studies.

However, according to Gregorio (2004), Aeta courtship happens inside the house of the girl, the typical scene we could see in most of the community. The boy usually visits the girl at night, but there are some who courts a girl at morning. The male usually brings bread, coffee and sugar and other basic needs as a gift to the girl and her parents. One of them admitted that he gave soft drinks just to win the heart of the girl. They no longer do Harana because according to them it is old-fashioned. Mangawang (2004) mentioned that the Magbukun tribe also a definite set of patterns for courting or marrying. They were trapped in arranged marriage wherein their parents decided for them. They had no right to refuse because they would be punished. The groom-to-be gives 'balhak' or dowry in a form of plants and animals that serves as payments. The wedding is called 'lango-lango'. The bride is inside the tree house and her family guards her. The groom must reach her before he is hit by a sharpen bolo.

According to Danque, (2004), one of the oldest members of the Aeta community, the boys and girls participating in the wedding ceremony including the parents of the bride and the groom will dance while circling in the fire. They wear tapi and bahag as their costume. The dance every night which lasts from one (1) to two (2) weeks. They will only stop, to work and to eat. If you failed to do the act, the family of the boy will pay certain amount of money to the family of girl. During the ceremony they will make a stair made from bamboo or Yantok called largo-largo, and at the top of the stair there's a floor wherein the husband and wife-to-be will stand. The godfather and the godmothers are also on the wonder floor. The groom will get his bride from the top of the largo-largo but before you can reach his bride, the father of the girl will rob his way with a bolo on his hand. The father of the bride will act like he was defending his daughter, but in the end he will let the groom get the bride. And when he reached the place of her bride, the godfathers and godmothers will throw money, that the bride and groom are prohibited to get the thrown money. After the ceremony they will celebrate the newlyweds by eating together. The husband and wife will decide where they are going to live.

According to Original People Organization (2009), the indigenous people of the mountain or what they call Aetas, much more than struggles in their daily lives they are also finding it hard to preserve their cultural ways of living in the times of modernization in the country, projects of different power plants or factories in their lands are one of the concerns that will destroy their lands of inhabitant. In such ways they will lose their livelihood. A lot of them are forced to go down the mountains to work as beggars or seek help in terms of asking for money literally in front of people. Another problem is that their ways of culture are not

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that preserved to some of the tribes because of the influence that has been introduced to their tribes through the past years. Their ways of marriage and religion is one of the most affected in this case. And this is also noticed on different foreign studies that have conducted their research with the Aeta people what a Negro man's worth (1966).

According to Scholes (2011) study, the Aeta communities in Morong, Bataan are struggling to preserve their different cultures as well as their marriage and other cultural practices. Different problems in terms of cultural are all evident because of the foreign influences even in the local religious cultural practices that have been introduced to them. Siddle (2011) stated that countless attempts are done to preserve their lifestyles and cultural practices by the government. All of these were done for these people and some of their rights like the right to vote and right to education is also a crucial part for their well-being but still. The preservation of their own culture is still a concern because of the growing chances of forgetting them.

The researchers chose this study because of the growing influence that the culture from indigenous people is slowly being forgotten. As the years are passing through they are experiencing the slowly decline of the values to the cultural practices of the indigenous people, The study aims to show the values and cultural practices of our indigenous people in such ways that they will be valued and preserved and to do that we must enlighten their minds and open their thoughts regards our study so that we may be able to show the different values and practices of the indigenous people in our country especially the Aeta communities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers follow the qualitative ethnographic method. This qualitative study which aims to document the narratives of the

cultural way of courtship and marriage practices of Aeta's in Abucay Balanga, Bataan.

The researchers cited two definitions of Ethnographic to dig deep within its world. According to Brewer (2000) mentioned that ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally.

Alongside, Bryman (2000) ethnography is not one particular method of data collection but a style of research that is distinguish by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of peoples in the given 'field' or setting, and its approach, which involves close association with, and often participation in, this setting. It is premise on the view that the central aim of the social sciences is to understand peoples' actions and their experiences of the world, and the ways in which their motivated actions arise from and reflect back on these experiences. Once this is the central aim, knowledge of the social world is acquired from intimate familiarity with it, ethnography is central as a method because it involves this intimate familiarity with day-to-day practice and the meaning of social action. To access social meanings, observe behavior and work closely with informants and perhaps participate in the field with them, several methods of data collection tend to be used in ethnography, such as in-depth interviewing, participant observation, personal documents and discourse analyses of natural language.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the data gathered, the following were the findings of the study:

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1. On The Practices of the Aeta's Communities in Terms of Courtship and Marriage

The courtship practices of Aetas include complexity, family orientation and sanctity of women and the marriage practices are family's decision and sanctity of marriage. The results revealed that most of the participants experienced courtship under the supervision and control of the parents or the elderly members of the family. The courtship is also done through the communication and conversation of both families to further engage the couple into marriage. It is also said that the span of the courtship lasts up to years that includes the service and getting favor of the guy. Aeta men show their respect and sincerity to the family is not just seen by the act of it but is also seen on the gifts and presents that are given to further prove that they are really into the girl. This also reflects the eagerness of the boy to get the girl's attention and the favor of the family. The presents given by the Aeta man also show their respect to each other especially to the girl to enjoy the span of their marriage. Marriage of these minorities revealed that practices they perform is very serious matter because it's a union of two families of the same tribe. Conversation gives importance for the family ties of the both party. Marriage is an act of man and woman for an instinctive desire for permanence promise of continuity in patriarchal family lines with deep religious, social, and institutional significance.

2. On the Significance of the Aetas' Courtship and Marriage Practices

The study revealed that in deeper dug of this study it gave further insights that the Aeta male serves the family for some household chores and instances of work in the house of female Aeta's being courted, courtship happens at home as the show of respect for the family, Aeta's men usually wait for two years of courtship patiently, these is to show the

importance and respect to the sanctity of women. The family decisions matter about the marriage. Aeta's value love as they value their families.

The study also reveals that the start of the courtship prevails when the Aeta man ask the parents of the woman the permission to court the said woman. By that time, Aetas male give importance to the family of the female Aeta as the man take some of the hard works in the house to ask for the empathy of the family, giving food and presents that'll make the Aeta woman's family favor the Aeta man. The parents of the Aeta woman test the man if he can give all the needs of their child. And also, they wanted to prove that the Aeta man is worthy of entrusting their child will be given care, love and respect.

3. On the insights derived from the study
The study shows different insights as the study continues, like the complexity of their rituals and practices, Aeta Magbuken tribe of Abucay Bataan have different rituals being practice regarding to their courtship and marriage ceremonies and beliefs, such as the The terms "amba" and "lango-lango" where in by doing this it means that they give respect for their highness or term "anitos"

The whole marriage ritual is done by a week. The first days are the preparation for the big feast and the rituals itself. By that time, the Aeta woman is in a tree house wearing the wedding dress. She'll rip it off until the family of the man gives her a new dress. She can also soak it into the water or do things just to destroy it. If the dress will not be changed by the man's family, there'll be no wedding that'll happen. If the man passed this phase, he'll move on to the next level. The changing of dress symbolizes that whatever happens, the man should always give comfort to the woman as show of deepest and real love for the woman. The woman stays on the tree house, the man will try to get to her through a ton of man that tries to hit him with arrows

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and axes. If he'll be able to go through that and get the girl, this'll prove that they can live together as man and wife. The arrows and axes represent the challenges and obstacles to the man. If he'll be able to overcome it, he'll prove that his love can last and withstand trials and struggles.

These insights will definitely an important idea in order for them to preserve their Aeta Magbuken culture in courtship and marriage that is slowly dying.

4. On the implication of the study to Social Science Education

The study finds out that preservation of the practices of Aeta Magbuken tribe regarding their courtship and marriage has a big impact to every one of us especially to the Social Scientists as society serves as their laboratory which these minorities move, make and practiced their cultures. The findings gathered in the study can give the Social Study Education such important points to understand and work for a understanding of the issues under study and for the betterment of this, as it enlightens the minority regarding the things being observed in the practices and traditions of the Aeta Magbuken and how they preserved and practiced it, up to this now. Its impact to Social Study education it enlightens the people surrounded the minorities for the betterment of the participants.

DISCUSSIONS

1. Practices regarding courtship and marriage of Aeta Mabuken Tribe of Abucay seems to be a serious matter as it was part of their culture as tribe. Courtship and marriage of Aetas were being done under some circumstances, first there should be the consent of the families as show of respect to them, their supervision must be present as the courtship and marriage happens or in process. Aside this the Aeta man has the chance to give some presents or gifts to the girl he is courting so the Aeta woman can feel that the man is

serious in courting her. The courtship happens in a very long span to give way to the Aeta woman to enjoy the courtship process so that the span of the courtship lasts up to years that includes the service and getting favor of the guy. In terms of the marriage, marriage was done as a symbol for strong family ties through good conversation and interaction of both parties.

2. As what the findings said regarding this study Aeta magbuken tribe ways and practices about their courtship and marriage is a bit similar to the lowlanders "unat" ways, as what said the start of the courtship prevails when the Aeta man ask the parents of the woman the permission to court it means that parents' permission is a must in order to start the courtship process , and as it started the aeta man has to help the aeta woman family in some instances of work or household chores at home, this is just serves as the test for aeta man. The parents of the Aeta woman test the man if he can give all the needs of their child. And also, they wanted to prove that the Aeta man is worthy of entrusting their child will be given care, love and respect, not just in the span of the courtship system but in start until the end of the marriage of the aeta couples.

3. The study concludes that there are a lot of insights gathered in the study regarding to the practices performed by the Aeta Magbuken of Abucay Bataan. Courtship and marriage of these minorities are being done in many steps and instances, ritual is being practiced to show their beliefs and traditions as they perform their courtship and marriage. The process of rituals is being done for a week for preparations and other activities to do such as the "amba" or the rituals they do as respect to their "anitos" they used to dance around the fire for a week, the next one is the "lango-lango" or the act of marriage where the aeta man needs to go up in the three for the girl he loves. If the man passed this phase, he'll move on to the next level. The changing of dress

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symbolizes that whatever happens, the man should always give comfort to the woman as show of deepest and real love for the woman. The woman stays on the tree house, the man will try to get to her through a ton of man that tries to hit him with arrows and axes. If he'll be able to go through that and get the girl, this'll prove that they can live together as man and wife.

4. The study shows that the result has a big impact to social study education as the field of specialization covers the whole society including these minorities the aeta magbukun of Abucay Bataan. The study will give the points to some instances for the better explanation and understanding of the practices they performed as part of their rituals, beliefs and traditions. The social study education will get an insight on how they can help these minorities in preserving their practices such as the courtship and marriage and they can be able to give such sole importance and respect to them.

The preservation of these practices will be a good thing to do in order to develop and enhance and develop the said practices so that it will last forever and the people who surrounds the minorities will find out and witness their practices.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were made:

1. Practices regarding courtship and marriage of Aeta Mabuken Tribe of Abucay seems to be a serious matter as it was part of their culture as tribe.
2. Both of the core of the Courtship and Marriage Practices of unat and kulot are the comfort of the newly wed promoted by the parents.

3. When holding celebrations, the Aeta Magbukun are very meticulous to every activity and event
4. The knowledge from the study will help the future educators to cope up with the specialization of the said minority.

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