

* Courtship and Marriage Rites in Philippine Provinces *

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* Olog, The Betrothal House

Ifugao, Mountain Province

The Ifugaos of Northern Luzon segregate girls who are ready for marriage in a communal abode called "Olog" or "Agamang". The boys, on the other hand, are housed in an "Ato." The boys from the "Ato" regularly visit the "Olog" and perform the first stage of courtship known as the "Ca-i-sing". They unburden their feelings in native songs rich in meanings and insinuation. The girls respond in native verse. All these are done under the watchful eye of the "Olog" head - an elderly and married woman or a childless widow who keeps the parents of her wards informed of the developments of the courtship. The practice, unique to our Northern Mountain Tribes, is also known as "Egban" (Kalinga) or "Pangis" (Tingguian).

* Tapat, Courtship through Poetry and Song

Ilocos Province

In small towns in Ilocos, a young man employs music and verse to declare his attraction to the woman he loves. The would-be suitor (sometimes with a friend in tow for moral support) goes to the girl's house to serenade her from her window. The lady then responds in a song - one that would suggest that the man has a long courtship ahead of him. (Those were the days... - Ed.) The man then counters with another song that is more passionate. This musical exchange continues until an "understanding" is reached. This practice is also known as "Harana" in the Tagalog regions. Among the Maranaos, the practice is known as "Tubad-tubad" wherein playful verses are exchanged between the two would-be lovers.

* Bisperas, The Eve of the Wedding

Province of Batangas

This is an old custom peculiar to Batangas. The day before the wedding, an entourage consisting of the groom's parents, relatives, "abays", "ninangs", and "ninongs", and others involved in the wedding walk in a procession from the groom's house to the bride's house. The purpose of this journey is to deliver all the ingredients to be used in preparation of the wedding feast. Everything from the cows and chickens, to the vegetables and rice, down to the condiments and the cutlery are carried in the procession. Upon arrival at the bride's house, refreshments are served. Thereafter, the elaborate preparations for the reception will take place.

* Pamalaye, The Formal Proposal

Province of Cebu

Asking the girl's hand in marriage is no simple matter for traditional Cebuanos. The entire family of the man troops to the girl's home, bringing with them musicians, gifts, food and wine. The discussions regarding the marriage are deputized to a "Mamamae" and a "Sagang" whose main qualifications are their great skills in the art of debate and rebuttal. They represent the interest of both families and are empowered to make binding contracts regarding the dowry. The reaching of an agreement between the families is the high point of this custom called the "Pamalaye". Lavish festivities ensue. Among the Ilocanos, this is known as "Tampa" or, the more formal arrangement, the "Danon". To the Tagalogs, it is "Pamanhikan." It is "Pasaguli" to the Palawenos and "Kapamalai" to the Maranaos.

* Pangagad, Bride Service

Province of Leyte

In Leyte, in lieu of paying a dowry, a Filipino man wishing to wed into a traditional family is expected to perform household service to the bride's family as proof of his sincerity and fortitude. This can include anything from fetching water, chopping firewood, working in the farm as well as running household errands. This usually lasts about one year. This is more of a test period - as the rendering of the "Pangagad" still does not guarantee irrevocable acceptance of the marriage proposal. Thus, it is appropriately known as "Paninilbihan" (being of service) or "Subok" (trial) to the Tagalogs. In Bicol, it is called the "Pamianan".

* Pangalay, The Wedding

Tausug

Of all social events, perhaps none is more elaborate than a wedding. And of all Filipino weddings, perhaps none is as full of color, splendor and pageantry as a Tausug wedding. On the eve of the affair, a cacophony of native percussion instruments - "agong", "kulintang" and "gabbang" - announces the impending wedding. Everyone in the village, young and old, are invited. An "Imam" or Muslim priest performs the ceremony proper. After readings from the "Koran", the groom puts his "fingerprint" on the forehead of the bride. This gesture formally seals the marriage. Like all weddings, lavish feasting, singing, dancing and merrymaking follow. And the entire tribe celebrates love and life.