

## BRIDGING THE GAP

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### **‘Bordon’: The West Bisayan merry mourning custom**

Among the inhabitants of Western Visayas, particularly those in Panay, there are many and oftentimes puzzling dos and donts that have to be observed upon the passing of a member of the family or the community. These are those that have become part and parcel of the customs and traditions of the people through time.

Nevertheless, despite the sadness and sorrow felt due to the death of somebody, there seems to be time where everybody looked forward to, especially in the past when there were no televisions, cellphones, computers, and other modes of highly technologically-driven entertainment. These were the feast prepared on the burial day for the mourners and the “bilasyon” that follows in one “pasiyam” or of nine days of prayers and merrymaking.

The purpose of the “bilasyon” is to comfort or ease the pains of the bereaved family for the passing away of a loved one. For some though, it is an opportunity to socialize with friends and meet possible future partners in life.

The most interesting and exciting game during the “bilasyon” was the “Bordon”. It is sad, however, that this traditional exciting game is no longer practise nowadays, except perhaps in some remote areas.

To play the “Bordon”, participants who are mostly young people, would form a big circle while seated on the floor. Generally, if the gender of the participants will permit, the seating arrangement would be boy-girl alternately. Thus, it will appear that the participants are actually couples. Inside this big circle is the “it” who may be variably called the “polis”, “hari”, “bastonero” or “kuring”.

As soon as everybody is ready, the players clasp hands together and a ring is dropped at the clasped hands in one point of the circle while the group starts to sing the “bordon”. The “bordon” song, more or less runs this way: “Bordon de las kwerdas, singsing papanawa, palibut-libuta sa hari kag rayna. May mutyang trabungko, dalaga si Carmela nga maayo-ayo. Singsing ay abaw singsing...” (And, so on and so forth)

Meanwhile, the “it” will try to locate where the ring is around the circle for it is concealed in the moving back and forth clasped hands of the participants. If he/she is able to locate or apprehend the holders of the ring, they are penalized through the recitation of a “loa” or even required to sing songs or a duet. This holds true to somebody or the partners who accidentally drop the ring on the floor.

The “loa” or “lowa” is a quatrain rhymed in a number of ways, like a,b,a,a,a,b,b, or a,a,a,a,, etc. (Padilla 1994). Examples of loa are here given: (1) “Sa ibabaw sang bukid, may tambo nga nagaligid, Nagaligid, nagabalang-balang, Nagapangita sang tagabang.” (2) “Mga rosas sa kabulakan, Bulak sang kamantulan, Soltero nga waay nobya, Nagamantenir saging sab-a.” One that is very familiar with and always recited by young girls is this one: “Paghalin ko sa balay, Nagbilin si Nanay, Sanglit ako malaw-ay, Magpahigad-higad lang anay.”

There are also loas that are funny or often absurd and a few that are lewd and vulgar. Take a look at these ones: (1) “Si sin-o ang tampalasan, Ang namus-on sa sini nga dalan, Sa banta ko babaye, Kay ang ihi malapit sa ta-i.” (2) Sa ibabaw sang paho, May balo nga nagapungko, Hinaboy ko gamay hal-o, Hala! Fight! Bato!”

If this type of loas is resorted to by some participants, the older folks present may interrupt and say “Estangko!” which means “unacceptable” and so the one penalized may have to resort to other loas. As to the rest of the participants, they may likewise react by way of shouting “Bitor!” when they are in approval and may sing “Tatay Meroy waay datsoy!” if unacceptable. With this, the person concerned has to try again or be meted the penalty.

Another variant of the “Bordon” is called the “Panyong Palaran”. The game also start with the same seating arrangement mentioned earlier but, this time, there are more specific persons in target by the “it”. The game also starts with a song that runs like this: Tintin ka na uwak, hapon sa amargoso, Amargosong mapait, solterong maanghit, Amo ining katapusan sang anom ka verso, Panyo nga palaran, itaklop sa ulo”. The “it” puts the handkerchief on the head of whoever he wants to deliver the loa.

At times, when a male participant gets attracted to a female player, especially a new face, only the two of them take turn in putting the handkerchief on each other’s head. Here’s what they say: Male: “Aton palapitan isa ka prinsesa nga nagapanilong sa puno sang granada, Basi mabuyok ang pensar niya, Nga sa akon siya mamana.” Female: “Hardin gali ini sang paraiso, Apang maiwat gid magbaton estado, Maayo kon manami ang madangatan ko, Pero kon malain, kaloluoy man ako.” Male: “Ay, abaw si Inday wala gid kalooy, Sang pagbalakhoon ni Nonoy, Bisan pa gani ang gabok nga kahoy, Nagatakas-takas kon ako managhoy.” Female: “Dili ako magpati sa imo sugid, Kay akon natandaan sa libro ni David, Nga ang imo ginasugid, Lunsay lang gid mga binutig.”

As one can see, the West Bisayans have a very rich oral traditional literature. Before everything is lost to the overwhelming effects of modernization and globalization, scholars and students should find the time to record this very interesting non-material cultural heritage of the West Visayan region. Those who belong to the present owe it to the future generation to preserve components of this merry mourning tradition.