

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

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## **Sacrifice and Sharing, by Gibson**

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*Philippine Studies* vol. 36, no. 1 (1988) 116–119

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

constructs which he studied as belief: 1) That Fate or Destiny decides everything on Earth, disabling man from recognizing or doing anything against oppressive structures; 2) That life among the poor is peaceful, making them complacent and resigned to their fate; 3) That the oppressed especially women, are blessed, the drama characters having been patterned after the suffering Christ; 4) That the present order offers hope to be brought in *deus ex machina* manner by fantastic and fictitious characters like Darna, Kapitang Kidlat, Johnny Davao and Ginang Milyonarya; and, 5) That everything in life is caused by love or lack of it.

Echoing Nicanor Tiongson's analysis of disvalues in Philippine drama and movies ("Four Values in Filipino Drama and Film"), Nofuente's conclusion is that radio and TV drama dulls people's perceptions of reality instead of clarifying them. He sees drama (melodrama and comedy alike) as functioning beyond pastime or escape for the Filipino, because it should reflect social realities instead of illusions. Although we miss the exuberant prose of Nofuente in the original Pilipino text, the essay's content and commitment more than compensate for the lack of lyricism which was lost in translation.

By and large, all the essays are representative of the growing trend towards the further discovery of a national world view that is continually evolving and therefore dynamic. It is a volume that should encourage further studies and seminars which should include among others paradigms for studying the relationship between folk religion, folk arts, folk music and the world view they convey as the Filipino moves diachronically and synchronically towards his cultural emancipation.

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SACRIFICE AND SHARING IN THE PHILIPPINE HIGHLANDS. By Thomas Gibson. London: Athlone Press, 1986. 261 pages.

*Sacrifice and Sharing in the Philippine Highlands* is an in-depth study of the value system of the social and religious organization of the Buid, a technologically primitive highland group in south eastern Mindoro. The author states his purpose:

The central concern of this book has been to elucidate the fundamental principles and idioms according to which the Buid organize their social life. It has been my contention that the Buid religious beliefs are no less essential to Buid communities than are their beliefs and practices relating to the economy, politics and the conduct of proper social relations.  
(p. 217)

This book is a scholarly work and the reader will need some familiarity with anthropological terminology to fully profit from it.

The book deals with a common problem; namely, the way in which a technologically primitive group deals with the encroachment of an aggressive modern technological society. Hence the book is a valuable contribution not only for anthropologists but for anyone interested in the impact of modern technological society on more traditional cultures and the problems that this impact may impose.

The history of the Buid may in part account for their value system and social organization, as they have been through history, continually on the defensive against a better organized and more aggressive enemy. Mindoro has long been a trading stop for Chinese junks, and for the Sulu traders and raiders, who sometimes enslaved the Buid and other groups in Mindoro. With the advent of the Spaniards the Buid were caught in the clash between these two forces, and were either enslaved by the Sulu or made tributaries by the Spaniards. After the Second World War, they were subjected to an influx of lowlanders, both rich and poor, who took their land for farming or ranching, and their forests for logging concessions. Unlike the more warlike Igorot residents of the Cordillera, however, they did not fight back. And unlike many upland groups in Mindanao, such as the Higaunon, they did not acquiesce in the destruction of their culture, but were determined to protect it by geographical and cultural withdrawal.

Regarding the Buid value system Gibson writes:

The traditional value system stresses the absolute equality and autonomy of all adults and the need for collective solidarity in the face of external aggression . . . Local communities are bound together by the sharing of space, food, labor and ritual between members of different households and their potential sharing of residence and sex. (p. 218)

The social organization of the Buid proceeded, presumably over a long period of time, from the two poles of their value system: the absolute equality and autonomy of every adult and the need for social solidarity in the face of aggression from the outside, and also against any aggressiveness among the members of the group which might threaten group solidarity. Hence for the Buid, any form of aggressiveness or domination is taboo. They are true pacifists. This belief in absolute equality and autonomy affects the social structure in the following ways: There are no headmen, datos or ruling elders in the community. Except for one or two modern barrios the Buid live in small groups in the mountains, and all decisions affecting the group are reached by group consensus. In the home the husband and wife, married merely by mutual consent without any ceremony, each have a farm plot which the owner works and from which he and she contribute to the upkeep of the household. Children are cared for by the mother until the age of five,

after which they spend most of their time among their peers, receiving their education from the older children. They have absolute freedom to roam around, eating and sleeping in other houses. At the age of fifteen the young man leaves home, builds his own house, farms his own plot, and starts looking for a wife. The girl of fifteen leaves home, going to live with an older widow, until she finds a husband. When group assistance is needed the Buid does not call on relatives to help, but on other members of the community, and that in an indirect way. Sitting in a group but not facing one another, members of the group relate their needs and it is up to the members of the community to render assistance. However, the assistance rendered does not establish a reciprocal relationship of indebtedness between the one helped and the helpers. The obligation is to the community. In this way the equality and autonomy of the individual is preserved.

To preserve group solidarity the Buid have endeavored to eliminate as far as possible the sources of conflict within the community. To solve the problem of sexual jealousy, the marriage agreement can be terminated at the request of either party. This rupture, however, may cause social instability due either to personal feelings of the spouses or to bickering over the property to be divided. The divorce proceedings, unlike the marriage, must be discussed among the community in a meeting known as *tultulan*, and an agreement has to be reached. The ordinary Buid may have been married and divorced six times and ten divorces is not uncommon. In the field of economics, every Buid is free to barter produce with the lowlanders, whom they try to keep at as great a distance as possible. They realize that they are generally cheated by the lowlanders, but accept that as the price they have to pay for their independence. Aggressive behavior among members of the community is consigned to the realm of religion.

Buid religion, which is central to their way of life, is the invisible counterpart of their visible world. Since in the visible world the main problem is defense against outside aggression, and the need is for equality, autonomy and group solidarity, the same characteristics appear in their dealings with the spirit world. The main function of the Buid religion is defense against the host of malignant spirits which cause both sickness and death and aggressiveness among the people. Another function of this religion is to maintain harmonious relations with neutral spirits and friendly relations with the personal guardian spirits, the *lai*.

As there is no political hierarchy in the social system in the religious realm there is no hierarchical priesthood. The closest thing to leadership among the Buid is the spirit medium, who is believed to be able to see and converse with his personal guardian spirit, and to obtain assistance from his *lai* against the attacks of malignant spirits. The spirit medium in a seance communes with his *lai* in order to discover what evil spirits are attacking the members of the community, and to seek help in driving them away. If the situation is serious, then a number of spirit mediums gather and by

communing with their lai in a common seance exert enough spirit power to drive out the malignant spirits.

Animal sacrifices of domesticated pigs and chickens, used only for ritual purposes, are offered to the neutral and benign spirits, and the meat is shared by all the members of the community. Gibson describes the practice:

In animal sacrifice, humans simultaneously establish solidarity between the members of different households, and between themselves and their spirit allies, through the sharing of the meat of domesticated animals. . . . Buid religion not only embodies the same values as Buid society, it enters into the very constitution of the society. (p. 219)

Social aggressiveness is considered to be the result of the work of a malignant spirit, and a seance by a spirit medium and sometimes an animal sacrifice is required. In treating aggressiveness somewhat like a spirit-induced disease, the Buid protect social solidarity and at the same time the equality and autonomy of the individual.

Thus, in summary, we can perceive among the Buid a rational response in their social and religious system to the outside forces of aggression and oppression. This cultural response has enabled them to maintain their cherished values of equality and autonomy free from corruption from outside forces. However, for one who has worked among kinship type cultures such as those of the highland Higaunon and the Manobo in Mindanao, the price seems high and that is in the area of affectivity. One misses the manifest love of Higaunon parents for their children, and the sacrifices they will endure to assist a kinsman in time of need.

Finally, the ever increasing pressure from the lowlanders and the lack of areas for further withdrawal may soon force the Buid to abandon their cultural isolation and deal more positively and perhaps more aggressively with the intruders. The recent establishment of larger barrios such as Batangan, with certain positions of leadership in the hands of Buid, indicate that they have begun this transition. We can only hope that with prudent help from the Church and other lowland groups and with assistance from the government they can continue to retain the same degree of self determination which they have shown in the past.

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