

Prayer Warriors: The Story Of The Mamaratbat

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ABSTRACT

The qualitative study was conducted to determine the practices and beliefs of the mamaratbat and the ways to preserve their culture. Six participants served as key informants on the study, which utilized the multiple case study method. The theories on Functionalism, Habitus and Social Identity were used as frameworks. After a thorough thematic analysis of the data, the following themes emerged: the practice of the mamaratbat is according to catholic rites and is passed down from mother to daughter, they believe in the power of prayers and are written on notebooks handed down from their grandmothers, and lastly, men do not pray for the dead. The study concluded that the practice of the mamaratbat is religious, functional and feminine in nature. And the key to preserving their culture is to preserve the notebooks where the prayers are written.

Keywords: mamaratbat; case study; prayer; prayer warrior; notebook; feminine; Filipino; Eastern Samar; Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Culture is the distinctive identity of a particular group of people. It is their way of life, their values, norms and beliefs which are passed along from one generation to the next. Here in the Philippines, which is composed of 11.3 million indigenous people (Minority Rights Group International, 2020) and 175 ethnolinguistic nations (UNDP Philippines, 2013), the Waray-waray culture stands out because of its colorful and vibrant traditions and practices and one of their unique practices is their way of honoring and praying for the dead.

In Eastern Samar, a province located in the eastern tip of Samar Island, the practice of honoring and praying for the dead is one of the most important part of the Waray-waray culture. As a distinct Catholic rite, this practice is the believers' way of offering prayers of the internal repose of the dead (Catholic Funeral Rites, 2003), done in a nine- day prayer or novena, and is usually led by the mamaratbat (Alegre, 2014).

The mamaratbat, usually a woman or a group of women, plays a crucial role as a channel between the living and the dead. The nine-day novena, from a similar Latin word which means nine, is based on the practice of early Christianity where masses were held for nine days with devotional prayers for someone who died (Kane, Paula, 2004), although not explicit in the New Testament. During the wake, the mamaratbat will then sing and recite Latin texts (Balentic, 2011), mostly of which are incomprehensible to the uninitiated.

The Waray-warays believe that since the dead is helpless, it is up to the living to pray for his internal repose. But with a diminishing number of mamaratbat nowadays, the ratio for hundreds of deaths annually to the mamaratbat is disproportionate (Petilla, 2015). It is this dilemma that the Catholic church is facing, which they sometimes answer by dispensing away with the nine-day novena for the dead.

Filipinos have always believed in life after death. That is why, the mamaratbat plays a crucial role in the ushering of the souls from purgatory to heaven, as per Christian credence (Alegre, 2014). However, little has been written about them, their distinct practices and how the same will be sustained in the next hundred years more. The Latin texts they use are, up to this day, written in faded notebooks and in incomprehensible texts only they know and understand. Seeing that the practice of the mamaratbat have been given little grip by historians and local researchers, an exploration on this segment of the Eastern Samar culture is deemed necessary. The fading practice of the mamaratbat may well lead to oblivion what with their continued diminishing number.

In modern society, keeping traditions alive proves to be difficult and it is due to this quandary that this paper has been written. This study can help demystify on the enigma that is the mamaratbat and can usher in its cultural sustainability.

Objectives

The research only focuses on the practices of the mamaratbat and how it will be passed on to the next generation. Specifically, the research aims to:

1. Determine the beliefs and practices of the mamaratbat;

2. Determine the ways to sustain and preserve the culture of the mamaratbat.

Significance of the Study

The study aimed to shed light on the culture of the mamaratbat and find ways to sustain and preserve it. The results of the study are deemed beneficial to the following:

BCAEd Program. The program head, faculty who handles subjects pertaining to culture and the students will be enlightened on the unique practice of the mamaratbat. The results of the study can help them understand the distinct waray-waray culture and the factors that helped in shaping and developing such culture.

The University. Results of the study can become the basis of formulating and designing programs and activities for extension such as providing trainings or seminars to the local residents on the practices of the mamaratbat. These activities will lead to a strong partnership and create linkages with the community.

Maydolong. The residents and the town itself can be placed on the map and be recognized for the unique practice and culture of the mamaratbat. Results of the study can give a distinct identity to the town as well as the Maydolongnons. Regardless of faith or religion, the Maydolongnons will be able to share in the knowledge of the mamaratbat especially during wakes and All Souls' Day.

Mamaratbat. The object of focus of the study which is the mamaratbat can be impacted through the measures that will help sustain their culture. They will also be given recognition on the vital role they play in the community.

Definition of Terms

For clear understanding of the scope of the study, the following terms are defined:

Cultural sustainability- the act of maintaining cultural beliefs, practices and heritage and asks whether such culture will exist in the context of the future

Mamaratbat- a prayer leader who holds the nine- day novena for the final repose of the dead

Maydolongnon- residents of the town of Maydolong

Parapanabat- the ones following the lead of the mamaratbat

Pangadi- prayer for the dead, usually a nine-day novena

Pangatuigan-a novena for those who have already died, usually culminated with a feast and food offering for the dead

Panlimos- All Soul's Day, held in the second day of November, a distinct practice among Filipinos by visiting the cemeteries with prayers, flowers and food being offered

Vehilya- the novena offered for someone who died

Tapos- the end of the nine-day novena constituted with feasting

Waray-waray- a group of people who are living in the provinces of Samar, Leyte and Biliran and speaks the Waray language.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Filipinos are known for their devotional fervor for the religious practices and traditions. But while Catholicism flourishes on the islands because of the Spanish culture influences, many still cling to traditional beliefs and practices (Regencio, 2015). When the Spanish conquistadores came to convert the Indios to Christianity, the natives of Visayan islands were still on the level of spirit worship and animistic beliefs (Majul, 2015). That is why, even after almost 400 years of Spanish contact in the Philippines, many of these paganistic beliefs and practices are still seen in Catholics rites which are uniquely Filipino (Fitzpatrick, 2013).

The ancient native Filipinos had their own beliefs of Bathalas and anitos. They believe in animism, that spirits dwell in all objects and elements of nature such as leaves, trees, mountains and even weather conditions (Taylor, 2014). Offerings were made to these spirits to appease them and to help them in their everyday endeavors. Even animals were also believed to have spirits hence they were considered either sacred or symbolic.

Most Filipino tribes believed in life after death, and the widespread belief was in a heaven for the good and a hell for the bad. Heaven and hell were generally thought to be divided into different levels, through which the soul could move by gaining merit. Some tribes believed that souls went to different places according to how they died. In many regions of the Philippines, it was thought that people had more than one soul; sometimes three souls, sometimes two (Michael, 2017). Of the two, the good soul went to heaven and the bad one went to hell or remained on earth. Some tribes still believe that if a child is born close to the death of a family member, the child will receive a part of the dead person's soul (Jayeel, 2017). Ancestor worship was also practiced, with spirits of ancestors believed to remain on earth or visit the living. Many of these beliefs are still held by tribal groups and have been mixed with Christianity even in modern day Filipinos. Because of this, authors were able to

coin the term folk Catholicism, and one of this practice is the nine-day novena prayer offered for those who have died.

It has been discussed in many a history books and countless accounts of historians that the shift from paganism to Christianity was one of the main goals of the Spanish colonizers. Long before the Spaniards came to Christianize the native Filipinos, the local inhabitants of the islands, however, have established a distinct culture and traditions and indigenous religious practices such as honoring the dead by chanting different songs and offering food for the safe passage to the underworld. Early Filipinos firmly believed that the soul will travel to another world to receive due reward or punishment, depending on what the person has done when he was still alive (Halili, 2010). According to the Visayans, the good soul will go to the ologan and the bad soul will go to the solad. They had rituals conducted by the local priestess known in the Visayan Island as the “babaylanes” invoking ancient spirits and long-gone ancestors for protection, healing guidance and power. The modern equivalent of which is what is locally known in Samar and Leyte as the mamaratbat, or the prayer leader (Solmerano & Palencia, 2018).

The Mamaratbat

Pamamatbat, or praying for the dead, is one of the many practices that are unique among the colorful and vibrant Filipino culture, specifically in the Samar and Leyte region. The prayer leader, called the mamaratbat, has been believed to be the link which will lead to the eternal salvation of the soul (Alegre, 2014). The practice of holding a nine-day novena prayer for the dead here in the Philippines started during the Spanish colonization as part of their belief in purgatory, the temporary state of punishment for those who die (Gould, 2016) and is an act of Christianity, through the Roman Catholic Church, which was the religion of the colonizing Spain. The Church preaches that when a person dies and is deemed worthy of heaven but still needs purification, he is sent to purgatory where he relies on the prayers of the people here on earth to absolve them of their sins. (Shane, 2015). In the Second Council of Lyon in 1274, the Catholic Church emphasized that some souls are purified after death and these souls benefit from prayers and pious duties which the religious do for them (Raynor, 2017).

In some texts, the word mamaratbat may have come from its root word batbat which means to beat a strip of metal or drum and the entire word may mean the precentor who sets the tune and beat by singing a couplet (Scott, 1992). According to the ancient dictionary of the Pre-hispanic Filipinos, this word may also have been taken from the word “pamatbat” which means “awit sa inuman” or songs during drinking revelry (Espinosa, 2010). But according to the

book by Vim Nadera entitled “Isang Pamatbat ng Pagbabagong Anyo”, the term “mamatbat” is the person who sets the rhythm or beats of the metal (Nadera, 2012). Some scholars however believed that this term is similar to the Tagalog practice of panambitan which means crying for the deeds of the deceased parents. Drinking revelry aside, pamamatbat seems to be the traditional genre for death rituals of the Visayas similar to the pasyon. The one singing and/or chanting during the vigil for the dead is called in the local dialect as the mamaratbat, or the prayer leader. This practice cleaves towards Christian rites when a person dies but the influence of primitive religion still lingers on (Hislop, 1998).

Today, the mamaratbat continues to exist in the funeral rites of the Visayas, continuing a practice that has been prevalent for a long time. Regardless of religious affiliation, the mamaratbat, usually old women, are always called upon to offer prayers for the dead believing that by doing so, their souls will eternally rest. The prayers are not just usually done immediately after a person dies. The mamaratbat prays for the dead within nine days after dying, forty days after dying and after a year. During All Souls’s Day or what is colloquially known as the paglimos, the mamaratbat is the usual staple in graves and tombs. Depending on the request of the local inhabitants, the mamaratbat are doctors of the soul, called upon for healing and ushering from purgatory to heaven (Cunanan, 2019). The prayers are said in poor Latin, Spanish and Visayas and until the tapos, or end of novena, feasting on food is held (Roa, 2018). However, the number of mamaratbat in the locality is few and between and it has slowly been becoming a lost art among the Waray-warays. The well-known prayer leaders in the area are getting old and their practice are starting to diminish.

Cultural Sustainability

In a changing society brought about by technology and other modernity’s, culture should always remain intact as it is the identifying mark of a nation or a group of people. It is but a wonder that despite the onslaught of modern technology, trends and influences of other cultures, the Waray-waray culture remains as compact and unique as it was in the beginning. Subsequently, the practice of the mamaratbat should be preserved to be passed on to the next generation.

The sustainability and preservation of a culture depends largely on its society and its safeguarding people. To be kept alive, a culture must be regularly practiced and learned within communities and between generations (Hudson, 2014).

Different Practices on Praying for the Dead

Prayer is one of the most ancient expression of religion and has been practiced across culture and religion. The first form of prayer may have been a cry or an exclamation (Withers, 2016). For contemporary tribal people, a prayer leader often addresses his prayers to the gods, the divinities of nature, and the dead (Britannica, 2016).

In ancient Egypt, they used the Book of the Dead, which was a compilation of magical prayers that allow the dead to forestall all dangers and meet all the eventualities. In particular, they contain confessions in which the dead person justifies himself before the court of Osiris, the God of Death (Britannica, 2016).

In Chinese Buddhism and Daoism, a prayer for the dead, related to the transmigration of souls, are recited at funerals, the 30th day, the anniversary of the dead, and the birthday of the deceased. During the funeral, verses are also chanted and monks may be invited to conduct the ceremony (Zheng, 2015)

Hindus on the other hand believes that the essence of each soul is divine and that although the physical body is dead, it may be revived through reincarnation. During the funeral, mourners are encouraged to wear white (black is taboo), hymns and mantras are recited amidst an open casket and mourning ranges from ten to 30 days after death (Kramer, 2016).

In the Philippines, most of the inhabitants are Catholics, thereby belief in life after death flourishes and follows Catholic funeral traditions including hymns and mass. Filipino Catholics believe in celebrating All Souls Day, the 40th day novena and the ninth day novena, in honor of their dead loved ones. However, some sectors have their own funeral traditions. Filipino Chinese would hire professional mourners, wear white and burn paper money and Filipino Muslims opt to burying their dead after 24 hours. (Goldade, 2017). In Benguet, elders of the tribe perform a special ritual which they give a chant-like biography of the deceased and hit bamboo sticks together to guide the deceased towards heaven. In Ilocos, the wife of the deceased is asked to take care of the body of her deceased husband whom which will convey messages through her during the process. On the ninth day, a feast is held after saying the novena and will again hold a feast after a year (Noble, 2013). In Pangasinan, the usual novena prayers are offered for the dead and during All Souls' Day, or the Undas, cantores who assume the role of the dead will go to different houses to sing the song Pantawtawag or calling of the souls (Bravo, 2012).

Other Related Studies

There has been a limited list of studies pertaining to practices on praying for the dead both around the world and locally. However,

some studies found pertains to the beliefs on the power of prayer and religion and were deemed relevant to the study as well.

In a study conducted in Turkey regarding death-related traditional and religious practices, most of the participants describe death as the end of life. Subsequently, they believe that prayer is the first practice following death. A total of 42.0% said that relatives and friends who joined the burial ceremony shovel some soil into the pit over the corpse in order to express that they would not claim any rights from the deceased person thereafter, and 55.2% stated that they visited the deceased person's home to give social support to his or her relatives (Bahal & Beser, 2012).

In death, a funeral offers a venue to overcome grief in a culturally accepted manner. A study in the Netherlands postulated that holding a wake, offering prayers and flowers for the dead facilitate adjustment to bereavement and ease the grief of the bereaved individuals (Mitima-Verloop & Mooren, 2019).

The practice of praying for the dead is one of the many aspects of cultures that needs to be highlighted in the locality. Clearly, this has been around for a long time. However, literature in this content is scarce and limited which prompted the researcher to come up with a study which focuses on the local practices of death through the lens of the mamarabatbat.

Theoretical Framework

To fully comprehend and illuminate the foundations of the study, it is framed on the following theories:

Functionalism Theory

The theory was based largely on the works of Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer and Robert Merton. The functionalist perspective states that society is of interconnected parts that work together to maintain its balance and equilibrium. In this way, society needs culture to exist. Cultural norms function to support the fluid operation of society and cultural values guide people in making choices. Just as members of society work together to fulfill society's needs, culture exists to meet each member's basic needs (Kennedy, 2020). According to Durkheim, social order is held together by attitude of solidarity which play the role of ensuring the survival of a well-integrated society (Ampomah, 2013). Functionalists further believe that culture is more important than the individuals because the society exists before the existence of individuals and humans are only taught the means to fit into a society by socialization (Burrowes, 2006). This implies that a culture exists and will exist unto the next generation to satisfy the needs of the society.

Habitus Theory

Pierre Bourdieu's Habitus theory is one of the understated theories on culture yet also the most ambiguous. This theory refers to the physical embodiment of cultural capital to the deeply embedded habits, skills, values and dispositions that one possesses due to one's life experiences (Costa, 2017). Merriam- Webster defines habitus as the way that individuals perceive the social world around them and how they react to it. In Bourdieu's words, habitus are "structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures that is as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them" (Bourdieu, 1990). This means that when a person is born, he learns from one's experiences and are incorporated into his everyday life, which will guide the person's future action and behavior. For example, if one is born in the company of dancers, one believes he also has the skills of those dancers affecting his behavior and action (Nowicka, 2015).

Social Identity Theory

This theory was coined by Henri Tajfel, a renowned psychologist. According to this theory, social identity is the person's sense of who they are based on their group members. Tajfel proposed that the group which a person belongs to (family, social class, team) is an important source of pride and self-esteem giving them a sense of social identity (Macleod, 2019). According to Tajfel, there are three stages in this theory. The first one is categorization of groups based on the appropriate behavior or norms of the group they belong to. Second is, social identification by adopting the identity of the group they belong to and the last one is social comparison which is to compare the group they belong to other groups (Tajfel, 2017)

These theories are further discussed in the presentation of conclusions gleaned from the study. The findings of the study are supported by these theories to further validate the result. Reinforcement of conclusions through these theories can corroborate as to their coherence and veracity.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized the multiple case study design. Case study is one of the most commonly used qualitative research designs. It is a type of detailed research involving few respondents ranging from one to a small size of less than ten which provides a detailed description of the

development of a certain activity. It is used to have a deeper understanding about one or few institutions, process, individuals, or phenomena (Wa-mbleka & Kingston, 2018). As it is common in case studies, “generalizability is left to the reader. It is up to the reader to determine whether or to what extent the findings may apply to a different context” (Schmidt, 2002).

Research Participants

The participants of the study are mamaratbat or prayer leaders of Maydolong. Specifically, the participants were able to meet the following criteria:

1. She is a mamaratbat or prayer leader.
2. She is a resident of Maydolong.
3. She has been a mamaratbat for not less than five years.

The study employed the purposive sampling technique which is the default sampling in qualitative research. The method of selection of participants on the study is used based on the notion that the research participants who met the selection criteria, are considered as experts on the research topic, and are willing to share their insights truthfully.

Locale of the Study

The study is premised in Maydolong, Eastern Samar. Maydolong is considered a fourth-class municipality in the province and is home to a few mamaratbat who still practice the trade.

Data Gathering Tools

The researcher conducted interviews with the consent of the participants and used audio recorder, pen and notepads as aids in recording and transcribing of data. The researcher also collected documents, involved participatory observation, and studied physical artifacts relevant to the cases.

Data Analysis

After transcribing the responses of each interviewed participant and perusing the data gathered, the data was coded and categorized accordingly until a main theme was produced. The researchers used the thematic analysis method as proposed by Wa-Mbaleka (2018). This method provides ten (10) systematic steps that are helpful in analyzing the data clearly and completely. The ten steps are the following: (1) preparing and organizing of data; (2) reading transcripts once or twice; (3) developing coding manual; (4) coding; (5) finding

recurring ideas; (6) abstracting ideas; (7) interpreting data; (8) reporting; (9) verifying finding and concluding; and (10) revising. Data triangulation was used by confirming from the participants if the data abstracted were interpreted correctly. A retired English teacher was commissioned to help in the translation of deep waray-waray words to English.

Ethical Consideration

All data gathered from the participants were used for the purpose of this research only and will not be used to defame or malign any of the participants. The researcher also made sure that the participants agreed first to the process of gathering data by asking them to sign consent forms. The respondents were also informed that they can stop, without any explanation, the process of answering the questions, if they deemed it necessary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the data gathered from the study. Excerpts from interviews of the participants were subjected to analysis and translation. The main purpose of the study was to find out how the mamaratbat practice their trade. The researcher wanted to bring to light the distinct practice and beliefs of the mamamatbat in the municipality of Maydolong which can possibly be prevalent in other cultures in Eastern Visayas. The other purpose was to identify the ways on how the culture of the mamaratbat will be sustained and preserved for the coming generation.

The experiences and feedback of the participants during the pilot interview added insight to the research questions posed in the study. By listening to and analyzing the experiences of the mamaratbat participants, valuable information was obtained as to their beliefs and practices and how their trade can be preserved.

Demographics of the Participants

The results of the study are based on interviews from the six participants that were included in the study. These participants were the only mamaratbat known in the area who were able to pass the requirements posed as basis to be included in the study. All participants gave their consent to the conduct of the interview and the perusal of several manuscripts that they possess pertaining to the study. All participants live in the poblacion barangays of Maydolong, Eastern Samar.

All of the participants were unable to finish high school with three of them unable to finish their primary education. Despite this setback, all participants are literate. Their ages vary from 67-89 years old, and all of them have families of their own. When asked whether they are able to understand the Latin texts, all of them answered on the negative. Participant 4 claimed that they were able to memorize the texts by constantly reciting them but it took them several years to know them by heart. Five of the six participants' mothers were also mamaratbat. One of them was able to learn the trade by participating in the novena where they eventually memorized the prayers through reading and listening.

Each participant was interviewed face-to-face by the researcher. The one-on-one interviews were much easier than conducting phone interviews because most participants do not have cellphones. Interviews were recorded and transcribed within a couple of days after occurrence after which participants were able to review, change and/ or verify their comments. Most interview questions were asked exactly as they were written. However, the researcher followed up the answer with "Why" or "Can you tell me more" to get a deeper context of the response of the participant.

To add to the data for the study, the researcher deemed it necessary to conduct an observation on the practice of the mamaratbat during a wake or "lamay". The prayer lasts for an hour to two hours depending on the pace of the mamaratbat. The waray-waray prayers are spoken and the Latin prayers are sung in a fast melodious, lilting, tone. The mamaratbat does not wait for the others to finish their part and continues to recite her own prayers. She speaks what prayers to be said next saying "pangadion ta an" or "let us pray the", which the rest of the parapanabat or participants follow. After the novena, those who participated are given snacks or refreshments. The same goes on every day until the ninth day is finished. The novena will then be concluded with a tapos, or a feast for the relatives and friends of the deceased and those who participated in the novena.

Research Questions

Two primary questions guided the scope of the interview. These are:

1. What are the practices and beliefs of the mamaratbat?
2. How will the culture of the mamaratbat be sustained and preserved?

Results

Five distinct themes emerged from the research data. The major themes identified from the results of the study included:

1. The mamaratbat follow a novena **according to Catholic rites** but has its own distinct characteristic from other culture in the Philippines.
2. The mamaratbat believes that **prayers will help** the souls and that without them they will not ascend to heaven and will stay in purgatory.
3. The practice of the mamaratbat has been passed on from **mother to daughter** for as far as three generations.
4. The prayers of the mamaratbat are written in **the notebook** handed down from their grandmothers.
5. The **men do not pray** for the dead.

Theme 1: According to Catholic Rites

All of the participants assented when asked whether they follow the prayers for the dead of the Roman Catholic religion. All litanies included Our Father, The Apostle's Creed, Holy Mary's, and the Requiem prayer.

"danay kami hit deri nangangadi hit nga Latin kay danay karuyag hit nagpapapangadi nga waray-waray la."- participants 2,4,5

["Sometimes, we do not say the Latin prayers because some of them request that we pray in Waray-waray."]

They follow the praying of the rosary through its mysteries with one Our Father, ten Holy Mary's and 1 Requiem, instead of the Glory Be prayer, as the standard prayer.

" Parehas manla it hit kanan pag rosaryo pero iba la it am ginyayakan nga mga misteryo." – participant 6

["It is similar to praying the rosary but we utter different mysteries."]

When asked what those mysteries were, they said there are four mysteries including kalipay (joy), kasakit(sorrow), kapawa(peace) and himaya(glory). For each mystery, there are five sub-mysteries. After uttering these mysteries, it will be followed by the " Litania"(Litany) and the Oracion (Oration). The prayer lasts for two hours and is done for nine days. When asked what the different prayers are for the dead, the participants said that there are four types of prayers for the dead.

"Upat la it ka klasi. Nyan hin namamatay deritso it pinangangadian hin siyam ka adlaw tapos hit ika kwarenta diyas, niyan hin iglilimos, niyan hin nagbibihilya ngan niyan hin pangatuigan."

["There are four kinds. When the person dies, he is immediately offered a prayer for nine days and then after forty days, during the

All Soul's Day, when we do vigils for the dead, and during the "pangatuigan" where a family will hold prayers and prepare food offerings for their ancestors"]

When a Person Dies

When the person dies, the family will immediately contact the mamaratbat to hold a novena. If the family of the deceased decides to hold the wake for less than nine days, the mamaratbat will still continue to pray even if the deceased has already been buried until it completes the nine-day novena. After forty days, another novena will be held for the ascension of the soul.

"It kalag, angay it pangadian hin namamatay hin siyam ka adlaw, para makapahuway hiya hin maupay. It kalag aanhi la it ha tuna naglilibot libot ngada hit ika-kwarenta ka diyas. Pagkatapos hit kwarenta diyas, nagikan na it kalag dinhi ha kalibutan ngan naghuhulat hit katalwasan ha purgatoryo."- participants 1,3,4

["The soul needs to be prayed for within nine days, so they will be able to rest well. The soul stays on earth roaming around and after forty days, the soul goes on to wait for salvation in purgatory."]

In the Catholic faith, the numbers nine (9) and forty (40) are symbolic. According to the Bible, Jesus died in the 9th hour of the day (Collins, 2019). The number nine symbolizes finality or completeness. It is also an angelic number since the Bible speaks of the nine choirs of angels. It is also the typical number of prayers, because the first Christian novena was the nine full days that the Disciples stayed in the Upper Room and prayed after Christ's Ascension until Pentecost Sunday (Mirus, 2017). On the other hand, the number forty is also symbolic to the Roman Catholics. Forty is the biblical number for trial, testing, or waiting. It was used to describe a complete period of time rather than saying "many" or "some." For example, the flood lasted forty days and forty nights; the Israelites wandered forty years in the wilderness; Moses remained forty days on Mount Sinai. After his baptism, Christ stayed for forty days in the desert and there he was tempted by the devil. After his Resurrection, he appeared to the disciples for forty days before the Ascension. There are now forty days of Lent, and forty is the symbol of the church Militant (Grondin, 1996).

The concept of purgatory is never mentioned in the Bible. It has long since been an issue of debate among scholars because it pertains to what happens in the after-life (O'brien, 2007). Its origin can be traced among the early believers who claim that a middle place outside of heaven and hell will be experienced by the individual for some duration after his bodily death and the final judgment. Premised upon the notion that nothing impure enters heaven,

purgatory was a chance for the individuals to be cleansed of their sins, through the prayers being offered by the living (Hendzel, 2019).

All Souls's Day

During the feast of the dead or the "Paglimos", praying for the dead starts from October 25 and ends in November 2. The mamaratbat will then be requested to pray for the souls of the ancestors and family members who have already departed.

"Danay it usa ka pamilya, nagpapapangadi hin trenta(30) nga kalag, kada pamilya dapat tangpuson an pangadi, deri nga igsasakob ko an kalag ni kuan han kalag han amay ni kuan. Kada pamilya iba la nga pangadi. Danay, nakadto ak ha sementeryo hin alas kwatro hit maagahon, nauli ak hit alas sais hit gab i."- participants 1,2,5

["Sometimes one family will request to pray for 30 souls. So for every family that requests prayer, each whole set of prayer has to be finished because it is not allowed that I will include the prayers for this soul with the prayers for the soul of the father of this person. So for each family means a different set of prayers. Sometimes, I will go to the cemetery at four in the morning and will go home at six in the evening."]

The feast of the dead or colloquially known as Paglimos is also a distinct practice not just among Filipinos but also around the world which is dedicated to remembering the lives of the departed and offering prayers for those in purgatory. It also serves as a reminder that all of life on earth is preparation for life in heaven (Ruddy, 2018). This tradition of offering a day of prayers and commemoration for the dead dates back to St Odilo of Cluny, who established it in his abbey in France in the 10th century. From there, the practice spread until it became officially adapted in the fourteenth century up until today (Coffey, 2017).

Second Theme: Prayers will Help

The mamaratbat's tool of their trade is prayer. They believe that it is up to them to save the soul of the departed so they will gain eternal rest.

"Dre ngani pinapangadain it kalag, nagpapainop it kay igkukuri it hira didto ha purgatoryo. Kun hi kita nga buhi nakaon para mabuhi, it kalag kailangan hin pangadi para magin maupay it ira pag abat, kay di ngani nim pangadian, danay nagpapainop it o nagpapaabat para magpasabot nga ginugutom na hira."- participants 3,4,6

["If you do not offer prayers for the soul, they appear in your dreams because they are suffering in purgatory. People eat food to live, so the soul needs to be prayed for so they will feel better, because if we

do not pray for them, sometimes we will dream about them and they will make us feel their presence to tell us that they are hungry.”]

Catholic faith warrants that the living continues to pray for the dead and offer them sacrifices and mass to help in the salvation of their souls. Ancient Christians believed in the power of praying for the dead as texts and passages in the walls of catacombs urges the living to do so. The Book of Maccabees holds that some of those who have died who will be saved have not yet achieved heaven and the living can provide help for those souls by performing prayers and sacrifices (Monshau, 2010).

The participants were also asked whether they ask for something in return from those who requests them to pray for their dead. They were adamant in saying that money lessens the potency of the prayer and if you ask money, the prayer will not be effective.

“Di ak hit naaro hin kwarta o bisan ano pa man kay diri ma it asya. Diri ma in panalapi. Pagbulig ko in hit pamilya nga napapa-pangadi. Kun magpresyo ak, wara hit pulos nga ak pag ampo, diri it kakabulig hit kalag. Kun tagan ak, salamat han indolensya, kun diri, okey la daman”

[“I do not ask for money or anything because it is not right. It’s not about the money. It is my way of helping the family who requested for the prayers. If I ask for money, my prayers have no use and it will not help the soul. If they give me, thank you for the indolence, if not, it is also okay with me.”]

It is a Catholic tradition to offer prayers for a loved one. And there is no price tag for it. According to the Catholic church, if you must ask someone to pray for the soul of the departed, you may offer to give them something in return (Roach, 2020). According to a Bishop in Africa, salvation is a free gift that no amount of money can buy (Deng Bol, 2013).

One of the insights of the Mamaratbat is, what will the dead do without their prayers? They will perish and will never receive eternal rest, according to them.

“Kun diri pangadian it kalag, aadto nala it ha purgatoryo igkikinuri, diri makakatagamtam hin dayon nga pagpahuway.”- participant 2,3,4

[“If we do not pray for the soul of the departed, he will stay in purgatory and suffer and will not achieve eternal rest.”]

The mamaratbat then can also be called prayer warriors. The participants believe that they have a communication between them and God regarding the souls that they are praying for. They also believe that their role is to be a mediator between God and the soul (Grider, 2019).

Theme 3: Mother to Daughter

Five out of the six participants learned the trade of being mamaratbat from their mothers and their mothers from their mothers as well. The participants said that at a young age, their mothers who were mamaratbat will accompany them to the novenas and will ask them to read the texts in the notebooks. Before their mother died, they were handed the notebook that contained the prayers in waray-waray and Latin and they continued to be mamaratbat themselves. Participants 2 and 4 said that they apprenticed for their mothers for many years and they were only able to be mamaratbat of their own when their mothers died.

“Bata pa ak, igin iinupod upod na ak ni nanay hit pangangadi. Bisan maak di tiupod kay ginhahapos maak, naupod nala ak. Ginpinabasa niya ha ak an iya notebook, pero wara ko kamememorya kay damo an mga pangaradion. Niyen na ak pakamemorya han hi ako nala nga uusa an nangangadi pero nag iha pa at tikang han kamatay ni nanay. Han iya kamatay, iginbilin nya ha ak an iya notebook.”- participants 1,2,6

[“I was still a young girl when my mother will bring me to novenas and wakes. Even if I didn’t want to go, I will be forced to because if not, my mother will spank me. She lets me read her notebook but I wasn’t able to memorize it because there were many prayers written there. It was only when I was doing the prayers on my own that I was able to memorize but it took me long time after my mother died. When she died, she left me her notebook”]

In a family, the mother has a more important role in bringing up children. The nature of the mother-daughter relationship carries a strong impact on their social well-beings and self-esteem (Onayli, 2012). General Social Survey data between 1994 and 2016, show that mothers pass down their occupation to their daughters (Proulx, 2017). In matrilineality, or the identification of a person through their mother’s lineage, it can involve the inheritance of titles, possessions and trade (Hartung, 1985).

When asked what will happen to praying for the dead once they die, they surmised and fear that this practice will diminish.

“Ada mamatay ngani kami nga parapangadi, ambot hin o nala hit it mapalihog. Aadi gad in nga ak anak ginsisiniring ko nga mag aram hit pangadi pero nadiri ma in kay mayda man niya trabaho. Maupay kun mayda manunundod bisan namanla hit ak mga kaurupdan.”- participant 5

[“When we all die I don’t know who will follow in our footsteps. I keep telling my daughter to learn to pray but she doesn’t want to because

she has a job. It would be better if someone will take after the trade even among my relatives.”]

Fourth Theme: The Notebook

The prayers that the mamaratbat offer for the eternal repose of the dead are written in faded notebooks that they have inherited from their mothers. These notebooks’ words are barely comprehensible and have been subjected to damaging elements.

“In nga notebook hatag in ha ak ni nanay ngan iya daman it kinopya han pangaradion ni apoy. Damo na hin an nagkopya dinhi nga mga tawo nga karuyag la mangadi hit ira kinalugaringon. Binabaydan la daman ak hit nira hin igingkokopya ko hira depende la it hit ira hatag.”- participants 1,2,4

[“This notebook was given to me by my mother which she copied from her mother. There have been many people who copied the prayers from this notebook because they wanted to pray on their own. They pay me when they copy from this notebook, depending on what they want to give.”]

The waray-waray prayer is written in the old waray text which is mixed with Spanish words where the letter k is substituted with the letter c. For example:

Oracion

Mag- aampo kami ha emo Virgin Maria nga patabangon mo man kami kan Jesus, agud kami bawion sa iya calooy daco sacop senen bungto sa balay ug sa mga kasakitan namon sa calag og sa lawas man ngan buligan mo man came niyan an mga kristiyanos, mga napaubos han emo santos nga atubangan guikan han amon boot nga bug os ngan bawion mo man han mga caraotan ug mga caaway namon niyan tobtob ha amon ikamatay, amen.

According to all participants, they are unable to understand the Latin prayers but their mothers before them did.

“Di maak hit nakakaintindi nga Latin pero namemorya ko it hiya. Hi nanay lugod nasiring hiya naiintindihan niya kay han una an pagsingba, ha Latin man.”-participants 2,3,4

[“I don’t really understand the meaning of the Latin prayers but I memorized them. My mother told me she understands their meaning because mass before was said in Latin.”]

An excerpt of the Latin prayer goes this way:

Vinite exultamos dominu, Yubelemus deo salute re nuestro

Preucumpemus facim eyus in Confesione et en salmos yubelimos eis

This prayer is taken from Psalm 94 which, translated in English says “Come let us exalt in the Lord, let us anticipate his presence with his confession and let us sing joyfully to him with psalms.” Such Latin prayers in the notebooks of the mamaratbat might have been taken from the Latin mass that was being held during the time of their mothers and their grandmothers. The Latin masses were popular in the Philippines back in the day, where the priest faces the altar and say the mass in Latin. Today, masses in catholic churches are being held in the vernacular so the parishioners will be able to understand them better (Coyle, 2009).

These manuscripts written in faded notebooks has led the mamaratbat to carry on the tradition of praying for the dead up until today. Words and prayers spoken a century ago were able to find its way to this millennium. The prayers may as well be a hundred years old or more.

Language is linked to a country or a certain culture (Uribe, 2007) and in such manuscript, where their language is in the form of prayers, the culture of the mamaratbat is revealed. Language, not just reason, is evidence that man is a higher being according to Descartes and culture cannot exist without one (Sullivan, 1980). Hence, the preservation of the manuscript which contains the language of the mamaratbat is highly essential in the preservation of its culture.

Fifth Theme: Men Do Not Pray

In wakes, the variety of those who join in the novena ranges from 20 years old and above ladies, no man is present. During the novena, the absence of the men is noticeable as it is only the lilting voices of ladies which can be heard.

“Di yak it mabulig hit pangadi it kalalakin-an kay diri mat kanan lalaki hilig it pangadi. Waray ko pa hit nakita tikang han tikang nga it lalaki sumabat or namatbat. Bisan pa makausa wara pa gad.” - Participants 1,3,4,5

[“Men will not join the novena because they don’t have interest in praying. Ever since, I haven’t seen a man who will join the novena or lead the novena. Even just once, there haven’t been any.”]

The Philippines has a patriarchal system where men are believed to be breadwinners and women are responsible for childbearing (NCRFW, 2008). The woman is credited for taking care of the children and are more active in practicing their religion than men (Alcantara, 1994). Praying and religiosity are recognized as part

of the character of the Filipino women (Obligacion, 1997). Due to machismo and masculine standards of Filipino men, praying is mostly left to the women (del Castillo & Alino, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The practice of the mamaratbat is religious, feminine and functional in nature.

The practice of the mamaratbat is religious, feminine and functional in nature. The mamaratbat follow the Catholic rites of praying for the dead although some parts may be distinct. Albeit the prayers are similar to the rosary, the mamaratbat has different mysteries. These prayers are believed to have the power to cleanse the soul and absolve the soul from sins so it will go to heaven. The mamaratbat believe that they are helping the people who ask them to pray for the souls of their departed and thus they portray a role and without them the society will not function well. According to the Functionalism Theory, a culture exists to serve a function and create balance (Pope, 1975). It is likened to the human body where each part serves a function and all parts work together to make the human body function well. Durkheim, one of the proponent of the theory, posits that a culture exists because of a necessity (Fletcher, 1956). The mamaratbat believe that they pray because they are needed by the people that they pray the souls for, hence, their culture exists.

Transfer of Skill

The mamaratbat were able to memorize the different prayers in their manuscript through constant repetition. Though they did not understand the text written in Latin, they still believe in their potency. The transfer of knowledge of the mamaratbat is not simple. It took them years to memorize and know by heart the prayers. The transfer of practice of the mamaratbat is mostly handed down from mother to daughter. The daughter who is asked to accompany the mother during wakes eventually becomes a mamaratbat herself. In the Habitus Theory by Bourdieu, it indicates that a person is unconsciously doing the things that he is exposed to constantly and it dictates his future (Reay, 2010). In the case of the mamaratbat, because of the constant exposure to this practice, the daughter becomes the mamaratbat in the future.

On the other hand, it could simply be that the mamaratbat identifies with the other mamaratbat hence they became one. The only participant who did not inherit the skill from her mother claimed:

“Nag inupod upod namanla ak hat han pangadi, ngada han ak hibaró. Tapos hinuram ak hat nga notebook han usa han parapangadi nagkopya ak ngan namemorya ko an mga pangaradion hasta nga naglulugaring na a khan pangadi.”-participant 5

[“I just accompany the mamaratbat in their novenas until I was able to learn. And then I borrowed their notebook and copied the prayers until I was able to memorize it and then I set off on my own.”]

This could mean that through constant and repeated companionship, the participant was able to identify herself with the group of the mamaratbat and wanted to learn their trade so she can become one. In the Social Identity Theory, a person's group (organization, family or class) gives the person a sense of pride giving him a social identity (Harwood, 2020). This means that people derive part of their identity from the social group they belong to (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019).

Feminine in Nature

It is important to note that the mamaratbat is the informal equivalent of the priest. She is also considered a religious leader and packs influence on the religious culture of the town. The feminine practice of the mamaratbat is comparable to the priest which is also masculine in nature (Khwepe, 2016). The mamaratbat is trained within structures that are highly feminine, passing down the practice from mother to daughter. In the same context the priests are trained in masculine structures in adherence to traditional and cultural practices (de Young, 2018).

It is also notable to emphasize that no men are present during the novenas and no man has become a mamaratbat. This might be that this practice has been formed from the babaylanes of long ago, during the pre-Spanish period where the equivalent of priests were women, who wielded social and spiritual power (Villariba, 2016). In the patriarchal system of the Philippines which was the influence of colonialism (Medina, 2015), the practice of the mamaratbat is quite contradictory. This can be an exemplification of the cultural feminism theory where it implies that society places women in a position overdetermined by a patriarchal system (Alcoff, 1988). Such theory identifies women as the most important and marginalized group in a society (Evans, 1995) and declares that the mother and daughter relationship should be repaired as it has been destroyed by a patriarchal society (Echols, 1983). Hence, the feminine practice of the mamaratbat diverts against the patriarchal system of the Philippines.

2. The mamaratbat culture can be sustained through the preservation of their manuscript.

Every mamaratbat has a manuscript of their own. The manuscript contains the prayers written in Latin and in old waray-waray words. These manuscripts were handed down from two generations and can be traced back to the early 20th century. The mamaratbat is guided by these manuscripts as all the prayers needed for them to practice their occupation are there. These prayers are not handed down from one mamaratbat to another by word of mouth but rather by copying the manuscript from another mamaratbat. Some participants claim that some local parishioners already asked them to make copies of the prayers so they can pray on their own. The survival of the language of the mamaratbat depends on the preservation of these manuscripts.

Cultural sustainability is the maintenance of a cultural practice or belief and its existence in the future (Soini, 2014). Its effectiveness is influenced by the people as culture is dictated by the beliefs of society (Bender & Haller, 2017). Local tradition such as that of the mamaratbat is important as it is one of the pillars (Jahnhami, 2018) of the culture of the waray-waray. The language of the mamaratbat as a culture is in the form of prayers, which can be found on the manuscripts handed down from generation to generation. The preservation of language of the mamaratbat or of any culture is important because when it dies or becomes extinct, the knowledge and the ability to understand its tradition will no longer be transmitted (Foundation for Endangered Language, 2017).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions deduced from the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The researcher recommends that the practice of the mamaratbat be recognized as an essential part of the Maydolongnon culture, by the Cultural Affairs of the Local Government Unit.
2. The researcher also recommends that the prayers of the mamaratbat be taught through a training activity, to the younger generation and to other women in the locality so that they can do the pamamatbat on their own. This can be useful during the paglimos where the ratio of the mamaratbat to the families asking for prayers are disproportionate.
3. The notebooks used by the mamaratbat are suggested to be printed in a more readable form and be distributed to the locality through local religious groups. Furthermore, the Latin texts on the notebook will be translated in waray-waray so the mamaratbat and the rest of the Maydolongnons and other municipalities interested in doing the pamamatbat will be able to understand their meaning.

4. Finally, a similar study is recommended to be conducted across the province or the region to give credence to this unique culture of the Waray-waray people.

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