

MARUYOG CHARM: PERCEIVED PROTECTION AND HEALING BELIEFS

Julieta G. Infante

julieta.infante@gsc.edu.ph

ORCID No.: 0000-0003-0931-1502

Norton Morada

norton.morada@gsc.edu.ph

ABSTRACT The Ati tribes are considered to be one of the first ethnic groups to inhabit the country. Along with their primacy in civilization comes their supremacy in supernatural beliefs, cultural and traditional practices. Among their beliefs include the use of herbs and certain plants to protect people, especially children, from evil entities and harmful spirits. These herbs and plants are placed inside small plastic tubes, which are then made into bracelets. Maruyog Charms, a name given to the bracelets, are recognized by both the National Council for Indigenous People and the Department of Trade and Industry. Each bracelet contains lana (virgin coconut oil), shards of santoara (limestone), herbs (salindugok, tagahumok, amigos), diamante negra, punta diamante, textiles, and mata-mata. The lana is made on Good Friday, a day believed to hold the strongest elemental pull on the primitive world. Santoara, limestone crushed into tiny pieces, are added to the bracelet to make people more accommodating to the bearer. The herbs, on the other hand, are gathered all-year-round and each herb has its own function. Salindugok is brownish green-colored shrub infused as charms, especially made for entrepreneurs, to attract customers. Tagahumok is a green-colored shrub included in the talisman to make the hearts of those around the bearer softer and easier to please. Amigos is a herb incorporated to the bracelet to make people friendlier to and more approachable for the bearer. The diamante negra and punta diamante act as panaming (shield) to ward off dark and negative energies. Both the textiles and the mata-mata (black and red seed) are added to the charms for decorative purposes only. The continuous production of these charms ensure the preservation of practices, and traditions of the indigenous people.

Keywords: Maruyog Charm, Protection, Healing beliefs

INTRODUCTION

Ati communities were known to exist and roam around in Guimaras. This island is located in the Western Visayas region between Panay and Negros. There are about 6 Ati settlements in Guimaras particularly in Buenavista (Serum), Lininguan and Dagobdob in Sibunag, two in Nueva Valencia (Tarog and Ubog).

One of the six Ati settlements in Guimaras is the Kati – Kati community situated in Sitio Kati – Kati, San Miguel, Jordan, Guimaras. The group was established in the year 1980, four years after the establishment of R.A. 8371.

Kati- Kati is headed by the tribal chieftain, Crispin Valencia together with the tribal council which facilitates and addresses their concerns to the government. Establishing a community helped them to become more organized in voicing out their aspirations, ideas and stand towards specific issues.

The Ati tribes are considered to be one of the first ethnic groups to inhabit the country. Along with their primacy in civilization comes their supremacy in supernatural beliefs, cultural and traditional practices. Specifically, this study aimed to determine how Maruyog Charm started as a traditional practice of the community; determined the raw materials and sources of the Maruyog Charm; and the perceived protection and healing beliefs upon wearing the Maruyog Charm.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in the study was qualitative to determine the perceived protection and healing beliefs of Maruyog Charms. The informants of this study were the three (3) Maruyog Charm Makers and the Chieftain of the Kati-Kati Community that were engaged in the traditional practices in making maruyog charms. To gather the needed data, an interview guide prepared by the researchers was used. One-on-One Interview was conducted. It is a personal interview that is carried out with the informant at a time. This is purely a conversational method and invites opportunities to get details in depth from the informant. A qualitative observation was also done to gather systematic information on the site and during the actual act of the informant. Qualitative use subjective methodologies to gather information on specific area. Narrative analysis was conducted to analyze collected data which was done by reformulation of stories presented by the informants taking into account the context of each case and different experiences of each respondent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Components of Maruyog Charm

- Lana is made on Good Friday, a day believed to hold the strongest elemental pull on the primitive world.
- Santoara, limestone crushed into tiny pieces, are added to the bracelet to make people more accommodating to the bearer.
- Salindugok is a black-colored shrub infused as charms, especially made for entrepreneurs, to drive people closer to their businesses.
- Tagahumok is a green-colored shrub included in the talisman to make the hearts of those around the bearer softer and easier to please.
- Amigos is an herb incorporated to the bracelet to make people friendlier to and more approachable to the bearer.
- The diamante negra and punta diamante acts as panaming (shield) to ward off dark and negative energies.
- Both the textiles (hablon) and the beads (black and red seed and gold & silver beads) are added to the charms for decorative purposes only.

The word "maruyog" in the Ati native dialect means, "beautiful". Maruyog Charm, a name given to the bracelet, is recognized by both the National Council for Indigenous People and the Department of Trade and Industry. It is a branded and innovated traditional 'anting-anting' of the indigenous people. These charms, as far as Nanay Perla can remember, were used back to when she was still a kid, but the commercial trade started in 1997. Nanay Perla herself spearheaded the production. She taught the process of making these charms to the younger women in their community. It has since then been passed on from generation to generation.

Nanay Perla and the members of their tribe hunt for and gather these materials in the woodlands. She said that they cannot plant and reproduce these because these are of wild origin.

CONCLUSIONS

Creating Maruyog charms are a vital part of the Ati tribe's culture. Among their beliefs include the use of herbs and certain plants to protect people, especially children, from evil entities and harmful spirits. The continuous production of these charms ensure the preservation of practices, and traditions of the indigenous people.

Maruyog Charm promotes the indigenous community's culture and craftsmanship and supports the campaign in lessening the textile pollution by using recycled materials. They aim to make more innovative use of the charms by incorporating them into bags and clothing in the future.

These Ati communities had a great contribution not only in tourism but also in their share towards the expansion of the country's heritage.

It is recommended to have a review of community development approaches in the indigenous community is timely to encourage better participation from the locals and establish more sustainable programs. Collaboration among government, non-government and education institutions may be coaxed to exert continuous and documented efforts on the development of the Ati and other indigenous groups of people and related researches must be conducted in terms of acceptability of livelihood technologies.

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Key Informants

- Perla Moreno (60 years old)
- Lucia Tahan (55 years old)
- Mary Joy Farcon (29 years old)
- Crispen Valencia (60 years old)