



The Picturesque



The Sublime



The Sublime 1



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a means of eliminating the regular practice of head-hunting and inter-tribal wars; and b) the introduction of western educational and medical services (see section 3.4 below).

More recently, the church has altered its approach to one of respect towards the traditional cultural and social life of the people. The church has begun to participate in dialogue with the elders of the atos and with the general assemblies of the barrios. Its attitudes to festivals such as tengao have changed. In the past, these rest days have incorporated ritual supplications to spirits or ancestors. Increasingly, they have become times for offering prayers or thanksgivings to God for the coming or past rice season, for a new barrio marriage, or for the life of a deceased loved one. Rather than condemning such practices as pagan, the church is increasingly seeking to uphold them.

The church has provided an important social space for women in Igorot society. Through such organizations as Episcopal Church Women and by their weekly participation in church services, Igorot women have been socially and politically empowered. One elderly woman told us that before the church (and with its western education) women could only influence community decisions.

Signs of Hope in "Bagong"

(N.B. Names in this account have been altered. Otherwise details are recounted as conveyed by the interviewees)

"Bagong" appears as a typical village in the mountains of the Cordillera region of North Luzon. There are some things about "Bagong", however, which are not typical-- for here there are some special signs of hope.

In many villages in this region the strongly enmeshed community life has begun to fragment. Elders complain that their young people are no longer interested in corporate decision-making, are losing respect for their elders, and are not interested in the wisdom and discipline of the village at all.

In "Bagong", there is a general assembly which meets at the atoll every six weeks. Everyone from the village who can walk is in attendance. All groups from within the village are represented. The elders are there, the members of the village council are there, the women from the village are in attendance, representatives from the village church are present and even the young adults actively participate in the meeting. Agreements are not always reached swiftly and some issues are difficult and contentious-- like the arguments about "tengao" or rest days. Rest days are part of the longstanding traditions of "Bagong". They are proclaimed by the elders at particular seasonal times or when someone is married or when someone from the village dies. As well as being traditional, these rest days have practical value. They allow for celebration, ceremony, prayers, the sharing of wisdom and grieving for and remembrance of the dead. Disputed at "Bagong" is not whether to have rest days, but how many at a



Bontoc



Children at play in the rice field



An Ato Banana Tree Grove



*Lot's Wife's Dilemma-
Up the Hill Looking Back*

time can be afforded. Several days lost in the fields can place a heavy burden on a subsistence farming community. There are times when village traditions and basic survival seem to be at cross purposes. These things need to be between the older and the younger members of the village. "Bagong" is one place where this process is occurring. here is an important sign of Hope.



Women planting rice in the field



*Winnifred Annayo and Soledad Longid,
two Episcopal Church Community workers
and our local consultants, with the Women
planting rice in the field*

Many groups and individuals compete to bring the "truth, the way and the life" to the masses; few, however, are faithful expressions of the gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ in whose name they profess. This theological tension is clearly recognized in a modern Filipino saying: "The Spanish brought the Cross and the Sword; the Filipino church must now use the Cross as a critique of the Sword". In the Cordillera region, there are many religious groups that proclaim the gospel of personal piety, condemnation of all politics, and disengagement from family and community life. It has been found too, that some from foreign political organizations, and from the US and Filipino governments respectively for political ends. Even where there are no ulterior motives and political backing, these groups offer competing versions of religious hope. The theological tension facing the church here, is that politicization of religious versus faithful politics. In this tension lies a basic observation that organized religion can function either as a legitimiser of a particular social arrangement or as a critique of that same arrangement.

In the Filipino context, there is an emerging new "theology of struggle" - a theology which refuses to acknowledge such western dichotomies as faith and works; personal salvation and salvation-history; this life and the next; personal faith and social engagement. This theology is a liberation theology in that it seeks to empower men and women of faith who are struggling against complex systems and structures which have rendered them powerless and impoverished for many generations. It is a liberation theology too, in that it passionately believes and proclaims the present-day reality of poverty, oppression, violence and suffering is not the ultimate reality and that these things only find their

meaning in a struggle to overcome them. It is a theology of struggle, in that like faith of the pre exilic prophets, fidelity to God's word does not allow them to remain silent in the face of injustice, violence and oppression. The Good News inspires hope and compels struggle against the powers of death and the deadly powers.

In the Cordillera context, the church is attempting to proclaim this message and to build communities of resistance and communities of hope. Communities of resistance, because it recognizes that the marginalisation of Igorot society is causing the breakdown of family and community life - especially due to migration from the area by its young people in search of better education and work opportunities. The marginalisation of Igorot society is also undermining the capacity of the people to sustain their own livelihood through subsistence agriculture. Finally, marginalisation is leading to the desecration of the mountain ecosystem which in turn is destroying the foundations on which the traditional Igorot economy is built.

Communities of hope, because the church recognises that the clock cannot be turned back - change and development are occurring and that these changes need not be inimical to the people if they arise out of their own aspirations, needs and skills in the first place.

In the struggle to empower communities of resistance and foster communities of hope, the church is beginning to appreciate afresh that faith is never a guarantee or sanctification of all who call upon the Lord's name. The journey is a long and arduous one, made possible only by God's grace.



*William Henry Scott's House,
Sagada*

At Sagada, we had 2 public meetings, one with a group of 9 women, two of whom were innkeepers and a further 3 were teachers, and a second meeting with 12 or so men attached to an ato on the outskirts of the town. In both groups, ages ranged from between 20 and 70 years of age. Most of the people's concerns, relating to tourism could be grouped into 4 interrelated issues:

- Tourist behavior and dress;
- Commercialisation of Igorot culture;
- Desecration of traditional cultural rituals and areas; and
- Effects of tourism on young people.

The most common complaints at the meetings related to tourist behavior and dress in public. As one elder so colourfully expressed it:

"The trouble is that tourist kiss and do their thing anywhere without the thought of other people around. What is most disturbing is that white people taught us to cover up our bodies and to be ashamed of nudity - now 70 years later white tourist come wearing skimpy, see-through clothes which offend us - especially as most of them are not beautiful yet blatantly displayed themselves!"

A related concern was the affect that young tourist have on local youth. Some women noted early signs of a sub-culture developing, where young men act as tour guides and providing marijuana and hallocinogens such as trumpet flowers and mushroom tea for the tourists. Both older men and women believe that younger people were not as respectful of their own culture and traditions as previous generations. They placed some of the blame of this to trend on the influx of tourists over the past 10 years. One spin-affect of tourism has been the introduction of electricity to the town and with it television and more significantly videos. Some people have commenced selling X-rated movies but, in the main, videos are simplistic B-grade American horror movies or violent action films such as Rambo. Some young boys have become addicted to them even to the extent of skipping school so as to earn pockey money and hire videos. One person claimed that mock street ganfs had been formed in mimicry of Chinies Kung-fu groups seen on video.

Another complaint against tourist behavior was that many wanted to stay up late each night to have parties. This was considered out of character for small barrio like Sagada. One elder has even advised one or thwo tourists that they have come to the wrong place - "that if they want wine, women and song they should go to Manila and Olongapo - not Sagada"!

The other two issues relating to tourism were more to do with adverse affect that tourism as a phenomenon is having on their own culture. Nearly everyone we spoke to inn Sagada has complained of the desecration of sacred sites in the area - particularly of the traditional burial caves where apparently tourists have ransacked coffins for souvenir bones. Some sacred sites are even taboo to many members of the Sagada community itself, yet tourist often ignored these taboo, or at least were ignorant of the,, and entered into these areas. A great deal of resentment was expressed too at tourists who run in front of traditional ritual parades and take photographs as well as those who disobeyed rest day prohibitions.



Where I Once Stood



*Portrait of the Photographer
as a Young Man*

Throughout the Cordillera region there is much poverty and sickness. Roughly 80% of the people live below the poverty line and malnutrition and disease is prevalent. About 70% of pre-school children were recently found to be suffering from moderate to severe malnutrition. The infant mortality rate is about 52 per 1000 live births. The leading causes of deaths in the mountain villages are preventable diseases such as pneumonia, bronchitis and other respiratory ailments.



Herbal Medicine Healer

There are hopeful signs in "Bagong" that improved health care is on the way. Several people in the village are involved in programmes which are investigating and developing the local herbal medicine. The strong tradition of local herbal medicine is at last being recognised by the government. People in "Bagong" are participating in a programme of research, testing, education and application of herbal medicine for the prevention and treatment of common ailments.

The church in "Bagong" is another sign of life and hope. The church in many villages has found itself alienated from the cultural life and decision-making processes of the people. In earlier years the church took a confrontationist approach to the people's traditional religious and ceremonial practices. More recently it has begun to listen and learn from their viewpoints and to work out ways of meaningfully interpreting the Christian gospel in terms of their community life. In "Bagong", the church appears to have been established in which the people read the Bible together, investigate its meaning and discuss how the principles discovered can be applied in their own context.

"Juliet" is a single mother with a 9 year old daughter. She is one person who has been active in recent months in organizing small Bible study discussion groups in the homes of her village. "Juliet" was asked what led her to a personal faith and what provoked her to become involved in the church. She replied that there were three main watersheds for her in recent years.



Two Elderly Women having a
Roadside Yarn or Chin Wag
(oz-lish for conversation)

First, "Juliet" was challenged by local seminar conducted by the Episcopal Church. "Juliet" said that during this seminar the Bible was opened and studied by the participants. For the first time she realized that she had access to this information first hand. Until then she had always thought that it was through the priest alone that she could learn about God. She was so excited about what she learnt and how this effected her life that she decided to encourage other people also to study and discuss the Bible.



*A Police Station Raided by
the NPA*

The second challenge of faith for "Juliet" was through discussion groups organized by the New People's Army (N.P.A.). "Many people say that members of the N.P.A. are all atheistic communists, but this is simply not true" asserted "Juliet". "Many of these people are believers and I or one have learnt a great deal from them". It would appear that the N.P.A discussions are effective in helping people at the village level to understand how the wider political structures ultimately affect their daily lives. These discussions help people to see that it is possible for many ordinary people to act together to resist exploitation and insist on a fairer distribution of resources. "Juliet" obviously sees this as an important part of her Christian faith and her response to God.

TRADITION AND POVERTY

There have been some rituals and traditional requirements which have in recent years impoverished community life by imposing heavy burdens upon some of its members. The slaughter of pigs or chickens has been considered imperative on particular occasions. Wedding celebrations have been a common example. Depending upon the line of descendancy of a particular family, the barrio elders may impose upon the time requirement to slaughter a designated number of pigs and caribou as part of the celebration. Not to comply is to suffer a great loss of face and dignity in the eyes of the rest of the people. Some families, already poor have become destitute in order to fulfill these requirements so that the spirits in turn will deal favourably with the family.



Children

TRADITIONS VERSUS CHANGE

Ever since the invasion of the Philippines by the Spanish in the sixteenth century, the peoples of the Mountain Province have shown a remarkable capacity to resist the various attempts made to impose change upon their way of life.

The American influence of the early twentieth century was more successful, but even so the beliefs, social systems and seasonal rituals of the mountain peoples remained largely intact. Rather than change old practices the people gradually incorporated new ones. Representative barrio councils were accepted without negating the collective authority of the village elders. Church beliefs and rituals were superimposed over the existing "pagan" religious views and practices. With the inclusion of new social practices and beliefs and with the addition of barrio schools, however, the seeds of a more thorough going change were sown.

Today, barrio elders are anxiously observing changes in social values which appear to be irreversible. Less disconcerting to the elders is the inevitable tendency for the younger barrio members to question traditional religious beliefs. their concern rather centres upon the eroding social fabric of the village community. Older barrio members are expressing their unhappiness about the decline in respect shown towards elders, less preparedness than in former times to invest effort in collective decision-making, and an unwillingness to co-operate for the good of the village.

Increasing individuals is displayed in the priority which is given to the immediate family and its material well-being over and against the corporate affairs of the barrio. The decline

in the observance of traditional rest days is a good example. According to tradition, the "tengao" (also known as "obayo") or rest day should be observed to mark particular seasonal times such as the planting and harvesting of the rice crop and also on the occasions of weddings and burials. The observance of rest days has contributed to community life in practical ways by providing recreation in the midst of the normal hardworking routines. Rest days have also provided timely space for reflection, the passing on of wisdom, and the strengthening of common bonds. More frequently, however, they are not being uniformly observed. This grieves the older members of the barrios as it not only represents a loss of cultural heritage but is symptomatic of a loss of unity and coherence in the community.



A Young Man



Old woman coming down
the mountain carrying logs
on her head

COUTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Courtship among the mountain tribes differs from place to place. Cawed (1981, op.cit., 24 pp.) describes the traditional practice of Bontoc courtships.

"...If a boy falls in love with a particular girl in an olog, he seeks the aid of his friends. During their evening gatherings, the girls bring suit to the one concerned. The boy comes for his usual visit, and together they sing love songs and tell stories. This goes on for some time, until the two get acquainted. The others see to it that the two are always paired off when they work in the fields, or when they gather in the evening. When they get betrothed, they are allowed to sleep together in olog until they get to know each other physically. They then move to the house of either party and stay there for 7 days...."

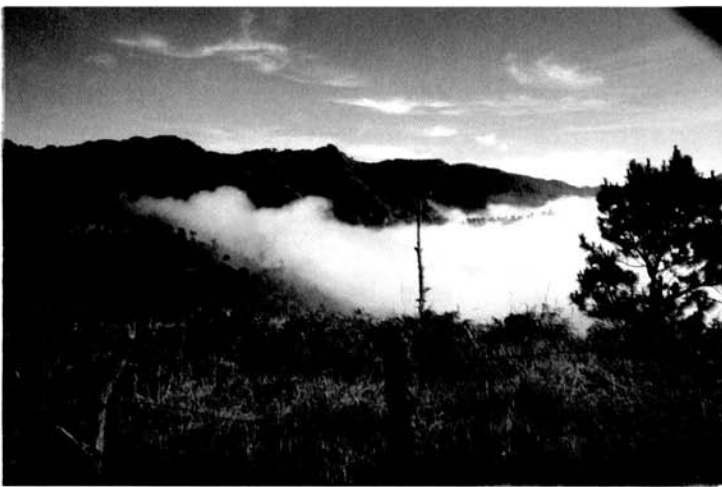
During these 7 days special rituals are performed in preparation for the wedding which is held on the final day of the week. The wedding ceremony and feast have many parallels to western practices:

"The ato elders officiate in the ceremonies and preside over the canao, or the wedding feast. After a pig is sacrificed, an old man who acts as a priest places an egg in the middle of a kiyag (basket used as a plate) containing rice. Lifting his eyes to ehaven, he addresses the great god Lumawig pronouncing the wedding prayer:

'You, who look down upon this man and woman, they are your children. They are here today, for they desire to be one. We made our offerings in the past. Today we celebrate another. Give this couple a prosperous life. Let their pigs grow big and plentiful. Mke their chickens grow and multiply. When they cultivate the earth and plant their seeds, let them bear good fruits. Let their beans spread nad cover the earth. Let them live in peace and harmony, and make the man in his capacity as the father, quicken the seed in this woman.'

"The feast begins. Fayas (sugar cane wine) and tappey (rice wine) are passed around. Food is prepared and ooked. Before the meat is distributed, a plate full of meat and rice is set aside and again an elder chants the kapa, a prayer recalling the first wedding between Lumawig and Fukan. After the story of the first wedding is retold, the blessed food is set for the spirit's ancestors who are invited to the feast. Finally everybody eats."
(Cawed, 1981, op.cit., pp.24f).

The Bontocs are monogamous, but divorce is practised if the couple is childless after several years. Arrangments are made between the husband and wife; no third party is involved. The wife can suggest to her husband to look ofr another woman who may bear him children. If he accepts this proposal, all properties remain with the divorced woman.



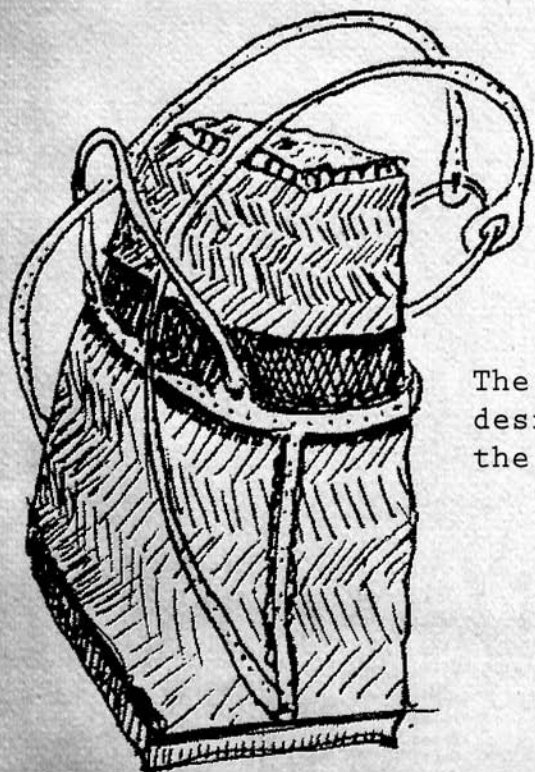
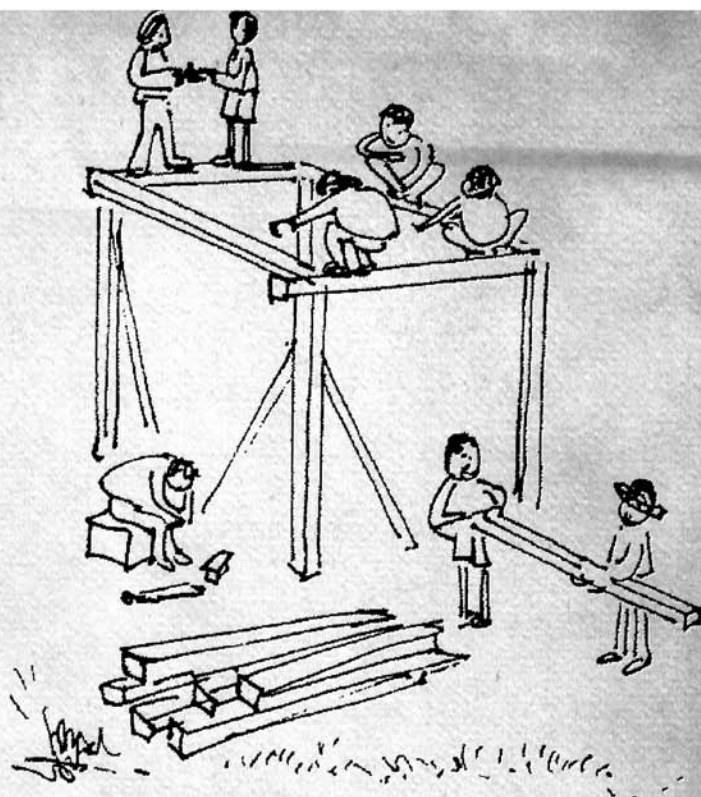
The Sublime 6

LAND OWNERSHIP

Land ownership in Bontoc is determined by those who cultivate it. In traditional Bontoc society, landlords or tenants did not exist. Comunal properties, however, do exist. These consist of mountains, forests, hills and pasture land, called tayan. A clan of several families is the owner of such properties, and each member is entitled to a portion. Should a member wish to own a tayan, he must approach the other clan members.

The communal property can only be disposed by the clan members when witnessed by the elders of the ato.

The mountain people call it "og-ogbo"- a system of mutual help. Labour is willingly given to a neighbour building his house, or in the rice fields in expectation of reciprocated labour "bye and bye".



The famous back-pack, designed and fashioned by the Igorots.