

# Bagobo tagabawa beliefs essay sample

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Heirarchy of gods. The Tagabawa are polyhteistic. They have a wide array of diwata or gods to whom their songs and myths are addressed. Among these is Tiguaima, the creator, assisted by the lesser gods like Mamal-e, creator of the earth, Macoreret, creator of the air, Domacolen, creator of the mountains, and Macaponguis, creator of water. Other diwatas are the Manama, dispenser of reward and punishment, and Todlai, the patron of marriage who is offered buyo and rice. The Bagobos also believe in a pantheon of demons. Darago is the great demon assisted by lesser demons like Colambusan, Abac, Tagamaling, Comalay, and Siring.

Rituals. The daily activities of the Tagabawa are marked by rituals. Areca nuts, betel leaves, food, clothing, and brass instruments are all placed on altars for the blessing of their diwata. Through such offerings they obtain immunity from malignancy spirits called buso and spirits of the departed.

A distinctive feature of Bagobo rituals used to be the practice of offering human sacrifices or paghuaga, especially in honor of Mandarangan, the god of war who resides in the crater of Mt. Apo and grants courage and success. Sacrifices are also offered to Tolus Ka Balekat, referred to as the one who knows everything and is the god of the highest type of altar. The slave to be sacrificed is bought from the Moros and unscrupulous Christians. The cost of such was shared by the family members offering the sacrifice. The victim is killed by pushing a lance forcibly into his body. The body is chopped into pieces and divided among all those who are present. It was believed that those who come in contact with the sacrificial victim is granted courage by the Mandarangan. Children who participate grow fearless. The present generation of Bagobo hardly react to the name of Mandarangan

unlike the older ones who treat the deity with a great deal of intensity. Many Bagobo nowadays consider such an activity as associated with the works of the devil. Paghuaga has been replaced by animal sacrifices.

An important religious ceremony is that which begins the rice planting season. Balatik a constellation of seven stars which make up a vow, is used as a sign to prepare fields for farming and to make the yearly sacrifice. The preparation begins with the consecration of the tools which will be used in cleaning the forest for the sowing of rice. All those who participate in the work gather the blacksmiths whose tools are consecrated. The offering of rice and chicken is cooked in bamboo, not in clay or iron pots which are not acceptable. The blacksmiths call on the spirits to accept the offering and to watch over them in the field. After which all eat a little of the food. Any activity, work or entertainment is banned for three days. Then the fields are cleared and burned. The soil is not broken yet, and no sowing of seeds must be done until another constellation appears which signifies the planting season.

Women take part in harvesting. A small knife called gelat is used in such activity. After the harvest the most abundant feast called the gatok-biaan or pakakaro is celebrated. Such a ceremony may be done individually or communally. Gatuk-biaan is the only Bagobo ceremony where knobbed gongs or agongs are not played. Only the native guitar and flute are played. The bagkes is the final ritual of the season. All dishes used in gatok-biaan are stored in the rice granary until the next festival. Literally, bagkes is tying

together with assurances to the spirits that they would be restored the following year.

Spirits and omens. The Sibulan Bagobo believe that there are eight souls called gimukod in everyone. When someone dies, four of the souls or pagkakalangit. The remaining four go to hell or karonaronawan. Other Bagobo believe that gimukod consists of only two parts: right and left, one going to heaven and the other to hell.

Snakes are considered a bad omen to the Tagabawa Bagobo. When someone encounters one, he must go back and consult the Bagobo medicine man or woman called matanom. The matanom handles the problem by etching on a wooden doll, the face of a man, and offers this in exchange or other misfortunes that might happen to the person. The matanom then sets a small bag containing rice and chicken in a dish of water as offering. Offerings are made on the tambara when Bagobos are sick. Tambara is a dish on top of a bamboo stick that is fixed on the ground. The dish contains buyo, bonga, lime, and tobacco.

When a Bagobo is seriously ill, he is transferred from his own house to another. This is part of the remedies attempted on his behalf. When death is foreseen, the person is taken back to his own house because that bay ring evil into others' dwellings. When visiting a sick person, a Tagabawa places copper rings on his wrist in order that the limokons or souls would not leave his body. A limokon is a song of a bird that is believed to be a message from the gods. The Bagobo who hears such a song would turn around to look for who is singing to tell him whether the message is good or bad. The corpse is

swathed in decent clothing, placed in the middle of the house, and given a vigil.

On supernatural beings. The Tagabawa believe in different supernatural beings such as spirits, ghosts, and creepy creatures. These supernatural beings include white lady, kapre, manananggal, wak-wak, tiyanak, sigbin, duwende, santilmo, tikbalang, and many more. They tell stories about mysterious sounds during the night and several encounters by people with these beings. Included in the stories are sightings of big cigars in big balete trees, coffins floating in the woods, spirits of dead people appearing or making their presence known, and many more frightening stories about the supernatural. They believe that these creepy creatures are companions of the devil and are fallen angels. To prevent these beings from getting near the Bagobos, they put subkist, sulfur, salt, bronze, garlic, and bagakay in their homes. When traveling along or passing by a creepy place, they say the word *tabe* to ask the spirits to be aware of them and not to harm them.

The Tagabawa also believe that there are people in the community practicing witchcraft. They believe that the curse befalls the victim of the offender who taps any structure that has direct contact with the victim. This structure may be a bench, a piece of wood, or even any part of the victim. The only way to revert the curse is for the victim to tap the structure tapped by the offender in return. So instead of the victim being cursed, it is the offender who will suffer. There are also beliefs that during festivals, practitioners of witchcraft place the dirt on their fingers in the food prepared to curse those who eat the food.

Those who practice witchcraft do not choose any particular victim. Whoever is available becomes the victim, be he friend or foe, a nobody or a relative. It is believed that only the mananambal or the shamans are the ones who know the cure for such curses.

On pregnancy. The Tagabawas have many beliefs regarding pregnancy and giving birth. Most of these beliefs are usually prohibitions. These prohibitions include actions not to be done and food not to be taken.

Inside the house, the pregnant woman is not allowed to sit or eat on the doorway because the baby might force himself or herself inside the inner part of the womb. For the same reason the woman is not allowed to sit on a pillow. Outside the house she is not allowed to pass at the back or under the house. She should also be not left alone when sleeping or doing household chores because a benevolent spirit might accompany her. Excessive sleeping is not allowed because the child might get lazy. Heavy chores, especially sweeping the floor which requires bending, is not good for the womb. A pregnant woman is not allowed to walk over a rope because she might have a hard time delivering the child. She is also not allowed to stroll outside the house at night because she might be accompanied by supernatural beings.

There are certain objects that pregnant women are not allowed to touch. They are not allowed to touch a monkey or look at ugly beings or objects because the baby might be born ugly. The pregnant woman is also prohibited from holding a doll because the baby might become mute.

On child rearing. The Tagabawa have certain beliefs on child rearing. They believe that placing a pebble on the child's mouth would make the child strong. For the same reason, an amulet or habak is also placed on the child's wrist. They also believe that supernatural beings can accompany the child when left alone. To prevent this they place a mirror, water, and grapefruit near the child. They also make it a point not to leave the infant alone. During the evening, it is prohibited to bring the child outside the house. The child is also prohibited from crossing creeks.

On adolescence. Males are not allowed to use the comb or the clothes of women because the Tagabawa believe that this might make them turn gay. They also believe that newly circumcised males should step on chicken manure to avoid inflammation of the penis. Females, on the other hand, have practices to be followed during the onset of menstruation. They should skip three steps of the ladder to avoid long menstruation periods. They should throw cotton on themselves to avoid pain during periods. They should sit on three leaves of gabi and also walk around the house to make the period last for only three days. They are not allowed to iron clothes or take a bath. Girls use eggs, flowers, or the blood from menstruation when washing their face so that they would have lesser pimples and a clean skin.

Adolescents are not allowed to have vices, engage in premarital sex or sleep in other people's house. Females are given household chores that are not heavy. Males, on the other hand, do the heavy work and help in the farm. Tagabawa today do not follow the traditional way of courting where the parents of the man are the ones who ask for the hand of the woman from her

parents. They follow the current trend of proposing personally, taking time to get to know the woman before they propose to her. However, there are still those who practice arranged marriages.