The Subanon, also called “Subanu,” “Subano,” “Subanen,” are the biggest group of *lumad* or non-Muslim indigenous cultural community on the island of Mindanao. The word is derived from the word *soba* or *suba*, a word common in Sulu, Visayas, and Mindanao, which means “river,” and the suffix “-nun” or -non” which indicates a locality or place of origin. Thus “Subanon” means “a person or people of the river”; more specifically, “from up the river,” since they are usually differentiated from the coastal and plains inhabitants of Zamboanga peninsula. Blumentritt mentioned the “Subanos” in his accounts, referring to them as “a heathen people of Malay extraction who occupy the entire peninsula of Sibuguey (west Mindanao) with the exception of a single strip on the south coast” (Finley 1913:2). Finley, recording his impressions of the Subanon at the beginning of American occupation of southern Philippines in the 1900s, cited published records of early Spanish chroniclers, notably the writings of Father Francisco Combes in 1667, to argue that the Subanon were the aborigines of western Mindanao.

The language of this group is generally referred to as Subanon. However, there are dialectal variations, depending on the locality in which the people live. The Subanon groups are dispersed over a wide area of the Zamboanga peninsula. The major localities they inhabit—many of which are valleys nestled among the rugged mountains—are Dapitan, Dipolog, Manukan, Sindangan Bay, Panganuran-Coronado, Siocon, Quipit, Malayal-Patalun, Bolong, Tupilak, Bakalay, Lei-Batu, Dumankilas Bay, Dinas, Lubukan, Labangan, and Mipangi. In certain places, the Subanon language has some Visayan and Moro words mixed in, as a result of centuries of trading activities between Cebu and the northern coast of Mindanao (Finley 1913:11). The Kalibugan or the Subanon who were converted to Islam speak a language which is a mixture of Kalibugan and Moro.

In 1912, the Subanon were officially estimated to number 47,164. By 1988, their population had grown to about 300,000. The Zamboanga peninsula, more than 200 kilometers long, shaped like a giant crooked finger that extends westward to the Sulu Sea, is joined to the Mindanao mainland by a narrow strip of land, the isthmus of Tukuran, which separates the bays of Iligan and Illana. Beyond this, and to the east, is the main region of Muslim Mindanao which is made up of Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, and North and South Cotabato. The peninsula itself is divided into three provinces: Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, and Misamis Occidental. Some communities of Subanon also live in the last province, particularly along the mountainous provincial boundary.

While practically the whole of Zamboanga has always been the ancestral domain of the Subanon, some areas of the peninsula are occupied by Muslims, and a few others by Christian settlers. The entire southern coastal region of Zamboanga del Sur, from the Basilan Strait to Pagadian near Lanao, is populated by mixed Muslim groups. Major urban concentrations—such as Zamboanga City, Pagadian, and Dipolog—have sizeable numbers of Christians. Towards the tip of the peninsula, in an area straddling the boundary between the two Zamboangas, live the Kalibugan, who number some 15,000.

History

The evidence of old stone tools in Zamboanga del Norte may indicate a late Neolithic presence. Burial jars, both earthen and glazed, as well as Chinese celadons, have been found in caves, together with shell bracelets, beads, and gold ornaments. Many of the ceramic wares are from the Yuan and Ming periods. Evidently, there was a long history of trade between the Subanon and the Chinese long before the latter's contact with Islam.

For some time before the Spaniards came and during the period of colonial rule, the Subanon had contacts with the Tausug and the Maranao. This relationship was not all commercial, however. To a large extent, it was one of domination by a powerful group over a relatively weaker one, since the Subanon were often subjected to Muslim raids for the purpose of capturing slaves and exacting tribute. The Muslims not only controlled coastal trade, but also extracted dues or tithes from the subjugated Subanon.

The coming of Spain to the Philippines as a colonial power complicated the picture. The Spanish colonial government sought to extend its sovereignty over the whole of southern Philippines. Declaring its intention to "protect" the un-Christianized, non-Muslim Subanon of the Sibuguey (now Zamboanga) peninsula, the government under General Valeriano Weyler constructed a series of fortifications across the Tukuran isthmus "for the purpose of shutting out the Malanao Moros. . . from the Subano country, and preventing further destructive raids upon the peaceful and industrious peasants of these hills" (Finley 1913:4). Spanish military control of the Tukuran garrison and fortifications ended in 1899, under the terms of the Treaty of Paris.

Before the American government could put in its occupation troops, the Muslims from the lake region went across the isthmus, and attacked the Subanon in the two districts of Zamboanga and Misamis. These renewed raids took their toll of lives and property, and many Subanon were even carried off into bondage by the invaders. The military garrison was taken over by Muslim forces, and a *kota* (fort) and several villages were established on the isthmus. The place was abandoned, however, when the American expeditionary forces appeared in October 1900.

Despite the long history of hostile actions against them by their culturally assertive neighbors, the Subanon have managed to preserve their tribal unity and identification, their language and dialects, their customs and traditions, and their religious world view. While feats of bravery are recounted in their ancient stories, the fact is that the Subanon do not have a remarkable martial tradition. As Finley observed (1913:13), the Subanon, in fact, lack the instincts of other warlike tribes, "and probably they could not have withstood the aggressive control of outside forces but for the fact that as this pressure became more and more persistent the Subanon moved farther and

farther into the inaccessible interior [where] they found vast areas of rich, virgin soil, wild fruits and vegetables in abundance, together with wild fowl and swine, and an abundance of freshwater streams."

Since the beginning of the present century, the Subanon's contact with the outside world broadened, to include the Visayan and the latter-day Chinese. Aside from the influx of these settlers and traders, there has been a massive penetration of the national government into the Subanon hinterlands for purposes of administrative control, tax assessment and collection, and police enforcement of national law.

The idyllic interior forest and mountain haven into which generations of Subanon have been driven deeper through several periods hardly exist at present. By 1991 wide swaths of primary forests had been cut by Manila-based logging concessions. For the past 10 years, organizations of various Subanon groups have petitioned national agencies concerned with environmental and tribal issues to protect the threatened homeland of this biggest of lumad groups. It is a problem faced not only by Subanon, but by practically all the indigenous people of the'island of Mindanao.

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Economy

The ancestors of the Subanon practiced dry agriculture, and most likely had a knowledge of pottery making. The Subanon are mainly agriculturists who practice three types of cultivation. Along the coastal area, wet agriculture with plow and carabao is the method of producing their staple rice. Beyond the coasts, both wet and dry agriculture is found. Swidden farming is the norm in the interior, particularly the uplands. Along the coasts, coconuts are raised aside from rice. Further inland, corn becomes an additional crop aside from the first two. Apart from the principal crops raised—which are mountain rice and corn—the root crops camote, cassava, gabi (taro), and *ubi* (yam) are also grown. These are roasted, boiled, or made into preserves and sweets. In some places, tobacco is planted. The people supplement their income and their food supply by fishing, hunting, and gathering of forest products. The extra rice they can produce, plus the wax, resin, and rattan they can gather from the forest are brought to the coastal stores and traded for cloth, blades, axes, betel boxes, ornaments, Chinese jars, porcelain, and gongs.

Trade between the mountain- and valley-dwelling Subanon, on the one hand, and the coastal people of Zamboanga, the Muslims and the Visayan, on the other, goes back many centuries. An old Subanon legend tells about the possible origins of this ancient trade. According to the legend, the first Subanon chieftain was a giant named Tabunaway. He ruled over his people long before the Moros and the Spaniards appeared on Subanon land. He lived near a place called Nawang (which later became Zamboanga). It was during his time that the Moros first appeared in Nawang. They sailed upriver until they reached the place of Tabunaway and his people. The Moros wanted to exchange the fish they caught at sea, with the fruits and other products of Nawang. They placed their catch on rocks and waited for the Subanon to come down from the hills. The Subanon tasted the fish, and liked it. They then put their own food of rice, sugarcane, and yams on the same rocks for the Moros to take. This was the beginning of trade between the Subanon and the Moros. The coming of the Moros to Zamboanga was recorded to have taken place in 1380, and trade between the two has been going on for hundreds of years.

The Subanon have maintained barter with the coastal people because of the difficulties encountered in a subsistence type of agriculture. Even with plenty of land available in earlier times, the backbreaking toil involved in kaingin or swidden farming, the lack of sufficient agricultural implements, and an apparently wasteful exploitation of resources which led to deforestation of Zamboanga forest as early as the 19th century kept the Subanon economy at a constant level of subsistence. On top of this, the Subanon planter had to contend with low prices for their agricultural products in the barter trade. Finley (1913), observing Subanon agricultural methods, remarked that these were inefficient, and "not profitable either to the government or to the hill people."

Sometimes there are crop failures, as a result of drought or infestation by pests. Lacking rice, the Subanon resort to gathering buri and *lumbia* or *lumbay*, which are palm types with a pith along the entire length that is a rich source of starchy flour. This is extracted and processed into food. The Subanon can also gather sago in the forests, particularly along the riverbanks, for their flour. There are also varieties of wild edible roots in the woodlands. Where orchards, gardens, and small plantations are cultivated, squash, eggplant, melons, bananas, papayas, pineapples, jackfruit, and lanzones provide the Subanon additional food.

In some coastal settlements, the Subanon have been known to cultivate coconuts for food and for trading purposes. They also grow hemp or abaca, and use the fiber for making ropes, weaving cloth, or exchanging for finished products in the barter trade.

Casal (1986) refers to the Subanon of Sindangan Bay in Zamboanga del Norte as "possibly the most rice-conscious" of all Philippine groups, because of their marked preference for rice above all other staples, as well as the amount of labor and attention they devote to their ricelands. Before the rice harvest in September, the Subanon subsist on root crops and bananas.

The relationship between natural phenomena and the agricultural cycle is well established in the folk knowledge of the Sindangan Subanon. They study wind patterns, looking out for tell-tale signs of imminent weather changes. Based on their native methods of meteorology, the Subanon identify three distinct seasons within the agricultural cycle: *pendupi*, from June to September, characterized by winds blowing from the southwest; *miyan*, from December to January, a time of winds and northeast monsoon rains; and *pemeres*, from March to April, the hot and dry season. The Subanon also reckon agricultural time by the stars, notably the constellation Orion. Among the Subanon, as it is with other Mindanao groups, the appearance of this star group signals the time for the clearing of a new swidden. The monthly rotation of the stars is a guide for the swidden cycle during the first months of the year (Casal 1986:36).

Political System

Subanon society is patriarchal, with the family as the basic governmental unit. (Finley 1913:25). There is no political hierarchy on the village level, as in the *datu* system of

government. The title of datu was used occasionally in the past but *timuay* is the traditional title for the communal leader who is also the chief arbiter of conflict between the families of a community or a confederation. The word "timuay" (variously spelled *timuai*, *timuway*, *timway*) is a Maguindanao word which means "chief" or "leader." It connotes both civil and religious authority for the bearer of the title.

The title of timuay may be recalled by the community and given to another tasked with the responsibility of leading the community. The timuay invokes this authority in cases of violations of social norms, such as affronts or insults, violations of contracts, and other offenses. Under his leadership, an association or confederation of families forms a community. If the timuay proves to be an efficient and popular leader, the community of families under his authority may expand. The authority of the timuay does not correspond to a particular territory. Within the same area, his authority may expand or decrease, depending on the number of families which put themselves under his authority. Consequently, "when a family becomes dissatisfied with the conduct and control of the chief, the father secedes and places his family under the domination of some other timuay" (Finley 1913:25). This, then, is the basis of Subanon patriarchal society: the absolute authority of the father to assert the supremacy of family rights within a community voluntarily organized under a designated timuay. During the Spanish and American periods, there were several attempts to organize the Subanon into politically administered towns or villages, but these attempts were resisted by the people. Such was the premium the Subanon put on the independence of the individual family. In fact, young Subanon who marry break off from their families and start their own families in other places.

In recent times, the Subanon timuay have been confronted with concerns ranging from local issues affecting their particular community to larger, regional issues confronting the entire Subanon group. These issues include the defense of the Subanon ancestral domain against the encroachments of loggers and mining companies. Highly politicized Subanon leaders have been active in organizing their people and coordinating with nongovernment organizations of tribal advocates.

Social Organization and Customs

A neighborhood of 5 to 12 households becomes a unit of social organization, where members engage in frequent interactions. In cases of dispute, members may intervene to mediate, so that they may over time develop as efficient arbitrators of disputes, and become recognized as such by this neighborhood. There are many such communities in Subanon society. A bigger group of interacting communities may contain as many as 50 households.

Marriage in Subanon society is through parental arrangement, which can take place even before the parties reach the age of puberty. The contracting families go through preliminaries for the purpose of determining the bride-price, which may be in the form of cash or goods, or a combination of both. Negotiations are undertaken between the two sets of parents through the mediation of a go-between who is not related to either family. Once the bride-price is determined, a partial delivery of the articles included in

the agreement may be made, to be completed when the actual marriage takes place. After the marriage ceremonies have been held, and the wedding feast celebrated, the newlyweds stay with the girl's household. The man is required to render service to his wife's parents, mainly in the production of food. After a certain period of matrilocal residence, the couple can select their own place of residence, which is usually determined by proximity to the swidden fields.

Family properties which are covered by inheritance consist mainly of acquired Chinese jars, gongs, jewelry, and, in later times, currency. The ownership of cultivated land, the swidden field, is deemed temporary, because the Subanon family moves from place to place, necessitated by the practice of shifting agriculture. The grains stored in bins or jars do not last long, and therefore are not covered by inheritance.

The family as a corporate unit comes to an end through divorce, abduction of the wife, or death of either spouse. But it can be immediately reconstituted through remarriage. The surviving widow can be married to a brother, married or not, of the deceased husband, or the parents of the deceased wife almost immediately marries off to the widower one of their unmarried daughters or nieces.

Socioeconomic needs bring about close relationships in Subanon society. Spouses can expect assistance in many activities from both their parents and their kin, and they in turn extend their help to these relatives when it is needed. Nonrelatives are expected to give and receive the same kind of help. By the mere fact that they live in a neighborhood, nonrelatives become associates in activities that cannot be done by the head of the family alone, such as constructing a house, clearing the field, planting, and holding a feast.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

The Subanon cosmogony exemplifies the basic duality of mortal life and spiritual realm, with a complex system of interrelationships between these two cosmic elements. The physical world is inhabited by the *kilawan* (visible mortals), who become sick and whose ailments are attributed to supranatural causes. In the nonmaterial realm exist the *kanagkilawan* (supernaturals), who are not visible to ordinary mortals, but who can be perceived and addressed by the *balian* (medium or shaman). The supernatural beings are of four kinds: *gimuud* (souls), *mitibug* (spirits), *getautelunan* (demons), and *diwata* (deities).

In place of a hierarchy or pantheon of supreme beings, the Subanon believe in the spirits who are part of nature. Spirits and deities are said to inhabit the most striking natural features which are considered the handiwork of the gods, such as unusually large trees, huge rocks balancing on a small base, peculiarly shaped mounds of earth, isolated caves, and peaks of very tall mountains.

The active relationship between ordinary mortals and the supernaturals begins when

an individual falls sick. The Subanon believe that an ailing person's soul momentarily departs from the person's body. It is up to the balian to recall the straying soul, reintegrate it with the ailing person so that the illness could end. Failing this, the patient dies. The soul then becomes a spirit.

The balian, as in any traditional shamanistic culture, occupies a very special place in Subanon religious and social life. The balian are believed to be capable of visiting the skyworld to attend the great gatherings of the deities, known as *bichara* (assembly or meeting). They are also acknowledged to have the power of raising the dead. Most religious observances are held with the balian presiding. These rites and activities include the clearing of a new plantation, the building of a house, the hunting of the wild hog, the search for wild honey, the sharing of feathered game, the beginning of journey by water or by land, and the harvesting of crops (Finley 1913:33). The religious ceremonies attending the celebration of the great *buklog* festival, held to propitiate the diwata or to celebrate an event of communal significance, are exclusively performed by the balian. In general, the functions of a balian are those of a medium who directs the living person's communication with the spirits, of a priest who conducts sacrifices and rituals, and of a healer of the sick.

The matibug are the closest friends of human beings, but they can be troublesome if ritual offerings of propitiation are not made. These offerings are not expensive. A little rice, some eggs, a piece of meat, betel quids, betel leaves, and areca nuts, given in combinations according to the shaman's discretion, would suffice to placate the spirits. These offerings can be made inside the house or out in the fields, by the riverbanks, under the trees, and elsewhere. It is believed that the supernaturals partake only of the *sengaw* (essence) of the offering, and human beings are free to consume the food and wine. The getautelunan can be dangerous; they are demons and must be avoided. Some diwata can also inflict sickness or epidemics. However, deities residing in the skyworld are benevolent. In some Subanon subgroups, there is a belief in a Supreme Diwata.

In death, a person is sent off to the spirit world with appropriate rituals. First the corpse is cleaned and wrapped in white cloth. Then it is laid inside a hollowed-out log, and given provisions, such as food, for its journey. A rooster is killed, its blood smeared on every mourner's feet to drive away malevolent spirits who may be in attendance. The log-coffin is now covered, and the surviving spouse goes around it seven times, then goes under it another seven times while it is held aloft. Those who accompanied the deceased to its grave, upon their return, get hold of a banana petiole which they dip in ash and throw away before they go up their respective houses. Those who carried the coffin take a bath in the river before going up their houses, to wash away any bad luck they may have brought back with them.

Each time the widower eats, he always leaves a space on the floor or at the table for his dead wife, and invites her to eat with him for three consecutive evenings. He mourns for her until he can hold a *kano* feast. Before this, he cannot comb his hair, wear colorful clothing, or remarry.

Architecture and Community Planning

The typical Subanon settlement is a cluster of three to twelve dispersed households, and is normally located on high ground close to the swidden farm. The traditional Subanon house is generally rectangular, thatch-roofed, with a small floor space averaging 12 square meters. Invariably, there is only one room, and therefore room for only a single family. In certain areas where contact and acculturation with the settler economy have taken place, some Subanon have begun building houses like those of the lowlands. In the interior parts of the peninsula, however, houses retain the traditional features recorded by ethnographers in the 19th and early 20th century.

The Subanon house in Sindangan Bay typifies this traditional design and construction. The floor is elevated 1.5 to 2.5 meters from the ground. The space under the house is utilized in various ways. The floor is ordinarily of split bamboo or palma brava. The floor of the living room is sometimes, in the humbler dwellings, all on one level. Usually, platforms about 2 to 2.5 meters wide are built against one, two, three, or four walls. Mats may cover these platforms, which then become lounging places by day, and beds by night.

There is no ceiling in the house, and the exposed beams of the roof serve as convenient places from which to hang a multitude of things. In the house of a prosperous family, as many as 30 or 40 baskets are suspended from the roof with strips of rattan or abaca. Clothing, ornaments, rice, pepper, squash, corn, drums, guitars, and dishes are some of the things stored in this way. Salt, wrapped in leaves, is also suspended over the hearth, so that it will not absorb too much moisture from the atmosphere. Hanging things from the roof beams has two advantages—the articles do not occupy floor space and get in the way, and they are protected from breakage, insects, and rodents.

The house has no windows. But the overhanging eaves protect the inside from rain. Around the sides of the house, some spaces are thatched with palm leaves, which can be detached at will. In good weather, this portion is opened to let in light, which also comes in through a space between the top of the walls and the roof. Light also enters through the door opening, which seldom has a door, and through the numerous spaces between the floor's bamboo slats.

A platform or porch in front of the door, usually measuring 2.5 square meters, serves many purposes, such as husking rice, drying clothes, and the like. It also helps keep the house clean, especially in rainy weather, since the occupants scrape mud off their feet on this platform before entering the house. A ladder is necessary to gain access to the living room from the ground. In many cases, this ladder consists only of a log with notches. When the occupants are not home, the log is often lifted away from the door, and leaned against a wall of the house. Sometimes there is a smaller log, sometimes two, flanking the notched log, to serve as handrail.

The roof of a Subanon house is densely thatched with nipa fronds. The pitch or slope of the roof is fairly steep.

The main beams supporting the entire structure varies, depending on the intended length of stay in one area. Most houses are built without the expectation of using them for many years, due to the shifting nature of agricultural work. Houses are built as close as possible to a new field. Occasionally, a site is found so favorable that the house is built to last, employing heavy and solid wooden supports. The strongest houses would have supporting beams made of hardwood 15 to 20 centimeters thick, but this is rather rare. Usually, the supporting timbers are 1 centimeter thick, the entire structure being so light a person could easily shake it at one of the supports. Tops of supporting beams are connected with rough logs which serve as stringers, to which the split bamboo, or palma brava, or other flooring materials are lashed with rattan strips. No nails are used in putting houses together, and even the use of wooden pegs is rare. Strips of rattan are the most favored fastening material.

The interior of the house contains both the sleeping area and the hearth. The latter found near the door, ordinarily consists of a shallow, wooden squarish structure whose bottom is covered with a thick layer of earth or ash. Large stones are put atop the ashes to hold the earthenware pots. On the walls of the house, water containers of bamboo about 1-2 meters long are propped up.

The small granaries, built near the Subanon house, are raised some meters above the ground, and at times are so high a notched log is required to enter the structure.

Inside the granary, the rice is stored either in baskets or in bags. Aside from these granaries and their dwellings, there is a special structure added to the spirit house of a shaman—a miniature house called *maligai*, which is made to hang from under the eaves. The maligai is where the sacred dishes are kept. On the roof of the spirit house stand carved wooden images of the omen bird *limukun*.

Visual Arts and Crafts

Unlike the glazed imported jars in some households, the indigenous earthenware of the Subanon are simpler in execution and design. Every household has at least one woman who is knowledgeable in the art of pottery, and who turns out jars as required by domestic needs. The process of making pots starts with the beating of clay on a wooden board with a wooden pestle. The clay is then shaped into a ball, on top of which a hole is bored. The potter inserts her hand, which holds a smooth stone, into this hole, and proceeds to enlarge the hole by turning the stone round and round the inner surface of the clay. Her other hand holds a small flat stick, with which she shapes and smoothens the outer surface. Having hollowed out the clay piece and finalized its shape, she then puts incisions or ornamental marks on the outside, using her fingers, a pointed stick, or a wooden stamp engraved with a simple design. The pot is made to dry out under the sun, after which it is fired, usually over hot coals. The baked pots are then ready to hold water or boil rice.

Several types of baskets may be found in a typical Subanon house. The women shape round baskets from materials of different colors, such as the nito vine, split rattan, bamboo, and sometimes wood or tree bark. The bark is slit, folded, and shaped to form a cylinder, whose bottom and sides are all of one piece. The top may be closed either with the same piece of bark, or with a piece of some other material. There are also bags woven to carry all sorts of things. These are usually made from the leaves of the screw pine, buri, or nipa.

Cloth weaving is basically similar to the style of the neighboring Muslim region. The weaving loom is set up inside the house. Cotton thread—spun from cotton by women using the distaff crafted by men—and abaca fiber are commonly used. Before cotton was introduced by Muslim and Christian traders, the Subanon used abaca fiber for their clothing and blankets. The strands or fibers are first dyed before being put in the loom. In this process, several strands are bound together at intervals by other fibers, forming bands of various widths. Thus tightly bound, these are dipped into the dye, then laid out to dry. The effect is that the bound part retains the natural color of the fiber, while the rest has the color of the dye. The process can be repeated to achieve various designs or color combinations. The favorite dye among the Subanon is red, with black also being widely used. Native dyes from natural substances, which give a flat or matte color, and aniline dyes are used in the process.

The finer metalcraft possessed by the Subanon, such as bladed weapons like the kris, kampilan, and barong, and chopping knives called *pes*, have been obtained through trade with the Muslims. But the Subanon also produce some of their weapons and implements. They also use steel, especially in making blade edges. The Subanon forge has bamboo bellows, while the anvil is made of wood with an iron piece on top where the hot metal is worked into shape.

Literary Arts

Subanon oral literature include the folktales, short, often humorous, stories recounted for their sheer entertainment value; and the epics, long tales which are of a serious character.

One of the stock characters in the long tales is the widow's son, who possesses stupendous physical courage. The following is one of the numerous stories told about him.

One day, the widow's son set out to hunt for wild pigs. He saw one which gave him a difficult time before allowing itself to be speared. The owner of the pig, a deity who lived inside a huge white stone, invited him to his abode, where the widow's son saw opulence and a richness of colors. The master of the house inside the stone wore trousers and a shirt with seven colors. The widow's son was invited to chew betel nut and sip rice beer from a huge jar, using reed straws. The matter of the pig was resolved and the two became friends. On his return journey, he met seven warriors

who challenged him to a combat. Each of the seven men was dressed in a different color, and had eyes whose color matched that of their dress. Forced into battle, the widow's son slew all seven warriors, but the savage fighting had crazed him so much that he was now looking for more enemies to fight. He came to the house of a great giant named Dumalagangan. He challenged the giant to a fight. The giant, enraged and amused by the challenge of a "fly," engaged him in a duel but was defeated after three days and three nights of combat. Battle drunk, the widow's son looked for more enemies, instead of going home, where his mother was so worried over him. He met another diwata, who passed his kerchief over him, rendering him unconscious. When the widow's son woke up, his rage was gone. The diwata told him to go home, saying that he was destined to marry the orphan girl (another stock character in Subanon tales), that the seven warriors and the giant he slew would come back to life, and peace would reign in the land.

The epics feature the diwata, as well as mythical and legendary heroes and chieftains who are partly divine. Composed of many stories, these epics are told in a leisurely fashion, so that it takes one night to complete a story. The chanters of the epic have to have a strong memory and a good voice. They are aided by "assistants" who encourage and sustain the bards. They start the bards off by chanting a number of meaningless syllables, giving them the pitch and duration of the recitative. Whenever they think the bards are getting tired, the assistants give them a chance to rest by taking up the last sung phrase and repeating it, sometimes twice (Christie 1909).

The singers, men or women, are honored and respected by the community, since they possess valuable knowledge of well-loved mythic events, which they recount in a most entertaining manner. These tales pass from one settlement to another during festivals, and are well-known among both the Subanon and the Kalibugan in both northern and southern parts of the Zamboanga peninsula.

To date, three Subanon epics have been recorded and published: ***The Guman of Dumalinao***, the ***Ag Tobig nog Keboklagan*** (The Kingdom of Keboklagan), and ***Keg Sumba neg Sandayo*** (The Tale of Sandayo). All performed during the week-long buklog, ***Guman*** contains 4,062 verses; ***Keboklagan*** 7,590; and ***Sandayo*** 6,577.

The ***Guman*** from Dumalinao, Zamboanga del Sur has 11 episodes which narrate the conflict between the good, represented by their parents, and the evil represented by three evil queens, their descendants, and other invaders. The monumental battles are fought between these forces in order to capture the kingdoms of Dliyagan and Paktologon. In the end the forces of good, aided by magical kerchiefs, rings, birds, and swords, conquer the evil powers.

The ***Keboklagan*** of Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte is a saga about the life and exploits of the superhuman hero named Taake, from the kingdom of Sirangan, whose successful courtship of the Lady Pintawan in the kingdom of Keboklagan, in the very navel of the sea, sets off a series of wars between Sirangan and other kingdoms led by chieftains who resented a Subanon winning the love of the lady of Keboklagan. The wars widen,

dragging other kingdoms into the fray. The chiefs of Sirangan, led by Taake, overpower the other chiefs, but by this time, there are too many deaths, and Asog the Supreme Being in the skyworld is bothered by this. Asog descends on the earth, tells the combatants to stop fighting, and to hold a buklog, during which each of the warriors will be given a life partner. He fans the kingdoms and all those who died in the fighting spring to life again.

The ***Sandayo*** of Pawan, Zamboanga del Sur narrates in about 47 songs the heroic adventures of Sandayo. Sandayo is brought to the center of the sun by his *monsala* or scarf. While in the sun he dreams about two beautiful ladies named Bolak Sonday and Benobong. He shows his affection for Bolak Sonday by accepting her *mama* or betel-nut chew. At the buklog of Lumanay, Sandayo meets the two ladies. Here he also discovers that Domondianay, his opponent in a battle which had lasted for two years, was actually his twin brother. After a reunion with his family at Liyasan, Sandayo is requested by his father to aid his cousins, Daugbolawan and Lomelok, in producing the dowry needed to marry Bolak Sonday and Benobong. Using his magic, Sandayo produces the dowry composed of money, gongs, jars "as many as the grains of one ganta of *dawa* or millet," a golden bridge "as thin as a strand of hair" that would span the distance from the house of the suitor to the room of Bolak Sonday, and a golden trough "that would connect the sun with her room." The dowry given, Bolak Sonday and Benobong are married to Daugbolawan and Lomelok. Upon his return to Liyasan, Sandayo falls ill. Bolak Sonday and Benobong are summoned to nurse Sandayo but Sandayo dies. The two women then search for the spirit of Sandayo. With the guidance of two birds, they discover that Sandayo's spirit is a captive of the Amazons of Piksiipan. After defeating the Amazons in battle, Bolak Sonday frees Sandayo's spirit and the hero comes back to life. One day, while preparing a betel-nut chew, Bolak Sonday accidentally cuts herself and bleeds to death. It is now Sandayo's turn to search for Bolak's spirit. With the aid of two birds, he discovers that Bolak Sonday's spirit has been captured by the datu of Katonawan. Sandayo fights and defeats the datu and Bolak Sonday is brought back to life. In Liyasan, Sandayo receives requests from other cousins to aid them in producing the dowry for their prospective brides. Using his powers, Sandayo obliges. After the marriage of his cousins, a grand buklog is celebrated in Manelangan, where Sandayo and his relatives ascend to heaven.

Performing Arts

Subanon musical instruments include the *gagong*, a single brass gong; the *kolintang*, a set of eight small brass gongs of graduated sizes; and the *durugan*, a hollowed log which is beaten like a drum; and the drums.

Vocal music includes the chants for the epic, and several types of songs, which include the *dionli* (a love song), *buwa* (lullaby), and *giloy* (a funeral song for a dead chieftain). One buwa sung by the Subanon of the Sindangan Bay goes:

Buwa ibon
da dinig ina ta

da-a magayod
ditong maloyo li
tulog bais
buwa ibon

Rocking
your mother's not here
do not cry
she is away
sleep well now
rocking

Another song, sung between friends, has the title "Mag Lumat Ita" (Let Us Play):

Salabok salabok
dini balay ta hin
glen da magtangao
mag lumpot ita glem

One by one
here in my house
some of us will seek
we will play together.

The giloy is usually sung by two singers, one of them being the balian, during a *gukas*, the ritual ceremony performed as a memorial for the death of a chief. The chanting of the biloy is accompanied by the ritualistic offering of bottled drinks, canned milk, cocoa, margarine, sardines, broiled fish, chicken, and pork. The balian and her assistants bring out a jar of *pangasi* (rice wine) from the house and into the field, where the wine is poured onto the earth. Then the chanting begins, inside the house. The translated version of the giloy goes this way:

First singer:

O how difficult
how difficult is our lot.
I will not mind the cost,
even if it is in great amounts
of gold.

Second singer:

O what can we do...
Kindagaw has taken him.
When Kindagaw takes anyone,
nothing can be done to take him back.
Not even with great amounts of gold.

To be at peace with the diwata of the tribe, the Subanon perform ritual dances, sing songs, chant prayers, and play their drums and gongs. The balian, who is more often a woman, is the lead performer in almost all Subanon dance rituals. Her trance dance

involves continuous chanting, frenzied shaking of palm leaves, or the brandishing of a bolo alternated with the flipping of red pieces of cloth. Upon reaching a feverish climax, the balian stops, snaps out of her trance, and proceeds to give instructions dictated by the diwata to the people.

Dance among the Subanon fulfills a multitude of ceremonial and ritual functions. Most important of the ritual dances is the buklog which is performed on a platform at least 6-10 meters above the ground. The most expensive ritual of the Subanon, the buklog is held to commemorate a dead person, so that his acceptance into the spirit world may be facilitated, or to give thanks for a bountiful harvest, or to ask for such a harvest as well as other favors from the diwata.

The whole structure of the buklog platform sways and appears to be shaky, but it is supported at the corners by upright posts. In the middle of the platform, a *paglaw* (central pole) passes through, with its base resting on a *durugan,* a hollow log 3 meters long and as thick as a coconut trunk which is laid horizontally on the ground, resting on a number of large empty earthen jars sunk into the earth. These jars act as resonators when the paglaw strikes the durugan. The jars are kept from breaking by means of sticks and leaves, protecting them from the durugan's impact. The sound that the paglaw makes is a booming one, and can be heard for kilometers around.

In a typical performance of the buklog, gongs are beaten, songs rendered (both traditional ones and those which are improvised for the occasion), and the people take turns sipping basi or rice beer from the reeds placed in the jars. As evening comes, and all through the night, they proceed to the buklog platform by ladder or notched log, and join hands in a circle. They alternately close in and jump backward around the central pole, and as they press down hard on the platform in unison, they cause the lower end of the pole to strike the hollow log, which then makes a deep booming sound. It is only the balian who appears serious in her communication with the spirit world, while all the rest are more concerned with merrymaking—drinking, feasting, and dancing.

The balian does the dancing in other ceremonies, e.g., for the recovery of a sick child. During the ritual offering of chicken, an egg, a chew of betel nut, a saucer of cooked rice, and a cigarette made of tobacco wrapped with nipa leaf, the shaman burns incense, beats a china bowl with a stick, beats a small gong called *agun cina* (Chinese gong), with the purpose of inviting the diwata *mogolot* (a class of deities who live in the sea) to share in the repast. Then she takes hold of *salidingan* in each hand—these are bunches of long strips of the salidingan or anahaw leaves—and dances seven times around the altar.

In the *puluntuh*— a buklog held in memory of the dead—two altars are constructed, one underneath the dancing platform, another near it. These are for the male and female *munluh*. The munluh are also the *manamat,* maleficient beings of gigantic size who dwell in the deep forests. In the ceremonies, the munluh are invoked and given offerings so that they might keep away the other manamat from the festival. The

balian dances three times around the altar and around the hollow log underneath the buklog platform, holding in one hand a knife and in the other a piece of wood and a leaf. The altar to the female munluh is served by two women balian who take turns in beating a bowl, burning incense, and dancing. Unlike the male shaman, they carry no knife or piece of wood. The male balian's dance differs from the female's. In the former, the dancer hops over the ground with a quick step. In the latter, there is hardly any movement of the feet. It is all hand movement and bodily gestures.

Many other kinds of dance, some of them mimetic, showcase the lively spirit of Subanon ritual.

The *soten* is an all-male dance dramatizing the strength and stoic character of the Subanon male. It employs fancy movements, with the left hand clutching a wooden shield and the right hand shaking dried leaves of palm. In a manner of supplication, he calls the attention of the diwata with the sound of the leaves, believed to be the most beautiful and pleasing to the ears of those deities. The Subanon warrior, believing that he has caught the attention of the diwata who are now present, continues to dance by shaking his shield, manipulating it as though in mortal combat with unseen adversaries. The soten is danced to the accompaniment of music played on several blue and white Ming dynasty bowls, performed in syncopated rhythm by female musicians.

The *diwata* is a dance performed by Subanon women in Zamboanga del Norte before they set out to work in the swidden. In this dance, they supplicate the diwata for a bountiful harvest. The farmers carry baskets laden with grains. They dart in and out of two bamboo planting sticks laid on the ground, which are struck together in rhythmic cadence by the male dancers. The clapping sequence is similar to that of the *tinikling* or bamboo dance.

The *lapal* is a dance of the balian as a form of communication with the diwata, while the *sot* is a dance performed by Subanon men before going off to battle.

The *balae* is a dance performed by young Subanon women looking for husbands. They whisk dried palm leaves (See logo of this article), whose sound is supposed to please the deities into granting their wishes.

The *pangalitawao* is a courtship dance of the Subanon of Zamboanga del Sur, usually performed during harvest time and in other social occasions. Traditional costumes are worn, with the women holding shredded banana leaves in each hand, while the men hold a *kalasay* in their right hand.

The change in steps is syncopated. The women shake their banana leaves downward, while the men strike the kalasay against the palm of their hand and against the hip. A drum or a gong is used to accompany the dancing.

The *sinalimba* is an extraordinary dance which makes use of a swing that can

accommodate 3 to 4 persons at a time. The term is also used to mean the swing itself, a representation of a mythic vessel used for journeying. Several male dancers move in rhythm to the music of a gong and drum ensemble, which are played beside the swinging sinalimba. At a given precise movement, one of them leaps onto the platform, steadies himself, and moves with the momentum of the swing. Once he finds his balance, he forces the sinalimba to swing even higher. This requires considerable skill, since he has to remain gracefully upright, moving in harmony with the sinalimba as though he were a part of it. The other two or three performers follow him onto the sinalimba one after the other, making sure they do not disrupt the pendular rhythm of the swing. A miscue could disrupt the motion, and even throw them off the platform. Even as they end the dance, they must maintain their agility in alighting from the sinalimba without counteracting or disrupting the direction of the swing. • E. B. Maranan/Reviewed by S.K. Tan.

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