

## *Sorcery in the Framework of Folk Medicine on Siquijor Island*

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Out of the 133 respondents (selected by stratified random sampling) interviewed, 92 believe sorcery exists on Siquijor Island and 97 said people were afraid of it. Only 13, however, believed that illnesses and deaths in Siquijor were due to sorcery. This finding seems to be in line with the observation that more people on the island are going to medical doctors. If a sick person believes the cause of his sickness is supernatural or sorcery, he goes to the folk-healer (mananambal). If he believes the cause is natural, he goes to the medical doctor, according to this study.

This is a survey, in breadth, of sorcery and folk-medicine on Siquijor Island, Negros Oriental.<sup>1</sup> This island, facing Dumaguete City, is reputed to be the center of sorcery in the area of the Visayas, Central Philippines.

The survey was carried out by seven researchers,<sup>2</sup> one located in

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<sup>1</sup> A depth study was made by Dr. Richard Lieban in Sibulan, a rural municipality of Negros Oriental and Cebu City, in 1958-59 and in 1962-63, respectively. His findings were reported in his book, entitled, *Cebuano Sorcery: Malign Magic in the Philippines* (1967).

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each of the six municipalities of Siquijor Island (Larena, Siquijor, San Juan, Lazi, Maria, and Enrique Villanueva) and one in the barrio of San Antonio, Siquijor. San Antonio was chosen as the control area because it is known as the "graduate school of sorcery" for the whole island.

Before gathering the data in the field, the seven researchers underwent a week-long orientation and preparation, during which they listened to lectures, read basic references, observed folk healers at work, and prepared the interview schedule,<sup>3</sup> under the direction of Dr. Hubert Reynolds. Prof. Timoteo Oracion assisted as one of the lecturers.

Presented here are the findings of the research team<sup>4</sup> on the following aspects: folklore and social psychology, beliefs and practices in folk medicine, causes of illness, symptoms and treatments, and apparent effects of practices and beliefs in folk-medicine in people's lives. These aspects emphasize the practices by the **Bisayang Mananambal**<sup>5</sup> (folk medicine practitioner), of supernatural healing and anti-sorcery.

It should be noted that gathering of information was handicapped by the suspicion of the respondents about the researchers' intentions and purposes.<sup>6</sup> Although there is no law prohibiting the practice of sorcery, still sorcery is a covert activity<sup>7</sup> and not in consonance with moral law.<sup>8</sup> Those who were known as sorcerers, with one or two exceptions, denied

<sup>3</sup> The following aspects were covered in the preparation of the questionnaire (with one aspect for each researcher to focus on): Folk Religion, Folk Medicine, Social Control, Folklore, Psychology, Economic Development, and Methodology.

<sup>4</sup> It should also be noted that findings gathered by Maria Pontefila during the Lenten Season of March, 1970 are included in this report.

<sup>5</sup> Referring to the **mananambal** in the Visayan-speaking region of the Philippines.

<sup>6</sup> A researcher, in a later survey, discovered that fear was instilled in the minds of known sorcerer respondents by some members of the community, so much so that the researcher's presence meant possible exposure to the eyes of the law.

<sup>7</sup> Based on Lieban's observation, sorcerers are usually guarded and secretive because as suspected sorcerers, they are apt to encounter violent attacks. In Siquijor Island, there were cases of houses blown up because the head or a member of the family was reported to be a sorcerer and had caused illness or death to some members of the community.

<sup>8</sup> Moral law, is a rule or group of rules conceived as universal and unchanging and as having the sanction of God's will, of conscience, of man's moral nature, or of natural justice as revealed to human reason. This moral law may be supported by the church, the school or education, and modern medicine.



outright any knowledge about the practice of sorcery even when asked indirectly. Some **mananambal** also hesitated to admit, to the point of denying, their ability to heal for fear of being reported and prosecuted for their "medical activities."<sup>9</sup> Some informants who had never been patients of the folk healers refused to admit any knowledge of, or belief in folk stories, folk medicines, or sorcery.

Because of this research situation, most of the data collected about sorcery and how it operates came indirectly from information given by the **mananambal** about "supernatural" healing or counter-sorcery, from involved respondents (patients) and from non-involved respondents.<sup>10</sup> Thus, this report focuses on sorcery within the context of folk-medicine, since sorcerers rarely admit that they practice sorcery.<sup>11</sup> This report also offers information about the influence of sorcery on the lives of those who believe in it.

### I. Description of the Research Area

The islands of Siquijor—formerly known to the Spaniards as **Isla del Fuego** (Island of Fire)<sup>12</sup>—is a sub-province of Negros Oriental. It is located 21 nautical miles east of Dumaguete City,<sup>13</sup> Negros Oriental.

The predominant economic activities are farming, fishing, and some cottage industries in **buri** and **abaca**. A manganese mine was closed down on account of the high cost of production and because of danger in the

<sup>9</sup> The Revised Administrative Code, Section 770 provides that "No person shall practice medicine in the Philippines without having previously obtained the proper certificate of registration issued by the Board of Medical Examiners as herein constituted, or the lawful board which was its predecessor. . . ."

<sup>10</sup> Those who were classified under non-involved respondents were expected to relate the experience, if any, of a friend, a relative, or a member of the family whom they knew had been a victim of supernatural acts.

<sup>11</sup> A known sorcerer who in the past denied having knowledge of sorcery, promised to teach a researcher a few methods of sorcery. Later, he said he could not fulfill his promise. He did not give any reason. The researcher could see that fear was foremost in the mind of the man because he would turn his finger near his head emphasizing to the researcher that he was getting confused.

<sup>12</sup> The stories behind the origin of the name are the following: there were plenty of fire trees growing around the island; and that the fire burning from the fisherman's lamp made the island look, from a distance, like it was on fire.

<sup>13</sup> To reach the Island, one can either take an interisland vessel which can dock on any of the two ports (Larena and Lazi), or cross towards the island in a pumpboat which can bring the passenger to any of the municipalities on the island, or fly in an airplane which can land on the unfinished airstrip in the municipality of Siquijor.



mining shaft. Fishing is fairly good around the southeastern part of the island, and is usually done for profit; but the fishing in the northeastern part is largely for home consumption. The farming undertaken likewise is primarily for local use.

The Presidential Arm on Community Development (PACD) provincial office has noted an unusually high degree of cooperation among the people in development projects on the island. At present attention is concentrated on waterwork projects, which is an important need of the rural people. The roads and schools are generally better than those found in other parts of the province. Many people seem to have a rather high level of interest in the development of their island, which may be due to the fact that most of them are native islanders since there is a low rate of emigration into Siquijor. The direction of migration is outward.

Although Siquijor is a relatively poor place economically, there are numerous improvements being undertaken with the cooperation of the people and their local administrators, and the provincial and national governments.

## II. Methods of Data Gathering

There were two methods of data gathering used by the research team—observation and interviewing.

The researchers employed both non-participant observation and participant observation. They were usually non-participant observers; but in a few instances, they participated as "patients" receiving treatment from a **mananambal**.

Interviews were both informal and formal. From the informal interviews, the researchers got a number of leads on prospects for a formal interview with a folk practitioner or patient. In the formal interviews, the researchers used the 19-page interview schedule, divided into six different sections: Folklore, Economic Development, Social Control, Folk-Medicine, Psychology, and Folk Religion.<sup>14</sup>

These interviews were usually preceded by a short period of casual conversation to establish rapport. The length of the interview schedule

<sup>14</sup> Revisions were made in the interview schedule before going to the field and again after one week on the field.



plus other survey approaches,<sup>15</sup> limited the number of formal interviews completed to an average of one per day per researcher.

Focus was also made in the collection of materials used in folk healing and sorcery.<sup>16</sup>

### III. Types of Respondents and How Selected

The researchers hoped to secure and compare responses representing different levels. Hence four types of respondents were sought for the formal interview: sorcerers, patients, healers, and non-involved informants (non-involved means one who has never been the patient of a folk-healer). Although the highest concentration of interviews was with patients and healers, many interviews were made with non-involved informants in order to provide comparisons between those who say they believe in and go to folk practitioners and those who say they do not. Similarly, patient and healer informants were selected from both poblacions and various barrios, so that information on the beliefs and practices found in the barrios could be compared with information found in the poblacions. Lastly, the researchers spent a great deal of their time with key informants.

For the informal interview, the persons interviewed were generally selected at random. As opportunities developed, authority figures in the municipality were made as initial contacts. The majority of interviews were of an informal nature and often dealt with various subjects. These informal interviews, in many instances, led to formal interviews with the same informants; and in other cases, they provided leads for formal interviews with other knowledgeable informants.

### IV. Background Data on Respondents

A breakdown of the 133 respondents shows that 55 were patients, 2 were *mananambal*, 31 were non-involved and 5 were known as healers-

<sup>15</sup> The research team would meet once a week in a strategic (e.g. where their fiesta) research area in Siquijor with the field supervisor, Dr. Hubert Reynolds. Special mention should be made of the fact that the team was out of the field one week to prepare a preliminary report to be read at the Philippine Sociological Convention in Cebu City. The team also attended the convention. An abstract of the preliminary report has been published in the *Philippine Sociological Review*, Vol. Nos. 3-4 (July-October, 1968), pp. 197-198.

<sup>16</sup> All of the materials gathered are currently on display at the Living Museum of Anthropology, Silliman University.



sorcerers. These five known healer-sorcerers were from the barrio of San Antonio; in other places, healers were not known to be sorcerers.<sup>17</sup>

Of the 133 respondents, 86 were males and 47 were females. Among the **mananambal**, 29 were males and 13 were females (approximately a 2 to 1 ratio). The youngest respondent was 23 years old while the oldest was 89.

On the educational attainment of the respondents, 14 had not gone to school at all. Twelve have had **cartilla**<sup>18</sup> while 59 have finished or have had some elementary education. Twenty-seven had reached the high school level while 21 attained college education.

The main livelihood of the respondents was farming (about 38% of the total), followed by teaching (9%), then government employees/officials (8%). The rest were fishermen, healers, motorcab drivers, businessmen, and a time-keeper, dressmaker, vendor, carpenter, policeman, nurse, musician, etc. Twenty-eight were not gainfully employed (18 of whom were housewives).

### V. Folklore and Social Psychology

In dealing with the study of folk-medicine it is necessary to first try to understand the view the people in a given place have of the surroundings. Since what one believes often determines what one perceives it is necessary to discuss the folklore and psychology of the people before we examine their beliefs and practices in folk-medicine. For example, if the people did not believe in evil spirits, they would hardly accept that certain illnesses were caused by them. Further, if the illness which the **mananambal** cures is "psychosomatic," as one medical doctor in San Juan indicates, then we need to try to understand the "cycle of fear" which can cause this type of sickness. (The cycle is described as: belief, sense of guilt, perception, anxiety, suggestibility and anxiety attack

<sup>17</sup> Lately, an informal interview was made by Maria Pontefilla with a known lady sorcerer (known to be the most dangerous) who practices on people outside the island. A very reliable informant said that she would be called out of the island to practice the art and would go home, up into the mountains in a hired car. She denied outright any knowledge of healing. She claimed, on the other hand, that she's more of a **mananabang** (midwife) than a **mananambal**.

<sup>18</sup> This is equivalent to the ABC taught to beginners during the Spanish period of Philippine history.



with its accompanying physical conditions.)<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it is important to deal with the folklore, the belief in it and its effects upon the lives of the people.

There are various stories about evil spirits and bewitched people which are believed by some of the people. A majority of the respondents believe in myths, legends, tales, riddles, and proverbs. Various reasons given are: that stories had been handed down from the old folks; they have meaning in their lives; that characters involved really exist and had been seen by respondents; and that the stories teach lessons. The respondents commonly believe in stories of witches (**balbal**), dwarfs (**duwende**), ghosts (**multo**) and spirits (**ingkanto**). Their beliefs in the existence of the **ingkanto** and **balbal** provide them with some means of understanding the genesis of disease. Their ascription of diseases as being caused by the displeasure of spirits will be dealt with later. As one healer-sorcerer puts it, "spirits are beings of another dimension who have their own system of government and their own way of life." They will only avenge and cause harm when one trespasses their dwelling places.<sup>20</sup> The **mananambal** concluded that they, like mortals, demand respect and privacy from their neighbors.

A few stories illustrate some of these folk beliefs.

#### Story A

A mother and her two sons had gone to the shore to fish at about 6 p.m. When they reached the beach they saw a baby, about one year old, near a banana tree and a large stone. The baby was crying. They went to the child and asked her who was her companion. The child only pointed to the banana tree and continued to cry. One of the sons suggested that his mother feed the baby and she did so.

The mother, recognizing the baby as the child of a neighbor, took the baby back to her house. When they arrived there the only person around was the child's grandmother who was rocking the crib, believing the child to be still there. She was very surprised when the mother and her sons

<sup>19</sup> Taken from the lecture given by Mrs. Bettie Carol Elwood, instructor in psychology, Silliman University, during the orientation period of the research team.

<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, one may be fortunate to befriend an **ingkanto**, especially in times of trouble or need. A **mananambal** remarked that the **ingkanto** will protect one from bad spirits, help him in his farm, by keeping pests away, and help him in his fishing if he is a fisherman (only after he has done the **pagdiwata** appeasement or petition), and give him the power to heal, as the case may be.



brought back the baby. They told the story and left.

About a week later the mother with her two sons became ill. She became very weak and had pain in her breast. The child also became sick and suffered scabbies. After about three years the mother was cured by a **mananambal** who said an **ingkanto** made her suffer because she had fed and returned the baby.

### Story B

Two friends, Juanita and Maria, agreed to attend a dance in the poblacion. Juanita was to pick up Maria at 7 p.m.

An **inkanto** heard the agreement and at the proper time he took the appearance of Juanita and went to get Maria. Instead of taking Maria to the dance in the poblacion he took her to a dance in a **balite** tree.

At about 8 p.m. Juanita went to Maria's house to get her. Maria's mother was surprised that Juanita returned and had again picked up Maria. After all was explained, an alarm was sounded and people went to look for Maria. She was found three days later standing on a vine in a **balite** tree.

A priest was called to help catch the girl and when he said some prayers she came down but when the people tried to hold her she ran off. Later the people were able to encircle her and whip her with the priest's belt which tamed her. He blessed the girl and she later related how the **ingkanto** had taken her to the dance in the **balite** tree.

### Story C

During the hot season the **amamarang** roams about taking children or strangling people and eating their livers. The **amamarang** is said to resemble a woman and have very long hair which she uses to strangle her victims.

If we view the relationship of a folk story with the psychological cycle, we can see that the "belief" in evil spirits as a cause of illness does substantiate the belief in folk-medicine. And if the various steps in the cycle are examined, further points of relationship will be found.

The next phase in the cycle is a sense of guilt. According to the respondents, victims of evil spirits, may or may not have done wrong to the spirits. But in the cases of victims of sorcery, the majority of the respondents said only the guilty could be a victim. One healer informant said that "if a person were innocent, sorcery would not be effective."



An example of this would be the respondent who supposedly became a victim of sorcery. It happened after a jeepney which he was following, and which was the same color as his jeep, hit and killed a cow. The onlookers were said to have mistakenly described his jeep to the owner of the cow. In retaliation, the owner of the cow resorted to sorcery but the respondent, who was not guilty, survived.

In reference to perception, anxiety and suggestibility, we have stories told of the use of evil spirits to threaten children into behaving. Patients, for example, may have directly perceived supernatural occurrences or others may have been sick with the same illness.

Finally, taking the symptoms of illness that people profess to have as a result of an anxiety attack, there is a fair amount of activity on the part of the folk healers to cure the people who come to them for treatment.

There is, therefore, strong evidence of belief in and psychological support for the practices and beliefs found in folk-medicine among the people of Siquijor.

## VI. Beliefs and Practices of Folk-Medicine

The various beliefs in folk-medicine in Siquijor have a similar view of the causes of illness, but the practices and treatments of the various healers and the actions or reactions of the patients vary in many cases.

The gradations vary from complete acceptance of the modern medical germ theory to acceptance only of the supernatural and sorcery causes, according to our survey. In some instances, an individual may completely accept the germ theory but sometimes believe that he is a victim of sorcery or evil spirits.

The many practices in folk-medicine for the prevention and cure of sickness vary from person to person. Though there are similarities, the particular ingredients of the folk-medicine and the procedures and treatments of the different healers differ. For example, two different healers had a different meaning for *tawal*. To one it simply meant the examination and diagnostic procedure, to another it was the cure. In two different cases the *palina* (a medicine) consisted of different ingredients. In the one case, it was only bits and pieces of the candle blessed in February (Candelaria) and the Easter Candle (Candela sa Perdon); in another case, it consisted of some roots (unknown) and incense mixed and either mixture is placed on embers.



The means of prevention also vary from place to place and person to person.

**Sumpa** (an amulet) is worn to ward off evil spirits.<sup>21</sup> In some cases, it consists of roots, incense from the church, pieces of the **Candela sa Perdon** and **Tres de Maria**<sup>22</sup> candles which are mixed and placed in a bullet shell or small pouch of cloth;<sup>23</sup> in other cases, a piece of a diamond will do; still in some cases, religious cord or scapular will keep the evil spirits away. Some use **santa lana** (holy oil), which is said to boil when a sorcerer is around.

Often, prayers are used to ward off evil spirits. The **Confiteor** (I Confess) is said to be effective against **balbal**; a prayer found outside a house, "Exsum petetes, Egusom, Egusom, Egusom, Egusom, Amen,"<sup>24</sup> was said to ward off the **ingkanto** and the **Credo** prayer was also said to be used. In most cases, the prayers are in Latin which is believed to be most efficacious, but saying the Lord's Prayer, in any language, and making the sign of the cross after the prayer is also commonly practiced.

Evidently, there are various means of protection and treatment against the causes of illness or death. The causes, which are few, shall now be discussed.

## VII. Causes of Illness

The causes of illness, according to our respondents, fall into two general categories—supernatural and natural. Under the category of supernatural cause, may fall three types: sorcery, evil spirits, and witchcraft. Of the two categories, natural cause is most often mentioned, while in the supernatural realm, evil spirits are more often given as the

<sup>21</sup> A **mananambal** from Misamis Oriental showed but would not allow anybody to hold the bottle he used as **sumpa** and for healing purposes. The contents were a white diamond, black diamond, sapphire, magnet, a ring made out of ivory called **wagas**, lightning (sometimes known as the teeth of a lightning), and oil which had been used to soak the medicinal herbs.

<sup>22</sup> Candles lighted from the altar of the Virgin Mary during the Holy Week, representing the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

<sup>23</sup> This kind of mixture may be taken orally as medicine or may be used for **palina**.

<sup>24</sup> Ex. . . (from); sum . . . (I am); petetes . . . (they ask); Egu . . . (I).

All of the latin prayers in this manuscript were translated by an Irish priest. In the priest's opinion, the Latin prayers had been corrupted and therefore became meaningless in its own context.



cause. Sorcery and witchcraft are alluded to only occasionally.<sup>25</sup>

The natural causes of illness are seen as pathological disease, accident, old age, poor health conditions, etc. A **mananambal** can usually tell whether an illness is caused by natural elements by feeling the pulse of the patient. The **mananambal** can further tell the native medicine's effect. When the **mananambal** recognizes that the ailment is outside his realm, he recommends that the patient see a medical doctor. It should be noted that a well-known and reputedly the oldest known healer-sorcerer in the barrio of San Antonio, who had fever, asked for medicine from a school-teacher.

The next major cause of illness, according to the respondents, is the activity of evil spirits. The two major offenders seem to be the **balbal** and the **ingkanto**. In some cases, these spirits are provoked by the activities of the people (i.e., plowing the land they inhabit or drawing water from their spring), but most often they simply act maliciously and unprovoked; they act true to form by victimizing innocent persons.<sup>26</sup> For instance, they feel provoked if one cuts down a **balete** tree which is said to be the abode of the **ingkanto**, or if a farmer plows the field and hurts the "inhabitants." Another example is the story about the root of a **dalakit** (synonymous with **balete**) tree. The root had obstructed the flow of water to the farm, causing the water to rise during rains, thereby flooding the farm. The farmer thus thought of burning the root but while he was thinking about it, a swarm of bees from the **dalakit** tree rushed toward him. Although he escaped being stung by the bees, he noticed days later that his legs grew numb and itchy, gradually became bluish, and later he had difficulty in standing and walking. The farmer attributed the ailment to **buyag**—an act of the evil spirits.<sup>27</sup>

In other instances, the evil spirits may have taken a liking to a person and tried to communicate with him. If the person refuses or fails to respond, the spirit gets angry and makes him sick. Common victims of these spirits are women with whom the former falls in love. Others get sick because they cannot stand the sight of the spirit. They are known to have been befriended by the spirit (**giamigo sa ingkanto**).

<sup>25</sup> It is useful to distinguish between witchcraft and sorcery. A witch brings about his evil effects simply because he is a witch and has no need of medicines or techniques. A sorcerer deliberately uses magical techniques and substance to work evil on somebody or something. (John Beattie, **Other Culture** [New York: The Free Press, 1964], pp. 213-214.)

<sup>26</sup> Refer to Story B earlier in this paper.

<sup>27</sup> The more popular meaning of **buyag** is described on p. 88.



Witchcraft, which is often mixed with the presence of evil spirits, has the **aswang** or **balbal** for its example. When a person sees an **aswang** he generally thinks of instant death at the hands of the **aswang**. The **aswang** reportedly attacks and kills any person he meets or wants to kill.

The fourth major cause of illness and death, according to our respondents, is sorcery. Though the incidence is not high, sorcery is perhaps the most interesting of all the causes reported.

Though sorcery does not occur often, a majority of the respondents indicated that it caused fear among the people, spurring them to take precaution against it. Sorcery is generally thought to cause sickness and death if the victim is not treated by a **mananambal**.

There are various reasons for a person to be victimized but noted most often by informants were land disputes, jealousy, adultery, frustrations in courtship, and disagreement during cockfights. In most cases, the intended victim is guilty; if he is not, sorcery will not be effective.

There are several methods<sup>28</sup> of sorcery, according to the informants. It was told to one researcher that there are 50 or more methods of sorcery being practiced in Siquijor. One respondent told this writer that there are about a hundred methods of sorcery. The difficulty is that not one respondent has been able to enumerate and describe even 20 of these methods. Among the most popular or well-known methods are **barang**, **haplit**, **paktol**, **hilo**, and **buyag**. Less popular methods include **angyaw**<sup>29</sup> **la-ga**, **San Anton**, **gilalag**, **sigbin**, **gisalwaki**, **among-among**.<sup>30</sup>

1. **Barang**. **Barang** is the name of the insect which is used in this method of sorcery (it looks like a beetle, is the size of a fly, and is all black with shiny wings and lives in horse manure). Three insects are selected and a piece of thread is tied to each insect. The length of the

<sup>28</sup> In some cases it was possible to obtain fairly complete description of the methods; in others, only sketchy references were obtained.

<sup>29</sup> One person, reputed to be a sorcerer, showed one researcher pieces of coin on a plate which was used as offerings to the evil spirits found in a cave.

<sup>30</sup> In other references, **among-among** is a generic term. In the Island of Siquijor it is known as a specific method of sorcery.

Other minor varieties that may be added are the following: **among-among sa tikong**, **bahag-bahag**, **angyaw sa langub**, **angyaw sa menteryo**, **angyaw sa ong-ong**, **la-ga sa sa-ang**, **discomonyon sa latin**, **kahuna**, **baligan**, **antiwil** or **pawikan**, **haplit-angyaw sumbong**, **sampal**, **angyaw sa santisimo**, **salak**, and **lumai**.

Except for the following types of sorcery: **San Anton**, **gilalag**, **among-among sa tikong**, **bahag-bahag**, **angyaw sa menteryo**, **angyaw sa ong-ong**, **la-ga sa sa-ang**, **discomoyon sa latin**, **kahuna**, **baligan**, **haplit-angyaw sumbong**, and **angyaw sa santisimo**, the rest of the above methods were also found by Dr. Richard Lieban (1967) in Cebu City and Sibulan.



thread should be about six inches or of a **dangaw**—the distance between the tips of the thumb and index finger of a spread hand. After the thread is tied to the **barang** the sorcerer commands the insects to go to the house of the intended victim. The insects go to the victim's house, lodge themselves in three different corners, and observe the victim until bedtime. At night, the insects enter the sleeping victim's body through the orifices and lay their eggs inside his stomach. After that they leave the victim and return to the sorcerer. The sorcerer can determine if the insects have accomplished their mission if there is blood on the piece of thread.

The eggs will later hatch into centipedes, ants, bees, and worms. When the eggs hatch, the victim will start to experience pain in the stomach, skin ulcers, swollen stomach, etc. However, the symptoms vary and he may suffer from one or all of the mentioned symptoms as well as from other maladies. The person must be guilty or the **barang** will have no effect.<sup>31</sup>

2. **Hilo**. The sorcerer will obtain a certain oil (not venom) from a poisonous snake. The informant could not describe the particular type of oil or how it was obtained but it does differ slightly from Lieban's description of the collection of blood and venom from a poisonous snake.<sup>32</sup> The oil is then placed on a finger. Though it is usually placed on the thumb, it can be put on any finger; but only one finger at a time.

It is interesting to note that **hilo** can be caused by sorcerers, spirits or the wind. The **hilo** can cause numbness and possibly death.

3. **Pakto!** (a) The sorcerer first obtains the waste, urine, saliva, a picture or a piece of paper with the name of his intended victim on it. He will then place this along with roots gathered and mixed on Good Friday in a can which has been well lined with the leaves of the **balalan-ti** (*macaranga tanarius*), **tuble**, **tuba-tuba sa isda** and **tubtub**<sup>33</sup> trees. **Salak**<sup>34</sup> (a water in which some roots have been soaked, is placed in the can and this is covered with a lid made of **nito** (*lygodium circinnatum*). This can is placed on a fire of **lipata** wood and when the mixture boils the lid is punctured with a **penzol** (the tail of a **pabanogon** or **pagi** [ray fish]). The sorcerer must be very careful during this time for if he is exposed

<sup>31</sup> There are some notable differences in the method as described above and as described by Lieban, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-53.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>33</sup> Most of the materials used for sorcery (or treatment, as the case may be) had no samples. Therefore scientific identification was difficult.

<sup>34</sup> A sample obtained during the Holy Week is not a water mixture but is putty-like. It is not used for **pakto!** but specially used for **salak**, a method of sorcery.



to the escaping steam, he will become his own victim. The mixture is then stirred with the **penzol** and the sorcerer shouts, "Help, because I am in pain." The sorcerer is at this time taking the part of his victim and the pain is transferred to the victim.<sup>35</sup>

(b) Another informant gave a brief description which varied considerably from the first one but which has similarities with the representational procedure mentioned by Lieban.<sup>36</sup> In this method, a doll (fashioned from bee's wax) of the person is made and stuck with a **bagakay** (*schizostachyum dielsianum*), a variety of bamboo, which is sharpened at both ends. The victim will then feel pain in the part of his body corresponding to the portion of the wax doll stuck with the **bagakay**.

4. **Haplit**. A wooden doll<sup>37</sup> is made by the sorcerer, who hires someone to take the doll to the Church and have it baptized while a child is being baptized. Whatever happens to the child must also happen to the doll. The name of the child is also given to the doll.

If the child dies later, the doll can be utilized for **haplit**. The sorcerer will then command the "doll spirit" (or the spirit of the dead child) to cause sickness to his intended victim.

Once again there is a strong variation in this description of **haplit** and that made by Dr. Lieban.<sup>38</sup>

5. **Buyag**. The person simply compliments you for the beauty of certain parts of your body and that part will then suffer itch, rashes, skin eruptions, and pain.

The person who is able to inflict **buyag** is said to have been born on Good Friday and he gets his teeth early or has them when he is born and they are separated in front. He is not necessarily a sorcerer.

6. **Gisalwaki**. A **salwaki** — sea urchin—is obtained and some hair from the intended victim is placed inside. The victim's hair is then boiled

<sup>35</sup> Lieban, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> A sample was obtained from a police chief in one of the towns who confiscated the wooden doll from a native of Iloilo. The Iloilo native, who was a resident of one of the barrios of his municipality, was suspected by his neighbors to have caused the illness of many in the barrio. To avert possible attack by the neighbors, the police chief raided the house and later asked the Iloilo native to leave the island.

<sup>38</sup> Lieban, *op. cit.* p.



in *ina'ap*<sup>39</sup>—a mixture of different roots and materials gathered from the forest, the cave and the sea which was boiled in coconut oil on Good Friday. (The coconut oil has to come from an only fruit facing west.) The victim will then either go insane or lose his hair. This particular type is said to be used predominantly by frustrated suitors or by disappointed girls.

7. *La-ga*. During Lent the sorcerer gathers the different roots, herbs, etc. and then on Good Friday boils these with coconut oil over a fire of *balalanti* wood. This mixture, called *inalap*, is then placed in bottles and kept until needed by the sorcerer. This mixture may be similar to that called *igdalaut* by Lieban in his description of *la-ga*.<sup>40</sup> At the given time some object belonging to the intended victim (a picture, hair, waste, urine, or saliva) is mixed with oil and some water and again boiled. The victim then suffers and dies according to the desires of the sorcerer.

8. *Among-among*.<sup>41</sup> A doll is made of *salong* (a sap from the *salangan* tree) and is brought to a haunted place by the sorcerer. The doll is tied to the haunted place with a piece of hair from a dead person (usually a woman, as female hair is longer than that of a male). Depending upon what the sorcerer wishes his intended victim to suffer, he will either cremate the doll over the fire made of *lipata* wood, which produces a burning fever; or he will use a *penzol* to stick the doll to produce pain in the corresponding part of the victim's body. If the *penzol* is struck through the heart of the doll the victim will die.

It must be stressed that at no time did any of this information come from a known<sup>42</sup> or admitted sorcerer nor was there any occasion to observe any of the the methods. However, in all cases the informants were apparently reliable sources as healers.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The materials were gathered for seven consecutive Fridays starting the Friday immediately after Ash Sunday. Four Fridays were spent in the forests, one in the sea, one in a cave, and the last Friday in church.

<sup>40</sup> Lieban, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>41</sup> This may be a type mentioned, but not known by name, by Lieban, *op. cit.*, and referred to as a wax doll.

<sup>42</sup> One or two known sorcerers, who indirectly admitted having knowledge of the practice of sorcery (promised to teach a researcher a few methods of sorcery), described a few minor methods of sorcery.

<sup>43</sup> Samples gathered were a wooden doll, the head of a plastic doll (found in a cave), a bottle of *lumay*, and the *salak*. The most recent acquisition are the materials used for the method of sorcery called *sampal*.



### VIII. Symptoms and Treatment

The major content of this section shall deal with treatments. Suffice to say, a patient's symptoms often are varied. They are often vague and general and may overlap and the diagnosis of the illness is often determined by circumstances surrounding the onset of the sickness or by the "pulse" of the patients rather than by the symptoms per se.

As stated earlier the means of treatment often vary from healer to healer, though there are some degrees of similarities. For example **palina** (described below), is often a cure for those who have been victimized by the **ingkanto**, and **tawal** is used for curing **hilo**. In the two cases the ingredients or procedures vary slightly. Perhaps it will be easiest to just relate a few of the treatments encountered.

1. **Palina**. Used for those who suffer from **panulay** (encountering of evil spirits, particularly the **ingkanto**).

(a) Small amount of the **Candelaria** (candles blessed on Feast of the Purification, February 2) and the **Candela sa Perdon** (Easter Candle) are placed in a can of hot embers. The patient stands over the can, wrapped in a blanket allowing the smoke to pass over the body while the patient recites the **Credo** prayer.

(b) Some **sumpa** (a mixture of roots, incense, and **Candela sa Perdon** and **Tres de Maria** candles) and a small amount of oil from **Round** (mixture of 300 kinds of roots and herbs mixed in coconut oil) are placed on hot embers and smoke passes over the patient.

(c) Mixture of roots and incense placed on ember and follows same procedure.

2. **Tawal**. Used to cure **hilo**.

(a) A prayer is said while some oil (coconut oil mixed with three kinds of roots said to be given by St. Vincent Ferrer) is applied to the back of the patient in the form of the sign of the cross. The cross extends from the base of the neck to the middle of the back and intersects between the shoulder blades. A prayer is said and the **mananambal** blows where the lines intersect. This is done three times. Finally another large cross is made.

This procedure is never done more than five times on different days, and prior to the final cure the patient takes one-half cup of oil (**lana**, **tambal ug hilo**) thus completing the cure.



(b) The pulse is taken and then the **mananambal**, as he chews some **sumpa**, makes a sign of the cross over the patient and then prays,

**Christum, Yurum, Yusom**

**Malignum, Malignum**<sup>44</sup>

and blows on the patient's back. This is done three times. The patient is then given some chopped roots of the **paguman**, **pahauli**, **pangasaw** and **dumagos** trees which are mixed with water.<sup>45</sup> The roots and water are then boiled and after the mixture cools the patient drinks two cups before breakfast. The patient is given this mixture for three days and if he is cured on the fourth day he takes one-fourth teaspoon of **sungil** (pork lard) to finalize the cure.

### 3. **Hampol**. Treatment for the victim of **balbal**.

Pieces of the ecclesiastical bread—blessed on the Feast of St. Nicholas and **Candelaria**—are mixed with saliva and pounded **mayana** leaves. This mixture is wrapped in a cloth and placed on the abdomen. If this mixture is applied to the forehead, pulse, temples and base of skull it is called **tawal**.

The roots of the **marbas**, **pahauli** and **escobang mayawis** trees are mixed with the root of **salong** (sap of **balngan** tree) which is placed in a cloth and applied to the stomach. The medicines are used every time the pain is felt.

### 4. Treatment for **buyag**.

The leaves of the **buyo** vine and the fruit of the **bunga** (betel nut) and **apog** (lime) trees are chewed by the healer while he recites a prayer. The mixture is then applied to the part of the body which is afflicted. There are other ways of treating **buyag**, like the **bolo-bolo**.

### 5. Treatment for **paktol**.

Leaves of the **pahauli**, **balalanti** and **lagnanam** trees are placed on the forehead of the patient and tied in place. The roots of the **badbaran**, **sulbaran**, **sulbad**, **badbad**, **mangungkong**, and **kulo-kulo** trees are shredded and mixed. They are wrapped in a thin transparent cloth and placed on

<sup>44</sup> Christum (coming from the word Christus) . . . (Christ); Yurum, Yusom has no translation or equivalent words in English; Malignum (coming from the word malignus) = evil person.

<sup>45</sup> The water has been mixed with ashes and was used after the ashes had settled on the bottom of the container.



the abdomen. They are changed daily. **Palina** is also applied (sumpa and round type).

#### 6. Treatment for barang.

A branch of a **bunga** tree, roots of the **tuba-tuba sa isda** bush and the **tubli** vine and a cigar butt are mixed and placed in a cloth which is applied to the stomach. This is kept in place until all the **barang** are dead and discharged. The medicine is changed if the roots dry up.

#### 7. Bolo-bolo<sup>46</sup>—Treatment of illness due to the **ingkanto**.

The **mananambal** places five stones of the **mutya sa salawaki** (like a fossil of a **salawaki** or sea urchin), **bato balane sa yuta** (natural magnet), and three other stones said to be given by the Virgin of Fatima during a dream. In half a glass of water, using a bamboo tube,<sup>47</sup> about one foot long and one-half inch in diameter, the **mananambal** blows into the water while he recites this prayer:

**Christus, Pactus et pro nobis**  
**Aubidines, Auskim, Lantim, Lantim, Lantim**  
**Crusis.**<sup>48</sup>

The glass is passed over the afflicted area, moving back and forth while the **mananambal** repeats the prayer three times. The water becomes turbid and objects<sup>49</sup> come into the water. The treatment is continued on different days until the water becomes clear.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> This kind of treatment was experienced by a researcher with a very popular **mambolo-bolo** who is always called out of town to practice the art. The researcher developed some itchiness which she thought was caused by ticks. The researcher noticed that a piece of coral protruded from the **mambolo-bolo's** clenched right fist. The researcher at first thought that the piece of coral was part of the paraphernalia but later changed her mind when the piece of coral appeared after the glass was passed around her body. She noticed later that the **mambolo-bolo's** right hand was empty.

<sup>47</sup> A tube made out of bronze was used by a **mambolo-bolo** from the mountains.

<sup>48</sup> Christus . . . (Christ); Pactus . . . (no translation); et pro nobis . . . (and for us); aubidines, auskim and lantim . . . (no translation); crucis . . . (of the cross).

<sup>49</sup> Objects like pieces of stone or coral, rotten meat, worms, insects, bird's feather, small bits of newspaper.

<sup>50</sup> In another instance, a **mambolo-bolo** asked a researcher—participant to hold a small bulky purse on her chest. Although the **mambolo-bolo** allowed the researcher—participant to inspect and ask about the materials used, he grabbed the small purse immediately when the **bolo-bolo** was over.



8. A **diwata** or offering to the evil spirits is often given in connection with the cures for illnesses due to evil spirits.

This usually consists of a whole white chicken cooked without spices, salt, tobacco (cigar), **tuba**,<sup>51</sup> eggs, wine, betel nut, cooked rice and sometimes smoked fish. At times money is given, poetry is recited and some dancing done. This offering may also be used as a preventive measure if it is given before activities are begun and, if the signs are favorable, then work commences.

#### IX. Effects of the Practices and Beliefs in Folk-Medicine on the Lives of the People

The beliefs and practices in folk-medicine in this report seem to have a direct effect upon the lives of many of the people in Siquijor. The beliefs in sorcery and evil spirits and the illnesses which they are seen to cause affect not only the health and medical condition found on Siquijor Island but also the economic development, the social relationships between the people and religious practices of some of the people. There are, of course, many who do not believe in the folk stories, or in the evil spirits, or in the ability of the sorcerers to make a person sick, or in the ability of a folk healer to cure people. But a majority of our sample do believe in these things and their lives are affected by their beliefs. Ninety-two out of 133 respondents believe sorcery exists on the island; 97 indicated that people were afraid of it and a majority said people should take precaution against it.

As was previously alluded to, the belief in the causes of illness tend to determine whether a person consults a folk practitioner or a medical doctor. Natural illness though treated by folk-healers in some cases, is most often seen to be in the sphere of the medical doctors. The patients usually consult either a **mananambal** or a medical doctor depending upon what they think their illness is, whether it is supernatural or natural in origin. However, in some instances patients consulted both the **mananambal** and medical doctor simultaneously, "just to be sure." Thirteen of the respondents indicated a belief that most illnesses and deaths in Siquijor were due to sorcery, 11 indicated evil spirits were the major cause, 32 said it was God's will, but most felt the causes were natural in origin. This belief then corresponds to the fact that more people are going to medical doctors. If the people do go to the **mananambal**

<sup>51</sup> It is a fermented juice from the flower of the coconut tree. Lieban, *op cit.*, p. 22.



it is to determine if the cause is natural or not; and if it is, some folk-healers then send the patient to the Rural Health Doctor.

It also might be mentioned here that the poverty of the people often encourages people to use the folk healers. The cost of a **mananambal** is often as low as 20 centavos or nothing at all; whereas if a person goes to a doctor he has to be ready to pay the medical fees of ₱1.00 or more, as well as the cost of medicine.

Beliefs in sorcery and evil spirits were seen by 80 of the 133 informants as a hindrance to economic change. In one case, a respondent stated that up to one-fourth of the land of some people is not cultivated due to fear of the evil spirits who inhabit the particular section of land. Some farmers will not use new techniques for fear of antagonizing the spirits and 85 of the respondents indicated that offerings were given to appease evil spirits. One PACD Officer-in-Charge related an experience where about 30 per cent of the workers on a project for a water intake tank at a certain spring were unwilling to work until a **diwata** had been made and the spirit appeased. This was done and the project was very successful. In most cases the expense of a **diwata** is not excessive, but if done frequently or by those with little income it can become an economic drain.

Social relationships are also affected by the fear the people have of the sorcerers. As the main causes of becoming a victim of sorcery are land disputes and personal quarrels, the people tend to avoid these things and thus remain innocent. There is a trend toward using the courts and trusting the public officials rather than resorting to sorcery; however, the expense and delays in court proceedings, the bribing of judges and/or the desire for injury or death of others might lead some to still resort to sorcery.

A fear of evil spirits also tends to reinforce the social mores of the people. As mentioned before, the children are often threatened with punishment by evil spirits if they don't behave, and one respondent stated that, "if people don't live according to the ways set down in the folk stories, he can become a victim of sorcery or evil spirits." If viewed in light of social conduct the beliefs in sorcery and evil spirits serve as a form of social control on the lives of the people.

What is the correlation between folk beliefs and practices and religion? There seems to be a good deal of connection between folk-medicine and religious feasts, saints and customs in the area. The in-



gredients for medicines are often gathered during the Holy Week and the Lenten Season (Seven Fridays before Good Friday). The candles blessed on Easter Sunday, the petals of the flowers thrown by children at the statue of the Virgin Mary during Holy Week<sup>52</sup> and scrapings from the **Santo Intierro** (Dead Christ) are sometimes mixed with medicines.<sup>53</sup> Incense and scrapings from the altar stone or tabernacle in the church are also often included.

Perhaps the greatest relationship between the beliefs and practices in folk-medicine and religion is found in the fact that in every case the healers interviewed believed their powers and instruction and sometimes medicines come from saints or God. There is a large amount of interweaving of religious beliefs and practices in folk-medicine, just as there is a high level of interspersing of folk beliefs and practices in religion. Thus, as is evident, the beliefs and practices found in this study of folk-medicine affect the lives of the people. This effect, of course, depends upon the amount of belief the people themselves have in these beliefs and practices.

#### X. Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, the part that folk practitioners play in the community is revealing. First, folk practitioners meet the need for low cost and convenient "medical service." For instance, there are only two medical doctors in San Juan whose services are severely limited by poor means of transportation. Second, the **mananambal**, **mananabang**, **herbolario**, and **manghihilot** are considered friends of the people who try in some way to help them in sickness, injury, or death. Thus, it is easy to see why the public officials are not anxious to initiate legal action against folk practitioners for illegal practice of medicine. Besides, it would be difficult to obtain persons to testify against folk healers. And finally, the folk healers often give explanation to natural occurrences which the people cannot understand. It is much easier for illiterate people to understand the activities of evil spirits based on folklore than it is for them to comprehend scientific explanation about sanitation, germs, and disease.

Efforts are being made by the government through the rural health centers and the school system to combat and straighten out beliefs on

<sup>52</sup> It is interesting to note that many people grab the decorations of carriages carrying icons during processions.

<sup>53</sup> The **mananambal** have to be satisfied with candle drippings from the carriages because the **Santo Intierro** is encased in glass and is well guarded.



the causes of disease which are now based on ignorance and superstition. It seems that these efforts are beginning to be productive as a majority of people interviewed indicated that natural elements cause disease and that they go to a medical doctor first when illness occurs.

Another aspect that should be mentioned here is the economic development of the area. What hinders economic development is not sorcery but belief in evil spirits. Clinging to traditions and beliefs of the past hold true to agriculture. Even if farmers practice the new methods of planting, they still perform some appeasement rituals before and after planting; the so-called haunted places are no longer tilled.

Perhaps as the income and educational levels of the people in the area improve and adequate medical facilities became available, the people's reliance on folk healers will decrease. This can only be determined by another study of the area after a lapse of a number of years.<sup>54</sup> A projection of this type is justifiable in view of the findings of our survey that there is a lower percentage of belief in the powers of the supernatural by the young. It seems that it is mainly the older generation that seek the help of folk healers, make offerings to evil spirits and perceive the spirits.

<sup>54</sup> There was no intention of making a depth study. This, the researchers recognized as a limitation. Therefore, they would encourage further research in depth.