

**Phase II Documentation of Philippine Traditional Knowledge and Practices on Health and
Development of Traditional Knowledge Digital Library on Health for Selected
Ethnolinguistic Groups: The SUBANEN people of Salambuyan, Lapuyan, Zamboanga del
Sur**

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Summary

An ethnopharmacological study of the Subanen was conducted from May 2012 to May 2013. The one-year study included documentation primarily of the indigenous healing practices and ethnopharmacological knowledge of the Subanen. The ethnohistorical background of the tribe was also included in the study. The study covered the Barangay Salambuyan, Zamboanga del Norte.

A total of 132 plants and 3 other natural products, 7 traditional healers and 3 focus group discussions in the community were documented. Documentation employed the use of prepared ethnopharmacological templates which include: medicinal plants and other natural products, herbarial compendium of selected medicinal plants, local terminology of condition and treatments, rituals and practices, and traditional healer's templates. Immersion in the community was the primary method employed. Interview and participant-observation, and forest visits were utilized to gather data. Focus group discussions were also done as a form of data validation. Formalized informed consent for this study was asked from National Commission of Indigenous People, barangay officials, and from different key individuals prior to the documentation and collection of medicinal plants.

1 Introduction

The University of the Philippines Manila, through the National Institutes of Health – Institute of Herbal Medicine and College of Medicine (Department of Pharmacology) has an ongoing study on the documentation of the traditional knowledge on health and health practices of selected Philippine ethnolinguistic groups. This was supported by the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development and the University of the Philippines Manila.

In 2012 to 2013 an ethno-pharmacological study on the three sites of the Subanen tribes of the Zamboanga Peninsula was conducted by a research team from the University of the Philippines Manila in collaboration with the Western Mindanao State University through the College of Science and Math Dean’s Office. The project was subsidized by the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development and the Institute of Herbal Medicine.

Background and significance

The Philippines is one of the richest countries in terms of culture diversity, as well as of biodiversity. There are 110 indigenous communities and more than 170 ethnolinguistic groups in the country. Among these are the Subanens of the Zamboanga Peninsula which is the subject of our contention. They form part of the Lumad Group of Mindanao.

Mindoro groups	Palawan groups	Lumad	Muslim groups
➤ Alangan	➤ Batak	➤ Subanen	➤ Maranao
➤ Bangon	➤ Cuyonon	➤ Manobo	➤ Maguindanao
➤ Buhid	➤ Tagbanwa	➤ Mandaya	➤ Yakan
➤ Hanunuo	➤ Palawano	➤ B'laan	➤ Tausug
➤ Iraya		➤ T'boli	➤ Sama
➤ Tadyawan		➤ Hignon	➤ Jama Mapun
➤ Tau-Buid		➤ Teduray	
➤ Ratagnon			

Table 1. A list of some Philippine ethnolinguistic groups

Each indigenous or local community possesses a unique body of traditional knowledge and practices which have been developed throughout centuries of use and passed down to succeeding generations. This information base continuously evolves, adapting to changes in a community's culture and environment. It also includes the peoples' wealth of knowledge in health and healing. The communities, characteristically living in the mountains or their fringes, have depended mostly on plants and other natural products from the forest to prevent or treat sickness. But environmental degradation and the onslaught of lowland mainstream cultures now threaten their healing traditions.

The culture of wealth of the people is inextricably tied to the rich biodiversity of their ancestral lands.

The loss of biodiversity to rampant logging, mining, and other environmental atrocities undoubtedly has an immense impact on the cultural wealth of our indigenous peoples and local communities. Lifestyle change as a result of displacement from their ancestral domains and lack of supportive mechanisms to pass on knowledge are leading to the discontinuance of their traditional healing practices.

A systematic and comprehensive endeavor to assist communities in documenting and upholding their healing traditions may be valuable in confronting this situation. The documentation previously done is not enough to cover the breadth and depth of the immense body of Philippine traditional knowledge and practices in health.

Another threat faced by indigenous and local communities is bio-piracy or the misappropriation of their knowledge and resources. In 1985, the estimated market value of plant-based medicines sold in developed countries already reaches \$43 billion but less than 1 percent of the profits were returned to the knowledge owners. Pharmaceutical, food, and cosmetic industries benefit from the wealth of their knowledge and environment yet only a few have acted upon the loss of the traditional knowledge, practices, and biological resources of the communities. Facilitating community documentation may then be a method to uphold the rights of the knowledge-owners as they are able to manage gathered data and assert their right to free and prior informed consent, proper acknowledgement, and equitable sharing of benefits in the utilization of their knowledge.

In this project, communities who will be trained in documenting their knowledge and practices may opt to:

- a) Keep gathered data within the community.
- b) Share selected data with a research institution with set mechanisms to protect community owned knowledge, this data will not be disclosed without prior informed consent of the community, and/or
- c) Share selected information which may be publicly disclosed and inputted in a Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL), similar to the TKDL model of India.

This national electronic database is a modern method of protecting our cultural heritage as old and new documentation on traditional knowledge in health are gathered and encoded into a digital format. Should traditional knowledge accessed in the TKDL be used for further scientific studies, the individual or agency will be linked to the knowledge – owner community to whom they should secure free and prior informed consent. Eventual product development shall call for discussion and agreements on appropriate access and equitable benefit-sharing.

The digital library will also provide currently available information gathered from previous work by other researchers and scholars. Selected information from available literature on early ethno botanical studies, mostly done by American and Filipino scholars, as well as traditional healing knowledge from old lexicographic and linguistic documentation of Spanish writers may be included.

This undertaking shall involve many institutions.

A memorandum of understanding among the cooperating institutions is being finalized. The set of duties of each institution, including technical and financial contributions, is defined in the MOU.

To be able to cover the different ethno-linguistic groups across the country, partnerships with regional agencies will be formed. Individuals from the institutions will be trained to facilitate the documentation and protection of the communities' health knowledge and practices.

A pilot study funded by the PCHRD has been completed. From this pilot study in an Ayta community in Quezon Province, we were able to develop data-gathering instruments. The prototype research protocol and data-gathering instruments will be openly shared to groups interested in this undertaking.

Objectives

Pre-documentation Stage

1. To identify and select ethno-linguistic groups and study communities based on established criteria
2. To identify and link up with research partners in the different regions
3. To orient and train project team in facilitating participatory research
4. To conduct consensus building with communities and integrate their recommendations
5. To prepare the research agreement and obtain Free and Prior Informed Consent
6. To prepare the database design of the digital library

Documentation Stage

1. To facilitate in building the communities' capacity for research
2. To document with the communities their traditional knowledge and practices in health
3. To collect herbarium specimen together with the communities, with their consent
4. To assist in developing mechanisms for protection of the community's traditional knowledge, practices and biological resources
5. To monitor project implementation and ensure that researchers abide by the Code of Ethics

Post-documentation stage

1. To assess and validate with the communities the gathered data
2. To select with the community information which may be inputted in the digital library

3. To prepare a hard copy of the documentation and herbarium collection with and for the communities and if applicable, to the regional research partner
4. To develop culture-sensitive health education materials with and for the communities
5. To evaluate the project with the community
6. To establish gene bank in the communities, research partner in the region, and in UP Los Baños, with the community's permission
7. To centralized data for the national digital library
8. To implement the database design of the digital library
9. To establish measures for appropriate access to traditional knowledge and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of the said knowledge
10. To promote communities' rights to their traditional knowledge, practices and resources
11. To promote the use of relevant information/use of the digital library to the indigenous and local communities, local health NGOs, local environment advocates, local cultural workers, the scientific community, and policy makers

Methodology

Site selection

The Zamboanga Peninsula was the identified area of study which is where the Subanen tribe resides. Three areas were selected based on the distinct differences in the dialect each group speaks and the distinct practices that each follows as a result of spatial differences. There are those coming from the Western coast of Zamboanga City, or the Subanons of **Malayal**, Sibuco, the central Subanons of **Mandih** in Sindangan Zamboanga del Norte as well as those coming from the eastern part or the Subanens of **Lapuyan**, in Zamboanga del Sur. These communities all possess the following basic requisites:

1. a reputation for indigenous healing practices as evidenced by the presence of traditional healers.
2. Richness of the biodiversity of the ancestral domain of the people.
3. Willingness and capacity of the community to participate.
4. Presence of peace and order in the community.

For purposes of this write-up, only the Subanen of Barangay Salambuyan of the Municipality of Lapuyan, Zamboanga del Sur is considered in this book which is the first of the three areas selected.

Selection of key informants

Preliminary Phase



Figure 1. Picture of the researchers with the regional director of the NCIP, IX

Approval and access considerations

This stage involved meetings with the National Commission for Indigenous People for the Free and prior Informed consent to be granted in order for the study to commence. Also, several courtesy calls to barangay officials, school heads, purok leaders and known relatives and neighbours of healers. It strategized to pinpoint the most knowledgeable, trusted, local Subanen who speaks the dialect and is educated. For Zamboanga City, given the language barriers, one has to be multi-lingual especially where Chavacano, Bisaya, tagalog and English is concerned. Other basic considerations include his or her:

1. position in the community
2. knowledge of the residence of and personal acquaintance with the healers
3. availability during the time of the research study

4. willingness to serve even for a short period of time
5. ability to work in a team with diverse culture and attitude

After repeated search, by the process of addition and elimination, talking to housewives, by-standers and barangay kagawads, informants were identified following the criteria set. The informants were actually active in traditional healing. Some informants like the elders and housewives or family caregivers were themselves interviewed about traditional medicine. There were thirteen (11) informants interviewed, six (7) of which are healers.

Data gathering

The research used the qualitative purposeful sampling method where the researchers intentionally selected individuals and sites to learn and understand the central phenomenon on the traditional knowledge and healing practices of the Subanen of Lapuyan. It involved casual conversation, life history and life-cycle interview, key informant (participant) interview, semi-structured interview, ethno-genealogy, questionnaire, observation, focus group interview, elicitation techniques where researchers use scrapbooks to elicit the names of plants and uses, audio or visual recording, such as camera recording, spatial mapping to record ways why data varies, such as in groups and institutions. The most commonly applied of all is fieldwork.

Fieldwork

In this setting, the researchers collected data by spending time at the participants' sites where they live, work and do leisure activities.



Figure 2. An interview with Mr. Francis Duhaylungsod, an incharge of the Department of Tourism (left); the house where the researchers lives

To understand best the patterns of the Subanen's culture, the researcher-ethnographer spent considerable time with the group. The patterns were not easily discerned through questionnaires or brief encounters. Instead, the ethnographer went "to the field" – lives with or frequently visits the Subanen being studied and slowly learned the cultural ways in which the participants behave or think.

The researchers used interview guide questions for the ethnography of the study area; local name of a plant, its use/s, plant part/s used method of preparation, and direction for application.

Collection of specimens

Preparation of materials for plant collection and preservation

Materials like Manila paper and wooden pressers were made ready for purposes of collection, segregation, lay-outing and classification and transport to the laboratory and the museum for validation of scientific nomenclature and description.

Review of literature

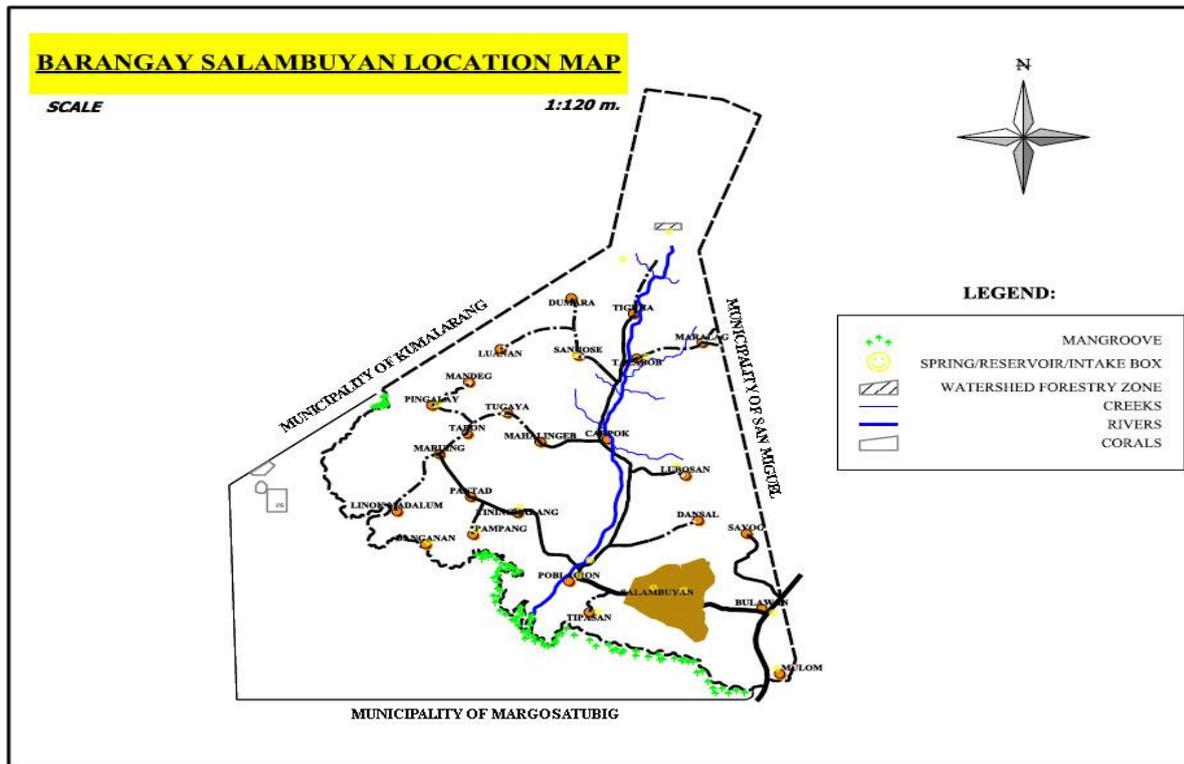
From the journal written by Janie Grace H. Hapalla (2002), The term "Subanen" is derived from the word "*suba*" meaning "river", "mouth of the river", or "upstream". Subanens generally refer to themselves as a whole as the *gbansa Subanen*, meaning "the Subanen nation". They distinguish themselves from each other by their roots or point of origin. These are based on names of rivers, lakes, mountains, or locations. Therefore you are *getaw dibaloy* if you are from the other side of the river, *getaw dibaba* if you are from downstream. You are also *getaw tasan* if you are from a place quite far. Prior to the naming of municipalities, the people were either *getaw Dumenghilas*, those from around Dumangkilas Bay and the Dumankilas River, *getaw Sibuguey*, those from around Sibuguey River and Sibuguey Bay, or *getaw Belengasan*, from around Balangasan River (now Pagadian), or *getaw Thebed* , those coming from the river of Thebed (Labangan). You will also hear *getaw Sindangan*, for those coming from around the Sindangan River, *getaw Ranaw*, referring to the Subanens of Lakewood and *getaw Melindang*, referring to those from Mt. malindang, Misamis Occidental. "Getaw" means "people" or "people of". The dialects differ in words pronunciation, although in some instances the words may take on different meanings. For example, the "h" in *Mahalambas* is pronounced as a "k" in *Makalambas* by the people of Lakewood.

The farther away geographically they are from each other, the less likely for them to understand each other. Thus the Subanen spoken in Siayan, Zamboanga del Norte cannot be understood by those from Lapuyan, Margosatubig, and the rest of Baganian Peninsula are nearly identical (Hapalla, 2002).

Another factor is the influence of other dominant linguistic groups. The Subanon of Malayal, Sibuco (Zamboanga del Norte) and Labuan, Patalon, and the surrounding areas in Zamboanga City are influenced by the Zamboangueno language (Chavacano) because of the close proximity to Zamboanga City. The Subanon of the Baliguian and Siocon, and the Subanen of Sindangan, Malindang, and Zamboanga del Sur are influenced by Cebuano (Hapalla, 2002).

The Subanen of Malayal, Sibuco, Siocon and Bakalan differ from the Subanen of Sindangan, Tuboy, Salug, Manukan, Siayan, There is yet another dialect spoken in the Mt. Malindang aream Tambulig and Dumingag. Still another is the Dumalinao, Lakewood, Sibugay dialect, which is in use in the Lapuyan-Margosatubig-Dinas and the Buug-Kabasalan areas (Hapalla, 2002).

Figure 5. Map Showing the Location of Barangay Salambuyan



According to the 2013 census, the community is composed of 206 houses made mostly of light materials, with a population of one thousand sixty two (1,062) residents where five hundred twenty three (523) are males and five hundred thirty nine (539) are females. Majority (70%-80%) of the residents speak in vernacular while the remaining twenty percent (20%) understand Subanen but converse in Visayan dialect.

Access to the area

To reach Salambuyan, one has to take a one (1) hour and a half (1/2) ride either by single motorcycle or habal-habal built to sustain travel in a very rocky road such as the first 8 kilometres towards the center of Salambuyan.

Before a stranger can engage with any locals, a good visit like a courtesy call to the officials of the municipality especially the mayor is equated to respect and literally access. In this visit, the intent of the researchers is articulated and the latter has to wait for the go signal from the powers that be. The moment clearance is given, it goes without saying that access to key informants are practically granted. It is here where negotiated data are spelled out like the information that the participant and the researcher agree to use in the study. Here agreements are made regarding entry procedures to the research sites, mutually respecting individuals at the site and developing a plan for giving back or reciprocating with the individuals.

Climate

During the months of September to April, Salambuyan experiences **pheres** (dry season) and it experiences **dlebok** (rainy/wet season) on the months of May to August.

Some local terms related to weather include: rain (dupi), thunder (dlogon), lightning (bethek delalak), hot (minit), bagyo (badyu), baha (bah), rain shower (theliti), ulan-init (phosilaw), and linog (dlinog).

3 Historical perspective of Lapuyan and Salambuyan

Lapuyan comes from the Subanen word *dlepuyan* or *pegepuyan* which means a place for cooking. During hunting season, it was said that hunters would cook their food and take a nap on the river bank of *Thubig- gepuyan*, which led to the name of Lapuyan River.

The place was visited by foreigners who made and left significant impacts on the village. In 1904, it was visited by General Leonard Wood who was the governor of the Moro Province. The place was also visited by Emerson Brewer Christie, an American ethnologist.

The ancestors of the Subanen in Lapuyan also experienced wars and migrations with the Moros of the past centuries. But any form of harm has been thwarted by the powerful *thimuays* under the leadership of Thimuay Mbeng.



Figure 6. Timuay Langhap Lantoy L. Imbing, a descendant of Thimuay Mbeng

As for the name of Salambuyan, an American (called by the Subanen as *Kasila*) who came from Dinas, Zamboanga del Norte was met by a Subanen and each time the Subanen would say "**Shalam**" which meant "shake hands. The *Kasila* asked the name of the place while pointing to the plants. The Subanen answered, "**Sibuyan**", thinking that the *Kasila* was asking for the name of the plants which were the Sibuyan. The *Kasila* combined **Shalam**' and **Sibuyan** which led to the present name.

Religion

According to Kimberly Apatan, Christianity was introduced to Lapuyan in 1912 and by 1928 was received as the religion of the tribe through the pronouncement of the tribal leader Datu Lemok Imbing.



Figure 7. Datu Lemok Imbing, a Subanen chieftain who in 1928 pronounced Alliance as the religion of the tribe

It is written in past studies (Apatan, 2012) that the Spaniards never invaded Lapuyan. Accordingly, the first missionaries to visit the village of Thimuay Mbeng, the highest official of the tribe during the olden days, were Rev. David Lund and his wife Hulda Lund. In 1914, another missionary arrived by the name of Rev. Samuel DeWitt Lommasson who stayed for three decades with the tribe. He is responsible for the conversion of residents to the Alliance religion.

Education

Before the opening of public schools among the Subanens, the young girls were trained to weave clothes and the young boys were trained by the fathers to weave baskets and other handicraft made of wood and rattan. Some boys were trained to be blacksmiths to make farm implements and weapons such as spears and bolos (Imbing, 2002).

With the coming of American missionaries in 1912, the great majority of Subanens, especially the Subanen of Lapuyan, accepted Christianity, which spread to all the Subanens in the Zamboanga Peninsula. With the opening of the public school in Lapuyan, Zamboanga del Sur in 1919, many of the Subanens went to school and their lifestyle had greatly improved. Today, there are many professional Subanens here and abroad (Imbing, 2002).



Figure 8. Salambuyan Elementary School celebrates their 15th Closing Ceremony with their dear Barangay Captain, Hon. Alvin Galanan (second from the right)

Language

According to the journal written by Hapalla (2002), the Subanen language has several dialects. Although some linguists may differ, I would submit that there are three separate languages: (1) the Subanon spoken by the people of Malayal, Sibuco, Zamboanga del Norte and Bakalan, Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay, (2) the Subanun spoken by the Tuboy-Siayan, Zamboanga del Norte and the surrounding area, and (3) the Subanen spoken in Lapuyan-Margosatubig, Zamboanga del Sur. Lapuyan Subanen has six-vowel language.

It has twenty two consonants. Unique to the language is the aspirated *p*, *k*, *t* and *s*, which are not found in other Philippine languages. Initial consonant clusters are present, which are noun and adjective markers.

Another feature worth mentioning is the presence of noun classifiers, a feature characteristic of Indonesian languages. An example is the word *lad*, which goes with a numeral and a noun. With the use of the word *lad*, you are given the signal that the following noun should have the feature of being flat, as in paper (Hapalla, 2002).

It is assumed that once upon a time there was only one language, but through the course of time, the language developed into dialects. They split into the “o” and the “e” (the /*schwa*/). Thus the people from Siocon and Malayal of Zamboanga del Norte have the tendency to sound the “e”, as for example in, “Subanon” for “Subanen” (Hapalla, 2002).

4 Material culture

Food

Rice

The Subanen of Salambuyan, like other tribes, eats rice as their principal food. Some buy rice from the stores nearby their houses. Also, they obtain this staple food from stores of Poblacion and of Bulawan. Some acquire rice from Pagadian City. Others with rice field obtain their food after harvesting.

Practices associated with rice planting to reduce worm infestation include the use of stalks of *biga* and trunks of *pitogo*, *dlih*, and *totula*. These stalks and trunks are piled along the four corners surrounding the rice field.

Root crops

In the absence of rice, they settle themselves for root crops like sweet potato (*ghubi*), gabi (*gabi*), cassava (*bhenggala*), and *ghelot*. These crops are usually boiled after being collected, except for *ghelot*.

Ghelot is a vine with thorny stem and rough leaves. It has lots of storage roots which can be an alternative for rice. They gather, clean, and slice the roots to smaller sizes. They add salt while crushing the roots with their hands. For a big basin of roots, a kilogram of salt is needed. They put the roots in a sack before bringing to the river. At the river, they crush the roots using their feet. Then, they lay and leave the sack in a portion of the river where water is not too abundant and secure it with a stone. On the third day, they mash the roots by their feet and they squeeze the crushed roots to get rid of the juice. They then cook it with coconut milk and sugar.



Figure 9. Herbal plant **ghelot** (*Dioscorea hispida* Dennt.) which the Subanen also use as a substitute for rice

Vegetable

The Subanen are fond of eating vegetables to stay healthy and fit. Some of which are the stalk and leaves of gabi (**gabi**), malunggay (**kamonggay**), eggplant (**thelong**), ampalaya (**puliya**), squash (**bhebasal**), sweet camote shoot (**ghekbos ghubi**), white squash (**dlabo**), and patola (**tikwa**).



Figure 10. Some of the vegetables eaten by the Subanen, sweet camote shoot (*ghekbos ghubi*) on the left and malunggay (*kamonggay*) on the right

Seafood

The usual marine products they consume are fish (*sera*), shrimps (*gulang*), and squids (*khenoos*). They eat this seafood purely or mixed with vegetables.

Foods for special occasions

Phetanod or Baptismal

The Baptismal Rite is considered a sacred practice among the members of the tribe. It is usually scheduled at the time of infancy of the child but is also being performed for grown-up members especially in cases of religious conversions. The host family serves different kinds of viands out of pork, lechon baboy, rice, cake, and soft drinks. They can serve lesser or as much as these food depending on their desire and budget.

Gbla-i (bla-i) or Wedding

The union between man and wife is an occasion of great joy and pride. The community celebrates together with the families of the groom and the bride. A Wedding banquet is not complete without the usual Pangalay or Wedding Dance that is performed during the ceremony involving only the couple.

After the ceremony, they enjoy the banquet having viands like meat balls, lechon manok, lechon baboy with a boiled egg in its mouth, whole chicken tinola (*tinibok manok*); rice; pasta like spaghetti and macaroni salad; dessert like cake and soft drinks. This is in contrast with the Subanen long ago who had only lechon baboy "*tenola baboy*", whole chicken tinola "*tinibok manok*", rice, and *gasi* or the rice wine.

Wake and Interment

During a wake, biscuits, breads, biko, suman, coffee are served to the relatives and friends while telling stories and playing cards.

After the burial, types of viands out of pork and rice are served to the relatives and visitors who accompanied the family on the deceased's last and final destination.

Clothing

Dlahu Subanen (Subanen dress), *dlahu maguindanao* (Maguindanao dress) and tapis as the lower dress were their clothing during special events. *Dlahu Subanen* (silk upper dress) and tapis made of *phulaw* or woven abaca fiber were worn by women in the historic days. Other types of dresses were *ginulong*, *shininah* (a dress like the Chinese dress) and *dlahu getaw melindang*. At this time, these clothing can be seen worn by a Subanen during cultural shows or special occasions. The upper garments of the male is called *paleheb* which is color black while for female is called *ginulong and shininah*. The clothes are embroidered with symbols: butterfly for female and eagle for male. Other portions of the cloth are decorated with hemming symbolic of nature such as flowers, mountain and river. These garments are paired with black *trousers* for male and *phulaw*, a skirt made of abaca fiber for female. Subanens are known to work in the fields or by river so both female and male wear a colourful handkerchief on their heads as a protection from the sun. *Thulapok* is the term for male handkerchief which is worn as a head gear in a triangular shape while *therung* is used by female that is simply wrapped around their head to keep their ears from showing.



Figure 11. Subanen children wearing their Subanen costume

According to Timuay Sacheuz I. Bayamban, the symbol to be embroidered on one's dress can be chosen by him or it depends on the imagination of the *mhemenie*, the one who embroiders. The symbol of an eagle wing is a design of Datu Lemok Imbing wherein the head is the head of the person wearing the garment.

Houses

Mostly, it is the sole responsibility of the male to build their house. Past Subanen houses greatly varies from the houses of today. Olden day's houses are very simple- with no distinct divisions for a living room, dining room, and bed room. Unlike these days, some of them have houses that are divided into specified rooms and they use imported or different materials.

The houses of the olden days and of the present significantly differ on the materials they use to build it. Gone were the stem of rattan (*guway*) used for putting and tying together the parts of a house, the *ghenaya* which made up their wall, bamboo or coconut timber as their floor and stairs, and the *gegi* which was the main material for their roof. The Subanen of today uses nails to put up houses, bamboo or wood for their walls and stairs, and nipa leaves or galvanized sheets for their roof.



Figure 12. A typical Subanen house

Music

Nowadays according to Racquel b. Georsua (2002), the Subanen keep alive a traditional, indigenous music culture as they continue to perform their traditional practices, rituals, and celebrations. They use music in varying forms during rituals and celebration.

She also added that the celebrations are essentially events where both young and old show off their talents and release their energies and inhibitions (as they are known to be a shy people) as they join in the different performances, competitions, and games. All the members of the community attend in their finest attire and bring their own musical instruments and dance paraphernalia, such as the shield (*dlasag*), dried rattan leaves (*kumpas*), and kerchief (*monsala*).

Moreover, she said that it is a family unit which initiates and sponsors any of these religious and social gatherings, which are the occasions for the use of music. The family thus plays a critical role in the passing on of the music culture. Musical ensembles, for the most part, are usually made up of members of one family and musical learning takes place within the family. Even before children learn to talk and walk, training of young family members in singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments already starts at home by means of their listening to and imitating their elder's music.

Physical instruments and paraphernalia used in the practices, rituals, and celebrations are from the natural resources of the community, such as bamboo, wood, animal skin, sea shells, beeswax, coconut shells, leaves and stones.

This is also true in the case of musical instruments. The regular or irregular repetitive rhythm of the gongs, bamboo zither (*segitan, thambobok*), wooden-slit drum or mortar (*kinlesung, dlesung* or *lulugan*), bamboo and wooden shakers and clappers (*buhahay* and *taha-taha*)- all produce sounds that recall nature and the Subanen environment (Georsua, 2002).

Agricultural activities could also figure in Subanen music. For example, the shaking and clicking sounds of agricultural sound-producing dibbles- such as the *orok, taha-taha*, and *buhahay* as well as the short lines they adopt from the brisk and lively melody of the epic Gambatuto- all synchronize (*sagab-sagab*) the snappy movements of boring and filling holes for planting. Thus, workers are inspired and entertained while working (Georsua, 2002).

Subanen music is highly patterned, regular and redundant, yielding stable structures which identify, correspond to or otherwise reinforce the core structures of their society, and represent patterns of interpersonal relationships which are fundamental in their various forms of social organization (Georsua, 2002).

Subanen music consists of vocal and instrumental music that are performed separately on specific occasions. The two media are never combined: vocal music is always unaccompanied, while instrumental music is danced but never sung (Georsua, 2002).

Vocal music is divided into ritual and non-ritual. Ritual songs involve communication with the supernatural through the chanting of prayers, invocations, incantations, and supplications to the spirits, whom the Subanen believe control their lives and destinies. Non-ritual songs on the other hand are purely for entertainments that enable the singer to express his or her feelings in a relatively free and improvisatory manner (Georsua, 2002).

Lastly, music is used in the tradition of their almost lost art of abaca-weaving, which provides total picture of the high levels of Subanen craftsmanship and intelligence, and which particularly demonstrates the role of women in Subanen culture- with their very strong sense of power, authorship and command of their rich forest sources. To entertain themselves while weaving, the women sing epics, myths, and legends, engage each other in verbal duelling songs, riddles, and rhymes; others play solo instruments while resting (Georsua, 2002).

Instruments

Khotet, kuhbing, tanggab, tumpong, gbasal, gagung, khutapi, and **tangheb** were the instruments used by the Subanen long time ago. **Khotet** is a two-stringed instrument with a body which is made either from the skin of puffer fish, devil fish, monitor lizard, or snake. **Kuhbing**, on the other hand, is made of bamboo which was used by lovers to deliver coded messages. **Tangheb** is like a drum which is hollow and wooden covered by skin of animals.



Figure 13. Musical Instruments Used by the Subanen of Lapuyan

Until now, **gagung** (gong) is an instrument being used by the Subanen for several occasions. The **gbebelu** beat is used when a family or household is in distress, like when attacked by enemies, the passing away of a loved one or when a member is ill. It is also used during funerals or when a member has difficulty breathing, the gathering of close relatives and community leaders, or every break of dawn and every coming of dusk. Another beat is called **thawag-thawag** which is used when the thimuay calls for a meeting or consultation with the residents. The beat differs depending on whether it is a religious ceremony or a healing ritual.

Arts

The Subanen used to weave abaca locally called as **phulaw** for belts which the local residents call **kandit**. Included in this section are the figurines, hats, **shelayan** or the swinging platform, mascara, **gbeban**, **nigo**, **bhelanan** (a basket made up of nito, rattan, and bamboo), **delos** (basket-like structure which is square-shaped at the bottom which made up of the same material as in making mats), and **dlebonyot (delos)** with strings from false rattan for carrying).



Figure 14. A swinging platform called *shelayan* (left), *dlebondyot* (upper right), and figurines (lower right)

Dances

Subanens have three distinct dances. These are the *sot*, *thelak*, and *pangalay*,

- *Sot* – a dance performed by a male with a *dlasag*, a long shield
- *Thelak*- this is executed by female with two curled and cimped rattan
- *Pangalay*- a courtship dance of Subanen



Figure 15 Glimpse of courtship dance

There are different dances that can be formed by either *sot* or *thelak* like *sot/thelak di pheyayapan* (worship dance), *sot di pagbunwan* (a dance using spear, for offense and defense), and *sot/thelak di khinlesong* (a dance in a *khinlesong*, a thanksgiving festival).

Songs

Subanen has different types of songs, which are the following:

- ***Bombong***- lullaby
- ***Gbayuk***- love song
- ***Pathedil*** and ***diena***- debate songs of children
- ***D'lonli***- adult song of Subanen
- ***Diamatan***- singing games
- ***Gabenaben***- song of nature

During programs and activities, the Subanen sang the national anthem using their dialect.

**DLUPA DLELAMEN
(Lupang Hinirang)**

**Dlupa Dlelamen, Muntya a di shilangan;
Shamaya name, dlelamen di palin
Dlupa melengas, gbenwa nu nga gembelo
Di hepegbuno, ndai khendehanan.**

**Su dagat muha su gbentud, su dlangit muha su nga gyup;
Su he sindag bu bantay mu mesige su helonen en
Mba petasen su phandi, ghilelanan di hepagen mu
Su nga gbitun, muha gendaw, mesiba l phalas en.**

**Dlupa matalisan, dlupa phadlelamen;
Melengas thandeng l ngalan mu,
Shapa name mba' dun medlat dini-a;
Sampay hepatay nyawa begay name.**

5 Economic status

Subanen mainly rely on farming and kaingin as their main source of income and food. They usually plant rice, corn, sweet potato, gabi, banana, cassava, and fruit trees. They also plant coconut trees. They sell their yields to earn a living and they also get their food from it. They have their own land “*baul*” where they plant. Despite of having their own lands, they are facing economic instability because of fluctuating prices of crops.



Figure 16. A farmer preparing his insecticides for his rice field

6 Justice system

The tribal leaders are also the government officials. They are the voice of their community during the making of policy for their betterment. Guhom's influence is still recognized in the community although there is a big difference between the status of guhom of yesteryears and today. During the past, all the guhom would gather on a place whether there is a case or not. On the other hand, the guhom nowadays only assemble if there is a case. The tribe still seek the aid of guhom for solving problems. Conflicts first routed to the tribal court. If it cannot be settled there, it would be brought to the barangays or a higher court.

Social institution

Marriage

According to Hapalla (20012), the Subanen are generally monogamous, but both polygyny and polyandry are permitted. Divorce is allowed but incestuous relationship is not tolerated. But when two couple is related, the male should give *gellet* (payment for breaking blood relations between the couple).

Traditionally, marriages may happen according to different cases:

- a. **Gembay-** by mutual consent of the contracting parties. The man asks the hand of the woman for marriage.
- b. **Gumbay-** the man desires the marriage and asks for the woman's hand.
- c. **Dlusud-** a case wherein the man wants to marry the woman, but either the woman or her parents is/are against the marriage. The man will go to the house of the woman and will not leave unless he is allowed to marry the latter.
- d. **Guli'-** the woman forces a man to marry her and will declare that she will not leave until a marriage will take place.
- e. **Thangag-** a case where a man and a woman elopes.
- f. **Pegbya-an-** arranged marriage by the parents and is against the will by either or both man and woman.

Nowadays, Subanen wedding happens in the church. They recognized church wedding is sacred and formal. However, Subanen in Lapuyan still practices tribal wedding but with alterations. According to Kimberly Apatan, in the 21st century, *bina* (pamalaye and/or marital engagement) is still commonly adhered in Lapuyan, although some modification is already apparent. It no longer observes the traditional singing, wearing of tribal dress, and long settlement of both party. *Bina* is consummated with the performance of *dega* (blood sacrifice). The couple is now free to cohabit and be recognized by the community as husband and wife even before the day of *gbla-i* or wedding.

In *bina*, a long, tiresome process is required. The man's family and the *guhom* of his community meet the girl's to negotiate. When the agreement is clear to both parties, the man can now prepare the banquet. The man's side arrives at 8 o'clock in the morning to prepare for the celebration at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

Polygamy

It was written by Apatan (2012) that polygamy was practiced by the wealthy Subanen in Lapuyan. Having several wives and children serves as the basis for the status symbol of a man, especially for a thimuay. This would serve as basis if he could be capable of handling his men properly. By having a good relationship among his household, he said to be a good leader for his tribe

Presently, polygamy (a state where a man have more than one wife at the same time) was abolished by Alliance church and tribal laws. But as part of the tradition, polygynous still exists with the approval of the *guhom*. In the case of polygyny, the first wife has the highest status among the family. Although the husband provides different rooms for the wives, the wives treat each other as sisters and help each other on household chores and nurse each other when sick. In Lapuyan, the common form of polygyny is sororal where a man's wives are blood related, either as sisters or cousins.

Also, a woman having more than one husband or polyandry was also a Subanen practice but is very rare today. Formerly, when two men, either brothers or best of friends, who were economically incapable, could agree to marry one woman and they must share the dowry as well as the burden of earning a living. This kind of polyandry is the fraternal type where the husbands are brothers.

Accordingly, polyandry exists because of the following reasons:

- a. **Economic reason-** the husband is unable to provide the needs of his family, so he will bless the desire of his relative to be the other man. The first husband could not leave his wife because of the children.
- b. **Sexual needs-** the husband can no longer grant the sexual needs of his wife
- c. **Offspring-** the husband is not capable to give a child and will make an agreement to his relative to give his wife a child or children

Divorce

If a husband and wife desire for divorce, the case will be headed by a thimuay through a verbal agreement. If the wife is the one who wishes for a separation, she will pay "**tholak**" in which the amount depends on the thimuay. If her husband wants her to stay with him, he doubles the "**tholak**". The thimuay will then advice the wife to be with her husband for the sake of their child/ children. The money they paid will not be given back to them but will be divided by the thimuay and give to his members.

Otherwise, if the husband would not pay, that only means that he agrees for a divorce. The thimuay will then decide if he will divide their children. If so, only male/s will stay with the mother and female/s with the father. There are also instances that the child will decide to whom they want to stay with.

The grounds for divorce are:

1. Either the husband or the wife hasn't fulfilled his/her duty as a husband/ wife or as a father/ mother to their children;
2. Lack of household stuffs necessary for everyday living;
3. Going anywhere, as if unmarried;
4. Vices; and
5. Spending money for unessential things like mah-jong, playing cards, cock and horse fighting

If the two remained unmarried and wishes to have each other again, the thimuay will decide and this will be agreed upon verbally. Presently, agreements are made through papers.

Death and burial

If a thimuay, *gbelyan*, or higher officials died, a *gagung* in a beat called *bhebulo* is played as an announcement. But if an ordinary Subanen died, there is no playing of *gagung*.

Historically, Subanen do not have coffins out of wood. They have their *phelapag* which is made out up of *dlih*. A withered banana leaf must be placed in one of the underarm of the deceased. The corpse wrapped with a white cloth would then be laid down in a mat placed in the *phelapag* with a metal vertically in line with his spinal column. This will be covered by a covering also made from *dlih*. The withered banana leaf and the metal is their way of preserving the cadaver and the burial can last up to 3-4 night. They wanted to preserve their corpse because some of the relatives live at a great distance. A failure to inform relative/s leads to an offense called *selaan* which will be filed against and will be paid by the immediate family of the dead. A demand of killing a pig is also possible.

In contrast, nowadays dead body is placed in a coffin made up of wood and the body can last up to 15 nights because of formalin which is a clear aqueous solution of formaldehyde containing a small amount of methanol used mainly as preservative.

Widow/widower

A widow or a widower could marry after 1 year. During the olden days, a widower can marry again after he has performed a *dlumpok*. Before *dlumpok*, 7 days from the date of death, he must spend for a buffet. In *dlumpok*, the widower ought to disburse a lot for a feast-like event and should cement the tomb of his wife. After doing so, he can now ask the permission of the parents of his wife to re-marry. The parents cannot say no if he has already done the *dlumpok*. If he could not stand his obligation during *dlumpok*, he can't be able to marry again, or else, he would pay an amount depending on the timuay. This is an offense called *bhenganan minatay*.

Leisure

During their free time, past Subanens are fond of playing and put a bet on "*sipha*" (a ball made from rattan), "*kheles*" (finger wrestling), "*thomba*" (arm wrestling) and "*mag binti*" (leg wrestling). Instead of money, they put their "*dleriya karaan*" (antique bowl) and/or "*bhendi*" (jar) as their bet.

At the present time, Subanen are engage on technologies like cellular phones, computers, televisions, and radio as their "*bhelang-bhelangan*" (libangan in Tagalog) Some plays basketball, and childrens play hide and seek and patintero.

7 Beliefs and practices (Hapalla, 2002)

Subanens believe in a Supreme Being called *Diwata Migbebeya'*. He is the Unseen and the Creator of everything. They also believe in a guardian spirit called *Medlengaw*. There are gods other than these, like for example the god of the *gbeklug*, whose name people will not mention without first putting their hands on top of the head as a sign of reverence and will never mentioned at night. There are diwata. They are worshipped in fear and reverence. Usually the worship goes with the moon, from the new moon to the full moon. There is a dancing and the calling of the spirits through the beating of the gongs and porcelain plates, as well as the burning of incense.

Gods give wisdom and knowledge. They reveal herbal medicines through dreams. In séances, the gods will reveal themselves and the *gmuntya'* is given. *Gmuntya'* are stones or calcified objects which are believed to have special powers that will affect the mind of an individual. This is either given to a person by another human being or by the gods or spirits.

There are all kinds of *gmuntya'*. There is the *gmuntya'* that will make one attractive to the opposite sex, one that will make a person intelligent, one that will have the power to overcome one's power to free one from all dangers. Another that will give the power to overcome one's enemies even causing their sickness or death, one that will assure good harvest, one that will make another person to become tongue-tied. Each stone has a specific power. It is not surprising then that you will hear some people carry with them several stones tied in a red cloth. Sometimes they are tied around the waistline or carried in their pockets. Once a year they will soak this in blood. Nowadays, it is the blood of a chicken. In ancient times, it was human blood.

Anybody may have the good fortune of being gifted with a *gmuntya'*. But if one misuses these, the spirits or gods may take these away. These may work for one's downfall and will bring sickness or bad luck.

The shaman or *gbelyan* is believed to have communication or access to the spirit-world. He heals the sick. He has access to knowledge. If he owns a *gbisu*, you cannot talk about him at night because his *gbisu* will hear you and tell him about it. The *gbisu* is an unseen being, visible only to a particular *gbelyan*.

The *gbelyan* is known to have in his care spirits that are referred to as *gayep*. These may take on the shapes of dogs, cats, or persons. There are as many *gayep* as there are *gbelyan*. Some are more powerful than the others. *Gbelyan* tests each other's power by what they call *sidduran gbulung*, where the one who gets sick first is believed to be the weaker.

Subanen believes in the existence of another world not seen by the natural eye. They are occupied by beings. Some are good, some are not. They inhabit trees such as balete tree, or rocks, or an area called *gmesena dlupa'*. There are the *gmenamad*, *gmenamand-talun*, *shumerep* (club-footed beings). They pinch you and you can hear their shouts in the evening or at dusk, especially when they decide to fish or hunt for seashells.

The *gmemenwa and shamayahan* are like human beings. They fall in love with humans and choose to make themselves visible if they want to. They live on dry land. Their houses are seen by the humans as trees and rocks. Those that live in the rivers or seas are *gmelengma'*. They have the ability to seduce humans. Other spirits and beings, which take the shape of humans, giants, dogs, cattle, horses and cats, are believed to exist also. They need to be appeased all the time. These are different from the gods which are called *diwata*.

Belief in the gods and spirits makes the Subanen god-fearing. There is a great respect for the other and for nature. The early morning and the afternoon mist are signs that Mother Earth is nursing the ground while the *Diwata Migbebeya* is busy watching over His Creation.

Gbeklug

According to Apatan (2012), a *gbeklug* falls under the same pattern of prestigious feasts practiced in different parts of the country. It is a series of agricultural ritual on the seventh year and during this long period two *gbeklug* structures are built.

From a journal (2002) written by Dr. Vicente Imbing, *gbeklug* has several types. *Gbeklug manganawa* is held for the healing of the ill. *Gbeklug pelento* is performed in the memory of a deceased chief. *Gbeklug denion* is a feast for the final burial of the dead. *Gbeklug* preparation take years to prepare the materials needed and to ask permission to the unseen elements where the *gbeklug* will be held. The festivity will last for 7 days, all Subanen will participate and this is considered as merry making or holidays. The people will do nothing except to drink, eat and chat all day. The feast must delight the spirits in order to avoid the people fighting each other or turn into stone. Bayamban added *gbeklug petaongang* is performed with two dancing platforms.

It takes a minimum of one year to prepare for a *becklog menonot*. As the final date of the *becklog* approaches, several rituals associated with the farming practices of people are performed.

Preparation starts with the observation of the positioning of the stars. When the cluster of the stars called *polu-polu* is directly overhead in the middle of the sunset sky, then the first ritual is performed. This usually takes place during the month of January and during the full moon. This ritual is called the *canu bitun*. It starts with the finding a place where they could farm. When they find a spot that is suited for farming, they put on that particular area a Subanen cross called *shelansang*. Beside the *shelansang* is palced a small plate which contains some *talon* (betel leaves) and *maan* (betel nut), as peace offering to the spirits asking them for consent to farm in the area. A white wood called *noti* is then placed on the trunk of a big tree that is within the area. If the white wood still remains on the same spot after a couple of days, then this is the sign that the spirits allow them to farm in the area.

After finding the right place to farm, upon obtaining the consent of the spirits, they then start clearing the area to make it ready for the planting season. They clear the area during the months of January and February, and allow the vegetation to dry up in March and April.

The burning of the dried leaves and the final clearing is done during the months of April and May.

Another ritual is performed during the planting season. It is called **pagebek**. This is done by stabbing a pig with a spear and then allowing the wounded animal to run around and shed its blood all over the field. After a while, the animal is killed using sharp poles (called *gerék*), which are used to bore holes on the ground where *palay* (rice) seeds are planted.

The third ritual is the **menoyak**. This is performed when the rice is green. They put the *shelensang* and split bamboos on the sides and corners of the farm. This is meant to block the entry of bad spirits called *mengagaw*.

The fourth ritual is **kinlesong**. This is a very lively celebration, especially among the young people. This is done when they harvest the half ripe *pulot* (glutinous rice, also called *malagkit*), which is toasted and then pounded into *penipi* (similar to pop rice). There is a night of dancing to the sound of gongs as well as the mortar and pestle. Some of the men and women dance in pairs while the other sing or eat *penipi*.

The fifth ritual is the **kang begu**. This is the time to eat the first newly-harvested rice. Pigs or chicken are butchered, the number depending on how many neighbours are coming to join the ceremonies. They also eat the newly-harvested rice with ginger and boiled eggs. A boiled egg is opened; if it is full, then it is believed that there will be another year of good harvest. For its part, the ginger is a symbol of continued prosperity and blessings, because even if the ginger is dry, it is still hot. The farm implements, such as the bolo and axe, are smeared cooked newly-harvested rice so that these could also be part of the ritual.

The sixth ritual is known to be the *pheluhob*. This ritual lasts for three days. Here the clean carcass of a pig is hung somewhere in the middle of the house where there are jars of *gasi* (rice wine). The ceremonies begin with an offering of food to the departed loved ones and officials. During this time, clothes are also hung on a line; this is called the *canu meluasan*. The belief is that before the spirits partake of the food, they would change their clothes. At the end of the three-day ceremony, the head of the pig is usually given to the leader or *thimuay* who will prepare the next *pheluhob*.

The Becklog Menonot

The seventh is the final and the greatest festival of all, the *becklog menonot*. It is considered as the final one because it carries with it all the minor rituals. This usually takes place in the month of December or January, when everyone is carefree and not busy with farm work. It lasts for seven days. To feed the community and visitors from other villages, several pigs, cattle and chicken would be butchered. To prepare for this festivity, many jars of *gasi* (rice wine) must be obtained, as well as least fifty pigs, twenty cattle, and a hundred chickens.

They also gather several rattan poles and special wood called *dlebalod*, which is pliant wood and does not easily snap. These will be used to construct dancing platform about twenty square meters in size.

This platform has eight round posts, each about eight to ten inches in diameter and made of another kind of wood called *bahan*. It is constructed in such a way that it can move up and down. The flooring of the platform is made of bamboo poles partially split, spread flat, and tied with rattan to the *dlebalod*. In the center of the swinging platform is a pestle. On the ground underneath the swinging platform is a mortar which is suspended on rattan. Right underneath the mortar and buried in a hole on the ground is a jar with a wide mouth. As people start dancing on the platform, the platform goes up and down. The pestle strikes the mortar (called *dlesong*) and produces a deep sound. The dancers move in such a way as to produce a rhythmic beating of the pestle on the mortar. The mortar is made of a special wood called *bayog*, which is intended only for *becklog*; the pestle is also made of a special wood called *manangola*.

One of the eight posts that hold up the dancing platform, particularly the one nearest the entrance of the platform, is the most important. It is called the *ginghuran tumayam*. This is the post where all kinds of ritual charms are applied. It is considered the throne of the presiding spirit of the big festivity. This post is always lighted throughout the festivities with a *sulo*, a splint from the forest.

The opening ceremony is called *getaen*. This is similar to our modern day ribbon-cutting ceremony. This involves the cutting of a strip of rattan by the *thimuay* (chief leader) who is sponsoring the *becklog*. Then, the *gbelyan* (shaman-priest) would go first on the platform and sing or chant a prayer inviting the spirits from on high to join the celebration. This prayer or invocation, when done by men, is called *megiloy*; but if a woman is the one singing it, it is called *memuati*. A rattan strip is stretched over every path leading to the place and *shelensang* are placed to block the entrance of bad spirits who might destroy the ceremonies or turn everything and everyone into stone (called *beloyen*). The *gbelyan incharge* of the *becklog* should always be on the lookout for unusual happenings. The gong and *gendingan* should also be continuously sounded to keep the people awake and alert.

In the opening ceremonies, elderly people are then the first ones to dance on the swinging platform, together with the *thimuay* and *gbelyan*. They dance by forming a circle around the pestle (called the *phetaw*). The first and opening dance must be solemn. The succeeding dances are open to all. Usually, it is done in a manner where the innermost circle is made up of strong men, who would attempt toppling down one another. The second circle is formed by young men and women who would dance with grace or who would hum while dancing. The third and outermost circle is formed by children who are dancing on the platform of a *becklog* for the first time in their lives.

The dancing would continue day and night, and everyone is free to stop to eat anytime to feel hungry. People would take turns dancing on the platform. Young men and women would get acquainted and in many cases become partners in life.

After three days of dancing, the next ritual is performed. This is called the *getas lati*. It is performed in removing some of the wood on the platform and cutting partially some of the rattan so that the structure will weaken and start to collapse. Then the dancing would continue until the seventh day, which is the closing of the festivities.

The ritual performed during the closing ceremonies is called *dlabudon*. This is done by dropping all the leaves (called *don*) used in wrapping the rice eaten during the seven days of feeding people. This announces to all the people that the festivity of mass feeding and dancing is over.

The structure of *becklog* remains standing and strong enough to hold people for dancing. Once in a while people from different places would come for merry-making and dance on the platform until it collapses or destroyed. This is left to collapse naturally. There is a belief that there are also spirits who come and dance on the platform until it is completely demolished.

In exceptional cases, such as when the sponsor is wealthy enough, the preparations take very long. For example, the six preparatory rituals are celebrated one each year for six years. During this time, they begin raising pigs, chicken, and cattle; they will also prepare several jars of *gasi* rice wine. Then on the seventh year, the *becklog menonot* is finally celebrated. Two dancing platforms will then be constructed, one on the eastern side of the house and the other on the western side. This latter one (called the *becklog phetoangan*) is where the people would be dancing. The festivity will last for a month. During the festivity, the sponsor would show his gratitude to *Diwata Migbebeya* for the showers of blessings received not only by feeding generously his guests but also by feeding the ants, the fish in the rivers, the birds in the forest in a ritual called *medlumang*



Figure 17. A picture of a 5-year old **Gbeklug** structure located at Poblacion, Lapuyan, Zamboanga del Sur taken last March 2013

8 Knowledge and practices on health

Concepts of health and illness

The Subanen people use the term *mesiba* (healthy), one is healthy when he is *mesiba dlawesin* (body is in good state) and *mhetaburo* (fat). A person is considered *melon mesiten* (ill) when he is *mhelubey dlawesin* (body is weak). *Mhelubey* is a term used for seriously ill person and described them as *phegetosen* where the person is having 50-50 chance of survival. *Phegetos* means dying person wherein he is in the state of *mhelengen hegene* (difficulty in breathing). One is dead when he is *mhengetusan gina* (stops breathing). Other terms they use are *ghemay* (rice), *shaging* (banana), *mais* (corn) and *ghubi* (sweet potato).

Causes of illness and death

- *Shinsala* (witch) - this are person who used black magic to cause illness to other people.
- *Shaetan* (unseen elements) – this are spirits leave in the forest and inflict illness when accidentally hit by human being
- *Maya-maya* (dwarf)- there are bad dwarves that will make fun to a man and can cause diseases to the latter if they are badly hurt even because of their own doings
- *Ghepod kora*- this is a half man- half horse creature which will eat humans even they are unharmed.

Other causes

Some illness like cough and cold are due to changing weather. Some are sick or died because of *saled* (hilo), age, man's lifestyle, and witchcraft.

Lumay (Potion)

At present, the use of *lumay* or potion is rarely practiced. Only few Subanen are doing these without even knowing the exact words used to add power on the potion. Accordingly, there are five (5) types of *lumay*:

- *Kalibagud*- this potion is said to have an effect to an angry person
- *Phugay*- this is the love potion
- *Kalimo*- a kind of *lumay* used to agree on a request

- **Phensalay**- this *lumay* is used for people to like a person
- **Panantoy**- a potion used in hunting wild animals and in fishing

Saled (Hilo)

Saled or poison is a practice to make someone ill or die. This is still exercised today, not only by older people but by younger ones who are around their 20's or 30's. **Mensaled**, the one who practiced **saled** has reasons in doing this to others. Maybe he doesn't want to be stepped upon or he doesn't want others to be ahead of him in terms of wealth, wisdom, or even in physical appearance. In the point of view of some, **saled** is also a way of defending one's self from enemies or possible allies. But even it's a form of defense, the use of **saled** is not advisable and is very frightening.

Accordingly, those **mensaleds** of Lapuyan today, came from the mountainous area of the municipality, no religious affiliations, or have a very little faith on the Creator.

People who believe in **saled**, be it a Subanen or not, take precautionary measures by carrying a small bottle with *lana* (coconut oil) mixed with part/s of certain plants. This *lana* protects them from being harmed by a **mensaled**. One can know if a **mensaled** is nearby because the *lana* boils and hence overflow from the pocket.



Figure18. Left, a bottle of *lana* which has a defensive power against *saled*. It is usually placed in the pocket to have a direct contact with the person using it, right.

Local terminology of conditions and treatments used by Subanen of Salambuyan

1. Pagan-Chills, headache, fever, weak body and body pain are experience. Carrying heavy things and washing clothes after giving birth is the said cause of this condition. This can be diagnosed through observation. Mhendeklepot, dlelupang, abaka, dila-rila, dolamon, dlebok and decoction of shelapid and mhendeklepot are used as remedies.

2. Pigis-Sudden illness, stomach ache, and back pain are felt by the patient. The caused of *pigis* is "lamig" and accident contact with unseen elements from the forest. This can be diagnosed through observation. The herbal plants that can be used to treat *pigis* are Dila-rila, thalon, thepalak gulangan and bayabas.

3. Himughat-It is because of doing household chores after giving birth or after a recovery from illness. This condition can be recognized through observation. Selimbangon (black) is used to treat himughat.

4. Gunossonos (Pasma-kaon)- Patient experience pain in the pit of the stomach, frequent vomiting, and headache. In this state it is due to not taking meals on time and can be recognize through observation. The management used is kakaw.

5. Kabuhi-The patient is nauseous. Not taking meals on time is one of the caused. This can be diagnosed through observation. Kakaw and gulo-ulo is used to treat kabuhi.

6. Panuhot-Feet get cold, feels something different and the patient will not recover if he could not fart. Eating different foods and taking meals not on time are the caused of *panuhot*. This can be recognized through observation. Thalon leaves are used as a treatment.

7. Migebasan shiheg or Migelaan Shiheg (Pasma sa kusog)- Varicose veins, the body is weak and loss of weight are felt by the patient. Wash the body after doing work or after a long walk and this can be diagnose through observation. Dluya and dlebulan are used as a treatment to this condition.

Knowledge and practices on pregnancy and giving birth

To avoid natural abortion, the fetus inside the womb must be in place through *hilot*. The pregnant woman should also not carry things to prevent abortion. There is a natural *pampakapit* used by the *panday tiyan* (traditional hilot) of Salambuyan. It is placed on the waist of the woman and is worn as a belt for 3 nights.

There are old stuffs that they still believe and practice nowadays. One of it is *pag lihi*. There are several types of *senanan* (lihi) to make pregnancy and delivery easy. One is to swallow seeds of a certain plant on the first month of pregnancy. This is done so that the baby inside the womb will remain small so that the mother will give birth easily. They also have a *lihi* to make the abdomen look small even it is already 6-9 months old which is done during her 1st month of pregnancy. Another is a *senanan* (lihi) to stay strong and fit. And even a day after the delivery, she can do household chores like washing clothes and fetching water.

During pregnancy, she must not eat plenty rice so that the baby would not grow in her womb which will cause difficulty in giving birth. Fruits, specifically watery fruits are good for her to eat except those itchy ones.

She must not do heavy works so that there would be no complications. She must exercise for an easy delivery. She should also seek the aid of a ***panday tiyan*** in maintaining the right position of her fetus inside.



Figure 19. A ***panday tiyan*** rubbing a liniment made of different types of herbal plants on the abdomen of a 9 month pregnant woman

At the time of craving, feeling nauseated and vomiting for a number of weeks or months is considered normal. But, this can be prevented or reduced to just days or only a week of this unwanted feelings by rubbing the disgorged matter on the stomach 3x and in a downward direction.

During the first 3 months of pregnancy, one can determine the gender of the fetus inside. If it positions itself at the left, it is a boy. On the other hand, if it positions on the right, it is a girl. This belief is said to be true and proven for many mothers.

Giving birth at the house is now prohibited. She should deliver her baby at the center or at the hospital. Failure to obey this rule means a penalty with a certain cost.

Abortion

It is rare that hilots attend to unwanted pregnancies. The Subanen performs abortion only if it is really necessary as in the case of a life and death situation. Healers admit that there are several species whose roots are good as abortifacient. However this is strictly prohibited as it is a cause for great sin to be committed.

Female Puberty and Menstruation

For a girl's first menstruation, a **senanan** (lihi) must be performed. She must put a white orchid flower on a glass of water and she must drink and wash her face every morning with it. In taking a bath, she must also put this flower and an egg on the water she will use. She must continually perform this for 3 days. This is a belief for her to stay beautiful and have fair and fine-looking skin. Also, she must drink the dews from a gabi leaf so that she could not experience metrorrhagia, an irregular uterine bleeding especially between menstrual period and her monthlies will only last for 3 days. These **senanan** (lihi) must be done for a regular menstruation.

Eating sour foods before and during menstruation must be avoided because it may impede the flow of blood and will cause dysmenorrhea.

9 Traditional healers of Salambuyan



EMITA ANDAGAO

Emita Andagao was born on the 20th of September 1965. She is presently 47 years old and is a mother of eight children who she said she gave birth to on her own, being a hilot herself without much difficulty. She inherited the knowledge of taking care of a pregnant woman and assisting in child deliveries from her mother who likewise inherited it from her ancestors. She gives herbal medicines for *shenanan* (lihi), relapse, prevention and cure and for ease of delivery, as well as share information to those who seeks her help. Since home delivery is strictly prohibited at present, her assistance is sought by the pregnant at the health center or hospital during the latter's labor pains and actual delivery. Aside from being a hilot, Emita also does body massage to those who seek her help especially those known to suffer from epigastric pain and abdominal discomfort which the locals describe as *panuhot* and *kararak* (kabuhi).



MARLITA CODION

Marlita is a resident of Purok Wani, Salambuyan. She is a 50 year-old trained hilot who gained her wisdom from seminars she has attended. She has been given this chance as a result of her constant assistance whenever certain complaints are referred to the center. Her 30 years experience of using medicinal plants has helped in various medical emergencies that the communities consider as usual complaints such as cough, fever and pains.



DALMACIO HUMPA SR.

Dalmacio Humpa Sr. is a father of two children and a grandfather of 3. He luckily married a good and affectionate wife, Violeta, who come from a family of healers. As the breadwinner of the family, he engages himself in operating power saw which provide the needs of her loved ones.

Through the teachings of his father, Dalmacio, he likewise became an *albularyo* or herbalist and is active for the last 25 years up to the present. Accordingly, being a healer is not that easy. Though you like to help and cure an ill person, looking and getting the needed plants are quite difficult especially if a certain plant can only be found in a very secluded place. There are plants that are guarded by spirits in the form of animals. He had an experience wherein he was able to sleep while waiting for a snake to move away from the plant he intended to get. He also experienced being scolded by his forefather in a dream because he had unwittingly revealed to the researchers the name of the plants but failed to warn them not to uproot any without asking the permission from the owners which are unseen.



The researchers at dalmacio's house which served as the researchers' home for a month.

It was in Dalmacio's house where the researchers lived for one month. It was here where the latter witnessed how Dalmacio obtained a part of or uproot a plant. He prays silently and buries a 25 centavo coin where the plant is situated and then gets the needed part/s. He believed that through this practice, his respect to the owner is shown and the disease will be cured.



CLARITA S. ANDUS

Clarita S. Andus is a resident of Purok Dumensit of Barangay Salambuyan. She came into this world in the year 1948 during the 31th day of December. She married a Subanon from Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte and sired 5 children. She is 64 years old, now a widow and a farmer who tends to her kaingin. She became known as an herbalist when ever residents get well from a snake bite. She claims to have delivered many children and her role as a birth attendant is untarnished in the last 30 years. She makes decoctions of different herbal plants as liniment to treat sprains, *panuhot* and *kararak* (kabuhi) which are proven to be effective. She also prepares a decoction of coconut oil and parts of selected plants as cure for patients who are poisoned by their fellow Lapuyanans.



JAMES M. LUSAY

James M. Lusay is an 80 year old farmer. He is happily living in with his wife Marina and some of his 7 children. He fixes bones of sprained patients and cure people with herbal medications for 70 years. He got his healing knowledge from his grandfather and he shared this to selected locals of Salambuyan.

ROMULO A. DUMIAL

Romulo was born on February 15, 1951. He is a farmer and a believer of Roman Catholic. With his wife Anita and 9 children, he combats the challenges in life by means of farming. Romulo is a gbelyan(a shaman priest) for 40 years and he shares that becoming a gbelyan is never through experience but through inheritance.

MAX T. LIWASAG

Max was born on the 8th of October of the year 1933. He is a resident of Purok Nangka of Salambuyan. He is a farmer and has his rice field as the surroundings of his house. His wife Anghelita delivered Max's children, a boy and a girl. Max is a gbelyan for 40 years. Just like other shaman priest, he does his obligation dutifully.

10 Materia Medica

This study was able to document a total of 132 plants and 3 natural products used by the Subanen. The common plants used are Malabanos or Guyabano in Filipino and Thalon or Guyabano in Filipino. Malabanos can treat 7 types of diseases like kidney problem, use to lower blood sugar and cancer while Thalon is used to treat 6 types of diseases. In some cases, a mixture of plants is used to cure a particular condition. Decoction is the most common preparation used by the Subanen.

The researcher recorded 39 plants for herbarial compendium of selected medicinal plants used by Subanen. The plants that are included in herbarial compendium are classified as uncollected, unidentified and no common names.

There are 2 noted rituals and practices of the Subanen, *Phengende "Sumpa"* is an example of Subanen practice. It is done to make the mother and baby healthy, to prevent poison inflicted by other person.

For local terminology of conditions and treatments, a total of 7 are noted. *Pagan* is one of the examples of local condition that can be treated by using dlebok, dolamon and dila-rila.

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