

A STUDY OF THE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS AND FAMILY PRACTICES  
OF THE INHABITANTS OF SIARGAO ISLAND

---

A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
University of San Carlos

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Anthropology

44304 C.11  
UNIVERSITY OF SAN CARLOS  
LIBRARY

by  
Jesucita Sodusta  
August 1964

APPROVAL SHEET

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Anthropology, this Thesis entitled: "A STUDY OF THE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS AND FAMILY PRACTICES OF THE INHABITANTS OF SIARGAO ISLAND," has been prepared and submitted by Miss Jesucita Sodusta who is hereby recommended for Oral Examination.

*Marcelino N. Maceda*  
DR. MARCELINO N. MACEDA  
Adviser

ACCEPTED, as Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Anthropology.

RUDOLF RAHMANN, S.V.D.  
Dean, Graduate School

APPROVED by the Tribunal at the Oral Examination with the grade of CUM LAUDE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman

*Lourdes R. Kusumbing*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

*Marcelino N. Maceda*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

Oral Examination conducted in the presence of:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Representative, Bureau of Private Schools

RECEIVED DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

This thesis attached hereto, entitled A STUDY OF THE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS AND FAMILY PRACTICES OF THE INHABITANTS OF SIARGAO ISLAND prepared and submitted by Miss Jesucita Sodusta in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Anthropology, is hereby accepted.

Marciano N. Maceda  
Adviser

---

Censor

---

Dean

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer wishes to express her profound gratitude to Reverend Rudolf Rahmann, S.V.D., for his helpful recommendations, suggestions, and constant encouragement for a fuller insight into the anthropological problems of this study.

To the following, she is truly grateful:

Dr. Marcelino N. Maceda

Dr. Gertrudes Ang

Dr. Lourdes R. Quisumbing

She is also grateful to the University of San Carlos for allowing her to make extensive use of the library.

A word of thanks is due the people of Siargao Island about whom the writer's major work has been carried out, specially to Reverend William Gerats, parish priest of General Luna, to Mr. and Mrs. Manuel Alforque, who helped her to express clearly the information on the marriage customs and family practices of the island contained in this study.

So many friends and acquaintances have helped the writer at various times and places and to them, acknowledging my indebtedness is a pleasure.

Finally, the writer wants to express her sincere gratitude to her mother without whose financial assistance and personal encouragement the task could never have been completed; and also to her sister and brother for having inspired her towards this achievement.

JESUCITA SODUSTA



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
THE PROBLEM . . . . .	1
Statement of the Problem . . . . .	4
Importance of the Study . . . . .	4
DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED . . . . .	5
Marriage . . . . .	5
Customs . . . . .	5
Siargao Islands . . . . .	6
Bride service . . . . .	6
Gift-giving . . . . .	6
Kinship . . . . .	6
Divorce . . . . .	6
Incest . . . . .	7
Taboo . . . . .	7
Courade . . . . .	7
Bilateral descent . . . . .	8
Culture . . . . .	8
Magic . . . . .	8
SOURCES OF DATA AND METHODS USED . . . . .	9
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY . . . . .	9
ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY . . . . .	10

EFFECTS OF THE LIFE-STYLE SYSTEM

CHAPTER	PAGE
II. PRE-NUPTIAL ARRANGEMENT AND NEGOTIATIONS . .	11
QUALITIES PREFERRED IN A GIRL AND BOY . .	12
FORMS OF MARRIAGES . . . . .	15
Child Betrothal . . . . .	15
Marriage by Elopement . . . . .	18
Marriage Proposal Without Courtship .	19
Love Marriage . . . . .	21
Forms of Courtship . . . . .	23
Love letters . . . . .	24
Love charm . . . . .	25
Serenading . . . . .	26
Nocturnal visits . . . . .	27
MARRIAGE PROPOSAL . . . . .	29
BRIDE PRICE . . . . .	31
BRIDE SERVICE . . . . .	35
BRINGING OF THE BRIDE PRICE TO THE	
GIRL'S HOUSE . . . . .	37
III. NUPTIAL DAY CEREMONIES . . . . .	39
PRE-NUPTIAL OBSERVANCES . . . . .	39
THE WEDDING ATTIRE . . . . .	42
THE MARRIAGE CELEBRATION . . . . .	43
SUPERSTITIONS CONNECTED WITH THE	
MARRIAGE CEREMONY IN SIARGAO . . . . .	45

CHAPTER	PAGE
RECEPTION OF THE BRIDE AND GROOM . . .	46
THE MARRIAGE FEAST . . . . .	48
The Ceremony of Sharing the Same	
Plate or Container . . . . .	49
FORMS OF ENTERTAINMENT . . . . .	50
Wedding Dance of the Bride and Groom	51
Dance of the Parents of the Bride	
and Groom . . . . .	52
DEFERMENT OF CONSUMMATION OF MARRIAGE .	53
THE FETCHING OF THE BRIDE . . . . .	54
IV. DOMESTIC LIFE AND CUSTOMS . . . . .	57
DIVISION OF LABOR . . . . .	57
SEPARATION . . . . .	60
INCEST . . . . .	61
PUBERTY PRACTICES . . . . .	63
Puberty Practices Concerning Girls .	63
Puberty Practices Concerning Boys. .	65
PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH . . . . .	66
Taboos on Pregnancy . . . . .	67
Pre-Natal Care . . . . .	69
Childbirth . . . . .	69
Disposal of Afterbirth . . . . .	71
Disposal of Umbilical Cord . . . . .	71

CHAPTER	PAGE
Post-Natal Ceremony . . . . .	72
Ceremonial Bath . . . . .	73
Naming of the Child . . . . .	74
Weaning . . . . .	76
Discipline and Affection . . . . .	76
SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES CONNECTED WITH THE UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN . . . . .	
CHILDREN . . . . .	77
I. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.	82
B I B L I O G R A P H Y . . . . .	90
A P P E N D I C E S . . . . .	95

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Siargao Island is reached both by air route and by sea. It has valuable forests and is endowed with rich alluvial soil. From an airplane, the island appears like a mass of cauliflowers resplendently bound by mangrove trees which protectively enclose the island from the easterly winds of the Pacific Ocean.

Ecologically, the island, which is composed of seven municipalities, forms a single unit. The area from Sapao, the town at the northernmost part of the island to Dapa, the southernmost, is so narrow that it can be covered in a single exploration. Hence, it is convenient for the purposes of this paper to consider Siargao Island as a unit instead of seven separate municipalities. Some of the municipalities are very new; others are centuries old.<sup>1</sup> Recently, new barrios have been established and settlers from the different parts of the country keep pouring in. Moreover, modern trends enter and diffuse with the customs and traditions of the people, resulting in an almost indistinguishable blending of both.

The population of Siargao as of February 15, 1960,

---

<sup>1</sup>See p. 6.

was 47,701.<sup>2</sup> Increasing in rate annually, there are the Cebuano, Leyteño, Boholano, and Ilocano groups and the natives which constitute the major portion of the population. Despite the many ethnic groups, there is, however, one common language, the Surigueño, which is similar to the language spoken by the people of Surigao (the capital of Surigao del Norte) and differs only in the intonation patterns adopted in the various towns of the island. Like many other languages in the Philippines, the Surigueño dialect does not claim to be unique in the sense that it has withstood linguistic influences, but has, somehow, inconspicuously been sporadically blended with the Spanish language, the lingua franca of the gobernadorcillos and tenientes del barrio since the Spanish colonization in the 16th century.

It may be recalled that as early as 1606, Siargao was already under the ministry of the Recollect Agustinians,<sup>3</sup> and it was constantly scourged and besieged by the

---

<sup>2</sup>Census of the Philippines taken under the direction of the Department of Commerce and Industry in the year 1960. (Manila: Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1960), Vol. I, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>E. H. Blair and J. A. Robertson. The Philippine Islands, 1637-1638. (Cleveland, Ohio: 1903), Vol. XVIII, pp. 174-175.