

PAGAN MAYAOYAO'S DAYS OF OBLIGATION

by *Emilio Natuno*

The many gods and spirits in which my beloved people of Mayaoyao believe not only demand that costly and often ruinous sacrifices are offered to them throughout the year, or that they observe hundreds of taboos, such as those of the "ichac" birds of which I spoke last month, taboos which curtail their liberty and hinder them very much in their daily life, but they impose also some other observances which are at times no less bothersome.

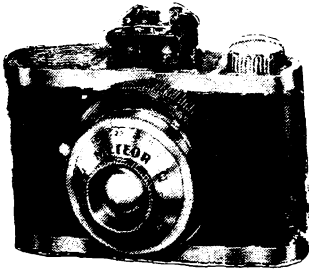
I mean the Mayaoyao's days of obligation called "Ngilin" and "Tungaw". These are appointed by the leading performers of their sacrificial rites; they are even recognized by the local civil authorities, and enforced to a certain extent inasmuch as they may molest those who would venture to transgress their prohibitions.

A "Ngilin" day is usually proclaimed after an earthquake, a heavy thunderstorm or rain. No one then may go to work in the rice fields or in the sweet potato fields. Everybody has to stay at home, lest he would draw upon himself and his family, nay, upon the whole people the wrath of the gods, who certainly, as they believe, would not fail to show their displeasure and anger by causing starvation in one or another way, or else by means of drought, diseases resulting in heavy mortality.

The "Tungaw" is the day that marks the beginning of the Mayaoyao year. It is appointed after the harvest. On the day that precedes it the rice chief, the "manungaw" as he is called, offers a great sacrifice while they store his newly harvested rice bundles in his granary, during which he performs some very special rites in behalf of the whole Mayaoyao community. He invokes the Earthquaker and Thunderer, the "Bunbuni" or Rice gods, the gods of pigs, chickens, fishes, birds, the gods of animal fertility and conjures them to multiply the rice, the chickens, the pigs the children of the people. "Quite an important sacrifice", so they pretend, "for it wins for us protection and welfare".

However, this protection and welfare will be blocked, or interrupted, or turned into evil, if they do not keep faithfully and minutiously all the injunctions imposed by the "tungaw". No one is allowed to prepare his meals on that day, pound his rice, fetch water; he must therefore do his cooking on the eve, as well as his pounding and he may not be too particular about having a good glass of fresh water, for he has to take it from the jar which he had to fill at the spring the day before. Neither may he go out and take a walk and loiter around the houses of those who are not his immediate neighbors. Yet he must go down
(*please turn to page 34*)

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to the river and take a ritual bath with the others, to wash away all possible evils that possibly adhere to his body in a mysterious way.

And you, dear readers, if perchance you should wish to pay us a visit and come to our homes in order to admire the beauty of our rice terraces, you are advised to make sure, beforehand, that the day of your choice be not a tungaw day, lest you would find your way barred and would be obliged to turn round and go back to the place where you started in the morning. You too fall under the obligations of our tungaw day, and should you make an attempt to trespass the sacred boundaries of our villages you certainly would be blamed for having imported together with your ownself a number of evils for the year to come.

From this, dear readers, you will realize how hard it is for all those who have been baptized to live in accordance with the requirements of their faith, and how much the missionaries need your support so that they may be able to go on with their most laudable work in favor of my poor and ignorant people.

—X—

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