KANYAW - CANAO

Strictly speaking, there is no such term as cañao or “kanyaw” as has been popularized by lowland brethren which collectively refers to any ritual dancing by indigenous peoples of the Cordillera.

Let it be said that there are specific terms for each ritual or activity and all rituals of the Cordillera are sacred and oftentimes secret and not intended for public viewing because these are petitions or expressions of worship to the unseen God, the Adi-kaila. Many elders maintain that the God that is called upon in church is the same God they call upon in their rituals.

In most cases, these rituals are tied up with the agricultural cycle particularly for rice, that is, starting from choosing the appropriate seeds, to the sowing, the planting, all the way up to the harvest. Each stage entails particular rituals to protect the plants and ensure a bountiful harvest.

Purposely for this International Learning Styles Conference, what will be performed is akin to a shortened version of the begnas, a thanksgiving feast before the start of the rice planting season which usually lasts for at least five days.

It opens with a parade of the men towards the place where the ritual will be conducted; in the village, this could be held in the dap-ay or the men’s meeting circle. On the way, the men beat their shields with a stick, a part of the ritual known as pakipak wherein the ‘pak-pak-pak’ sound of which along with some yells by the headman is said to drive away malevolents.

Upon reaching the ritual site, they start their libations and prayers over the sacrificial animal, usually a black pig. This is done with rice wine or ‘tapuy.’ The headman may offer an “uggayam,” a sing-song chant stating the petitions and blessings they are specifically asking for.

After the prayers, a wooden stake is driven into the animal’s heart and even the squealing is bound in ritual – the stronger and the longer it is, the better to drive away negatives and hindrances to success.

The animal is then roasted in an open fire and the burned hair is scraped off. While the pig is being burned there could be merriment by dancing the ‘ballangbang’ where five or more men will play the gongs and lead as they dance in a circle.

When the pig is half-cooked, the hairs scraped and the skin surface washed, the carcass is split open to remove the entrails. Particular care is observed specially in taking out the liver and the gall bladder. In a practice called ‘i-pidisan’ the elder or priest will examine whether these are healthy and how these are situated as the positioning could spell good fortune for the people sponsoring or conducting the feast or otherwise. Should there be a bad omen, the elder may ask for another animal sacrifice to ward this off.

If the ‘pedis’ is good, the dancers may again perform the ‘ballangbang’ and the public is encouraged to join in the dancing which would serve as a climax to the feasting. After this, there could be other ritual dances like the “pinanyuan” or kerchief dance among others while partaking of the cooked meat which could be considered as a fitting denouement of the event.* Nathan E. Alcantara

Ref:
http://jlamaria.multiply.com/journal/item/1/KANYAW_CANAO...._No_Such_Animal_by_NATHAN_ALCANTARA