This article refers to the tradition of the natives of Ifugao in the Cordillera Mountain ranges (Philippines) particularly the “Tuwali” tribe for an adult who had died of illness. Persons who have died of violence, drowned or otherwise the death is not due to illness are accorded different specific rituals. Different type of ritual is also given to dead infants and women who had died while giving birth. The burial traditions of early Ifugao have several variations. This is due to the fact that early farming villages are separated by the vast mountain range and rice fields. It is literally the kinship system that keeps a distinct family or clan in one abode or adjacent farming villages. Hence, intermarriages within the village or adjacent villages are not remote. It is further aggravated by warring communities which hampers the free travel to other villages or hamlets without the worry of being harmed or a chance target of headhunting expeditions. This explains also the fact that the “tuwali” dialect alone, not mentioning the other Ifugao tribes, differs in dialect terminologies, jargons and intonations. While there are several variations on how the tradition is practiced, it practically emanated from one ethnological group.

The Ifugaos have a unique way of honoring and attending to their dead. The wake for a young person, it is characterized by wailing, crying and deep mourning. For an older person, it is otherwise different. Ordinary families normally have the three days and two nights wake, whereas the “kadangyan” would have a longer period for the wake depending on the means and capability of the family. Monetary and logistical requirements for the traditional Ifugao wake and burial is even more expensive than doing a present day wedding or marriage feast. During earlier times, it is common to have a three day and two nights wake before the burial in the afternoon of the third day. Today, several traditions from different ethnological cultures had been adopted and incorporated to the old tradition which produces the present day Ifugao culture and tradition for the dead. Notably, some of the old traditions which seems impractical and outdated to the present day is not being practiced anymore. Gone were the days of earlier times when the dead are not embalmed and the strict adherence to the to the last detail on culture is strictly followed to the last detail.

During earlier times, when the “baki” (Pagan rituals) was the requirement of every endeavor, different rituals are performed for every specific purpose. When a family member is sick, pertinent rituals are performed to appease the spirits of the ancestors and deities that is believed to have caused the illness. If and when the desired results are nil, the family performs the “Hongan di mun dogo” aimed in making the sick recover. Said ritual starts immediately in the evening and culminates in the wee hours of the morning. Normally, there would be five or more munbaki (shaman) to perform the ritual which is led by a “munbagol” (native priest of higher order than the ordinary munbaki). Deities in the Ifugao Mythology and spirits of the ancestors of the sick person are called and pleaded to restore the well being of the sick person. If the client is of an old age, the ritual pleads for a
longer life. A minimum of three medium to large sized pigs and are sacrificed during the ritual. The “yab-yab” ritual highlights the “hongan di mundogo” ritual. “Yab-yab” is a “tuwali” word meaning to fan by weaving to and fro an object to create airflow for cooling. “Yab-yab” however is an idiom for giving the blessing to members of the family. The ritual connotes the sick person giving the final blessing to family members before he dies. If done separately, this ritual requires a medium size pig and a matured hen. In the climaxing part of the ritual, the “munbaki” (shaman) stands up holding the dangling chicken by the legs and while chanting the blessings in the “tuwali” dialect, occasionally swings the chicken forward and back to his sides. The shaman simultaneous stomps the feet (I-baltung) on the floor. By instinct, the chicken open up the wings as in to fly. The flapping of the wings symbolizes the blessing being accorded by the sick to the family. The “kadangyan” families sacrifice more pigs than the basic requirement.

Ifugao mythology is the core of the oral traditions (baki) invoked or recited in every “baki” rituals with the exception of the “bukad di a-am-mod” which is the recitation of the genealogy of the client. Two “munbaki”, preferably relatives of the family, are tasked to perform this portion. One of the shamans reciting all the names of dead kins on the paternal side while the other one taking charge of the maternal side of the client. Persons who had recently died and those who have not been accorded the “bogwa” or “tinip-lud” ritual is not included in the name calling. Amazingly, there are still some “mumbaki” who has the memory to recite the genealogy of an individual up to the tenth generation. “Bukad di a-am-mod” is a major and important invocation not only in the “hongan di mundogo” but almost all rituals.

The sick person succumbs. The family inform and summons all members and close relatives. Pounding (mun-bayu) of the un-husked rice grains (pa’-ge’) in the stone mortar (lu’-hung) without let up commences. Animals to be butchered are procured. Work parties to gather firewood (ma-nga-iw) in the forest (muyung)are organized. Other pertinent necessities are prepared. The space underneath the house or “ da-u-lon” is prepared. The “kubi” (chicken coops) and other animal cages are removed from the “dau-lon” and transferred elsewhere. The make shift chair for the dead (hadag), which is basically an H-frame made up of betel nut (areca palm) trunks fasten with the use of rattan thongs (u’we) is constructed in the center of the “da-u-lon”. The “mun-ngilin” or person responsible to supervise the performance of all the rituals for the dead is appointed by the family. The “mun-ngilin” is close relative and a respected "munbaki" himself and must knowledgeable on the genealogy of the deceased. Meanwhile, the dead is bathed and clothed with the native attire, binuh-lan or wano (g-string) for men and ampuyyo (wrapped around loin cloth) for women. While the corpse is being brought down from the house for the wake, older women folks would shout, “naba-ngad moh “adding in a loud voice the name of the deceased. And continuing, “Mibang-ngad kah bale yu na nalagitan” If literally translated into English, means, (name of the deceased) is dead. Return to your old house which is full of soot. The bringing out of the corpse from the house is called “lahun” meaning getting out from a house in the “tuwali” dialect. The “lahun” is the commencement of the wake. Day one is called “boh-wat” from the “Tuwali” word meaning putting up. The corpse is placed in a sitting position in the “hadag” supported by some g-string to let the dead sit upright. The death blanket or “gamong” is draped around the dead. If the dead is accorded a carabao dangli, the family uses the “pinag-pa-gan gamong”, whereas, if the family cannot afford a carabao on this occasion, the “lumtong gamong” is instead used. A spited bamboo node is placed below the chin of the deceased to catch body fluids coming out from the mouth of dead. Body fluids spilled on the ground is sanitized by covering it with soil, sand or powdered charcoal. A small bonfire is maintained near the corpse. Older women folks take turns in sitting near the corpse to drive away flies and insects that come
near. The “Tuwali” call this “mun-wahiwa”. Traditionally, a large sow is butchered as the first sacrificial pig. This is practically so especially if the deceased is an old person. It is butchered in the afternoon. Choice parts of the butchered pig called “bolwa” are sent through an errand to relatives as an invitation and information about the death of the client. At times, the errand shall walk for days on rugged and dangerous terrains just to deliver the chunk of meat (bolwa) to the relatives of the dead. This is basic principle of the Tuwali Kinship system.

The Ifugao natives have a unique way of butchering and preparing the sacrificed pigs. After the animal is immobilized by tying the legs, a slit is made on the throat as an opening for a sharpened stick to be inserted half way towards the internal organs. This enables the pig to be alive and squeaking while the “munbaki” recites his prayers. When the shaman is almost finished, the stick is pushed further until the pig expires. The carcass is carried and place over the fire while simultaneously removing the burned hair until all the hair is gone. The pig is then placed on banana leaves spread on the floor or ground. With a sharp knife, the belly is opened to make way for the intestines and other organs to be pulled out from the rib cage. The bile is examined first by the lead munbaki followed by the rest of the shamans. After the prognosis is announced, the butchered pig is chopped into pieces to serve the purposes. Some choice parts of the pig is allotted to relatives (bolwa). It is however divided through the supervision of the “mun-ngilin”. This is the “bolwa” or distribution of meat to relatives as a sign of kinship. The rest is cut into chunks and with salt to taste and no other ingredients, the meat is plainly boiled. It is served with plain boiled rice to people attending the wake.

The second day of the wake is called “ka’duwa” from the word “duwa” meaning two or second. Another large pig is butchered. The meat is used as food for people gathered for the wake. The third day is called the “katlu” from the tuwali word “ tu-lu”. This is the day for the “hablag”. It is the occasion when the in-laws and relatives of the deceased bring in their traditional share of pigs and liquor as sign of kinship. The “kadang-yan” in-laws come in an entourage of pomp and sound of gongs. This is the time when the traditional “dangli” is sacrificed or butchered. The “dangli” is specifically a carabao/water buffalo. It is traditionally butchered on the mid-morning (nung-gawa’y algo) of the third day before the dead is carried to the grave. A bull (bulug) is preferably.

Some traditional choice parts of the butchered carabao is set aside as “bolwa”. The “lapa” (front leg potion) and the “ulpu” (hind leg) of the butchered carabao are the traditional choice parts. Sometimes there is disagreement among the recipients if a relative feels that there is unfair distribution of meat. The chunk of meat, small or large as it maybe, signifies the kinship relationship of an individual to the family. The rest is cooked as viand for people attending the wake. The third day of the wake is characterized by a great influx of people who would come to pay their last respect to the dead. It is also the time for a community free lunch as it is an obligation to feed the multitude of people gathered. Neighbors help in feeding the multitude by cooking rice and securing a rationed part of the “dangli” to be cooked as viand for people who would eat lunch in their houses.

The head of the Carabao which was butchered as a “dangli”, after removing the flesh is hanged in the backyard (aldat-tan) to decompose. It is however retrieved after what remains is the unbroken, complete and intact animal skull with the horn. It is traditionally displayed in the front portion of the house.

Gongs are sounded in the afternoon (him-bata-ngan) signaling the time the corpse is to about be carried to the grave. The deceased is removed from the “hadag” (death chair)
and is carried by relatives and volunteers. Traditionally, there are two ways of carrying the dead, either by putting it in a straddling position on the shoulder of the carrier (i-bag-tutu) or carried by letting it straddle over the back of the carried (mi-ab-ba). The entourage for the dead is lead by a three gong beating the tune for the dead being carried to the grave. The person carrying the dead follows about a few paces behind, followed by members of the family, relatives and friends. Reaching the grave site, the dead is laid on a blanket spread in the ground. The seams of the burial blanket (gamong) are severed. The severed part of the “gamong” is called the “talung-tung”. One piece is given to the family while the other piece is left in the grave site. The dead is then carried inside the grave. Family members enter the grave to say their last respect to the dead. This is done by shaking gently the head of the dead while uttering the words that a person wishes to convey to the spirit of the dead. After all the family members have finished shaking the head of the dead as in making the last farewell, the dead is placed in an upright sitting position inside the grave. This is done by letting the corpse lean on a betel nut (areca palm) trunk fixed in the floor of the grave.

Note: after the dead is accorded the “bogwa” (bone cleansing ritual) or the “tiniplud” ritual, the bones are wrapped in a new “gamong” and placed in the “patye”. The “patye” is a cabinet like structure in the back portion of the grave where all the bones are placed, leaving the grave floor empty and ready should there be another dead body interned in the grave.

The grave is closed with the use of soil and rocks. However, before the grave is sealed, two “pudung” is inserted inside the grave and removed briskly as soon as the last stone to seal the grave is put in place. A “pudong” is a stem of the “bila-u” or “ha-nil” (mountain reed), tied in an overhand loop. That particular “pudung” that is used during burial is called “la-wit”. Early Ifugaos believed that the “lawit” will pull out from the grave stray spirits of those who enters the grave. One of the “lawit” is left in the grave door while the other one is bought ahead to the residence of the deceased. The one assigned to bring to the residence the “lawit” shall walk briskly without looking back. As soon as he reaches the residence, gives the “lawit” to the “munbaki” who will tuck in the “pudung” in the wall of the house. The one who carried the “lawit” will just sit in one of the corners of the house. The munbaki commences the “kibkiblu” rites.

After the dead is buried, it is a taboo by tradition to do cleaning inside the house and its immediate surroundings, dirty and disarranged as it maybe. It is only done the following day, after the “panagadan” ritual. The word “panagadan” is derived from the word “hagad” which are materials used in cleaning the interior of a house or surroundings; hagadon – to sweep. During earlier times," tuwali" folks use the “u-lut” or bundled rice straw in cleaning the house. Twigs tied together are used to sweep dirt under the house (da-ulon) and its surroundings (aldat-tan). There were no soft and hard brooms during those times. The “Panagadan” ritual is an idiom for doing away with the mourning of a family due to a death of a loved one and the depression and uncertain moments that had been experience due to the financial requirements involved for the wake and burial. One chicken is offered in this occasion. After the “panagadan” ritual, family members commence the cleaning and putting the house in order. It literally starts with the sweeping the interior of a house and its surroundings. It is forbidden for family members to do rice field works. The “tuwali” call this “tungo” or day of rest. Three days after the burial, the family performs the “kigad” ritual. Basically, six chickens are needed for the ritual but more chickens are added to suffice the viand requirement for the people who are gathered for the free lunch after the ritual. After the ritual, a “binyun” is hanged near the house. A “binyun” is a basket where the personal effects of the dead are placed. This includes “moma” paraphernalia (betel nut, piper betel
leaves and lime). It is believed that when the spirit of the dead comes, finds the “binyun”, gets his personal effects and return to his place in the underworld. The “Punbinokbkan” ritual is done four to six days after the burial. A large to medium size pig is butchered on this occasion. Per “baki” traditions, it is believed that the “alimaduwan” (spirit) of the sacrificed pig is brought by the “lin-nawa” (spirit) of the dead to the parents. “Baki” terminology calls this “i-dul-dul” or the spirit of the dead presenting the spirit of the sacrificed pig to his parents. Family members and close relatives are gathered on this occasion. This is the final and culminating ritual for the dead unless the prognosis calls for additional rituals.

Today, it is now common for the sick to be brought to the hospital or Rural Health Clinic for medical attention and if warrants confinement. Simultaneously, some families still perform the “baki” (native rituals), not only as a moral support to the worried family but as a bolstering hope. However, before performing any ritual, the family calls the “mun-ag-ba” (soothsayer) to ascertain who among the ancestor or deceased family member caused the illness. Depending on the circumstances how the person got sick, sometimes, deities in Ifugao mythology are included in the “mun-ag-ba” ritual. Nothing is sacrificed or butchered in this ritual.

If and when, the sick has not shown any improvement regardless of the medical attention in a medical facility and the rituals performed in the residence, the family opines that the sick be brought home. The family performs the “hongan di mundogo” ritual which encompasses the “yabyab” ritual. Painful as it maybe, but some families prefer that the sick die in their respective residences. In this case, the wake shall start with the traditional “lahun”. It is optional for the family to permit the women folk shouting the customary “naba-ngad mo . . . .”.

Majority of the Ifugaos today prefer that the sick remains in the medical facility regardless of the outcome. The patient dies while undergoing treatment in the hospital. The normal present day practice or procedure in treating the dead is followed. After embalming, the dead is placed in a coffin clothed with the choice of attire before being brought to the residence for the wake. Only a few Ifugao families to do the wake in funeral homes. Majority in Ifugao prefer it to hold the wake it in their respective residences. It is practice today to bring their dead to their respective places Ifugao even if death occurs in a distant place. As soon as the dead arrives in the residence, the casket is placed in the area of choice by the family where the deceased is viewed by people attending the wake. A “binuhlan” (g-string) for men and or “ampy-yo” (loin cloth) for women is placed on top of the casket or on a table beside the dead. Other families cover the dead with a “gamong” (death blanket) while others just place it together with other native attire beside the dead. This situation omits the “lahun”. Some families still do the traditional shouting of “naba-ngad mo” and “mibang-ngad kah bale yu na nalagitan”. The first day is still called the “boh-wat”. Butchering of a sow during the “boh-wat” and the appointing of a “mun-ngilin” is still done although there are cases today wherein a non-munbaki is appointed by the family as the mun-ngilin. The non-munbaki mun-ngilin is however assisted by a knowledgeable munbaki. “Kad-duwa” or “kad’wa” for the second day and “kat-lu” for the third day. The traditional carabao “dangli” is still practiced, however it is now common that the carabao head is scavenged for every remaining edible part. Only the horn is left or thrown away should no one be interested to take it as a souvenir. In-laws still bring on the third day the traditional “hablag” or contribution of animals to be butchered. The traditional “bolwa” or giving of meat share to distant relatives is still practiced. Even poor families try their best to produce a carabao for the “dangli”, regardless of the financial cost. Today, it is now common for families to do the five days – four nights wake with the burial in the
afternoon of the fifth day. Married children share the expenses incurred during the wake. Other married children who are living separately sometimes, bring the deceased for a day and one night wake, in their residences before the final burial of the deceased. A pig is butchered on the fourth day (kap-'at) More pigs are butchered on the fifth day (ka-lima) before the burial to keep up with the multitude of people attending the wake.

Today, the “hud-hud” is rarely chanted except on wakes where “hud-hud” knowledgeable women folks are available. Depending on the religious sect of the family, starting the first night of the wake, Catholic women groups joined by the faithful, come in nightly to sing religious hymns followed by praying a decade of the rosary. Christian charismatic groups follow next with the usual evangelization lectures. Dinner is served in the evening aside from snacks with coffee or juice which is regularly served to people present during the wake. As the wee hours of the morning approaches, young people in particular entertain the monotony of the night by singing with the accompaniment of a guitar. There are also occasions wherein intoxicated youths singing to the top of their voices to the merriment of drowsy wake attendees. During the wee hours of the morning till sunrise, it is normal to see some people slumped on the chair or elsewhere in deep slumber, but never would the corpse be left alone without some people awake to keep vigil. This is with the exception of the people engrossed in gambling who tends to be awake and alert all the time.

Families belonging to the Catholic faith bring their dead to the church for a mass before proceeding to the cemetery for burial. The coffin is positioned in the center aisle nearest to the altar, with the family taking the first pews. Final viewing of the dead and final blessing of a priest is done before the casket is carried out from the church. With the traditional three gong beat for the dead, is carried to the place of burial. The dead are now buried in public cemeteries. The traditional “lubuk” hewn out from the hill side is now obsolete with the exception of fur flung villages. There are families who prefer to build the tomb right in their back yard. Before burying, the dead is brought out from the coffin. The coffin is sanitized for sharp and blunt objects that are believed would make the corpse uncomfortable. Protruding nails are removed before returning the cadaver back in place. During the burial, the traditional tearing of the seams of the “gamong” (talungtung) is done before bringing the corpse inside the tomb. Once inside the tomb, members of the family traditionally shake the head of the dead (i-diwol) and say their last words before the tomb is closed. The traditional “lawit” (two pudung) is still observed when closing a tomb during the burial. The dead is buried lying in the coffin.

The “Kib-kiblu” ritual is still practiced after the burial. The following day, “panagadan” ritual is done before making a cleaning inside the house and its immediate vicinity. The “tungo” or day of rest which is literally no work in the field is impractical to people living in urban areas. Only farmer folks living in the hinterlands observe this taboo as day of rest. The “kigad” ritual is performed three days after the burial, however, not all families do the “binyun” or basket where all personal effects of the deceased is placed and hanged
outside the house. Since the “punbinok-bakan” ritual needs a medium to large size pig as sacrificial animal, catholic families in particular, performs this ritual simultaneously on the ninth day novena. This is done practically for the purpose of butchering a pig for the “pun-binok-bo-kan” ritual and using the butchered pig as viand for the ninth day novena where free lunch is served.

Today, more non-Ifugao traditions are incorporated to old traditions. Several old traditions which are impractical and outdated are not practiced anymore and with the threat to be forgotten and be just a part of history. With the dwindling of old folks knowledgeable in chanting and singing the “hud-hud” during wakes, it is not impossible that some days, the blaring and boisterous karaoke will be the one to highlight the wake of an Ifugao dead.

31 December 2011

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Pagan religions believed in many gods and generally worshipped the earth, sea, sun, sky and various other elements of nature. The Romans were polytheistic and much of their lives were spent in a fervent effort to please their gods. This was because ancient Romans believed that their gods had great influence over their daily lives and fates. In order to placate the gods, the Romans believed that certain

Ref.: [http://ifugaocustoms.blogspot.dk/2012/02/old-ifugao-customs-and-traditions.html](http://ifugaocustoms.blogspot.dk/2012/02/old-ifugao-customs-and-traditions.html)