

# Rituals

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Module No.10 : **Rituals**

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**Superstitions** are beliefs or practices for which there appears to be no rational substance. It is a term designated to these beliefs that result from ignorance and fear of the unknown. Those who use the term imply that they have certain knowledge or superior evidence for their scientific, philosophical, or religious convictions.

Here are some of the rituals performed by the elders and folks in different provinces in the Philippines.

## CEBUANO

Posted by [mondong](#) [7:46 AM](#)

- **CEBUANO**

Beliefs and practices govern almost all aspects of agriculture. The tamblan is often called to perform the practice of bayang or buhat before lands are cultivated. A dish of white chicken or white pork is offered to the unseen owner. Before planting, a table with cooked rice, chicken, wine or buyo is set in the open and offered to the spirits who are asked to grant a good harvest. If planting is to be done during a new moon in May or June, rice is toasted and then ground with sugar in a mixture called paduya. The paduya is then baked, divided into 24 parts, and wrapped in banana leaves and offered the night before planting to the aswang who

protects the field. For harvest blessings pangas may also be prepared in a basket from a mixture of rice, medicinal herbs, palm fruit and a wooden comb.

There are specific practices depending upon the crop being planted. During the planting of rice, one must not hurt or kill the taga-tagala, an insect with protruding antennae believed to be soul of the palay, or else this cause a bad harvest. A good harvest is likely when its tail points upwards.

In planting corn, the first three rows should be planted at sundown. This is the time when chicken and other fowl are in their roosts and if they do not see where the seeds are planted; they will not dig up the seeds. If it rains while the farmer is planting, it is a sure sign that the seeds will not germinate. Persons with few of broken teeth should not plant corn to prevent the corn from bearing sparse and inferior grains.

In coconut planting, so that the nut will grow big and full, seedlings must be placed on open ground during a full moon. They should be planted at noontime when the sun is directly overhead and shadows are at their shortest. This is so the coconut trees will bear fruit soon, even if they are not yet very tall. While planting coconuts, it would help if one is carrying a child so that the tree will yield twice as many nuts. Bananas should be planted in the morning or at sunrise with young plants carried on the farmer's back so the branches will have compact and large clusters.

Sticks should not be used when planting cassava lest the tubers develop fibers that are not good to eat. Ubi, on the other hand, is a sacred root crop. If it is dropped on the ground, it has to be kissed to avoid divine fury called gaba. Planters must lay clustered fruits on three hills for an abundant harvest of camote or sweet potato.

It is believed that planters must remove their shirts, lie on the ground and roll over several times during a full moon. Crops planted near the diwata's place or during thunderstorms will become rat infested.

During harvesting, if the crops are poor, the farmers prepare biku, budbud, ubas, tuba, guhang, 12 chickens, pure rice, tobacco and tilad. These they place under a dalakit tree in the fields as offering to the spirits.

Rice harvesting entails more intricate rituals. A mixture called pilipig is prepared from seven gantas of young palay added to ubas (grapes), bayi-bayi(ground rice), grated coconut and sugar. This mixture is pounded in a mortar and brought out at midnight. At midnight, the farmers call the babaylan to chant prayers while they surround him/her with smoke.

Fisherfolk have their own ways of soliciting the favors of the other world. During a full moon, a mananapit is asked to pray for a good catch and to bless the fishing nets and traps with herbs and incense. To cast off evil spirits, fisherfolk at sea mutter tabi meaning "please allow small yellow copper key under their belts to protect themselves from being devoured by a big fish. Divers eat the flesh of the cooked turtle for greater stamina underwater. Fisherfolk avoid bad luck by neither sitting nor standing in front of their fishing gear and by returning home by way of the route used when setting out the sea. To avail of future bounty, fisherfolk using new traps must throw back half of their first catches.

## • HOUSES

In building houses, spirits believed to roam the world of the living must be considered. Spirits

like dwelling in caves and ought not to be disturbed by the construction of a house nearby. A good site for a house is determined by burying 3 g of rice wrapped in black cloth at the center of the lot. If a grain is missing when they are unearthed three days after, the site is not suitable for it will cause illness. February, April, and September are the months to build houses. To bring prosperity and peace to the owners, coins are placed in each posthole before the posts are raised. The ladder of the house should face east to ensure good health. A full moon symbolizes a happy homelife when moving to a new house. For the moving family to be blessed, they should boil water in a big pot and invite visitors to stay overnight in their new house. A ritual is also performed against evil spirits during the inauguration of the public buildings, bridges, and other structures.

## ISNEG

Posted by [mondong 7:44 AM](#)

### • ISNEG

Many rituals are connected with the agricultural cycle: the daily life on the swidden, which includes clearing, planting and harvesting. Nature provides signs and portents that signal the start of specific activities. These are rituals related to life in the swidden, to rice and to community as a whole.

Three signs indicate the clearing work on the swidden can begin—the red bakakaw herb comes out, the tablan (coral tree) is in bloom and the leaves of the basinalan tree fall to the ground. This is around February to March. Then, the lumba tree begins to bear fruit, and it is a sign that the dry days have begun, time for burning the swidden. A good harvest is portended by the rising of a little whirlwind from the burning field. This, it is said, is the spirit *Alpugpug*. This wind fans the fire that moves across the burning field which never goes out of control, "because swidden culture has its own ecological wisdom." Before burning, the Isneg clear the swidden very carefully, taking care not to harm certain plants, such as the amital vine, which must not be killed, lest a death befall the offender's family. The clearing burned, a few seeds are cast into the wind and a prayer is offered to the spirits. The farmer and his family gather charred woods which has not been completely burned. This will be used for fuel, to be used during the harvest. Three days before rice is planted, the *agpaabay* ceremony is observed. A man and a woman scatter rice grains across the field to warn the rats not to eat them. The woman returns in the afternoon to make an offering to the spirits of the field. She bores a hole into the ground and drops a few seeds into it. Then she covers the hole with *taxalitaw* vine leaves and the *sapitan* herb. This is to ensure that the crops will be healthy. For the whole night and all throughout the next day, she cannot hand out anything to anyone, and no one is allowed to enter her house. On the third day, other women take up the chore of planting. They carry double sticks with which they bore holes in the ground. Coconut shells full of seed are tied to their waists. It is taboo for children to make noises, because they would likely disturb the spirits: the *paxananay*, who watches over the planting and the *bibiritan* which kills people when roused to anger. In September, the rice is ready for harvesting. It is then cooked with the fire of the stored charred wood from the burned clearing: thus, the cooking of the rice completes the ritual cycle of the swidden.

There are several rituals performed in connection with the harvest of rice. These actually begin with the killing of a pig as an object of sacrifice, accompanied by communications with the spirits, performed in the form of prayers by the *dororakit* or the shaman *maganito*. Rice pudding is offered to *Pilay*, the spirit of the rice, who resides on the *paga*, a shelf above the

Isneg hearth. This is the pisi, the ritual offering of food to the spirits. The old woman who performs this utters the following prayer: "Ne uwamo ilay ta ubatbattugammo ya an-ana-a, umaammo ka mabtugda peyan" (Here, this is yours, Pilay, so that you feed my children fully, and make sure that they are always satisfied.)

Another ritual is performed right in the fields where the harvest is going on.

The amulets inapugan, takkag(a kind of fern), and herbs are tied to a stalk of palay, which later will be placed in the granary before the other palay.

Again, these are reserved for Pilay. In case a new granary is built, and the contents of the old granary were transferred, the spirit's special share is also transferred to the new place. It is never consumed. An illness in the family during the time of harvest occasions a ritual called pupug. The shaman catches a chicken and kills it inside the house of the affected family. The usual prayers to the guardian spirits of the fields are recited, after which the household members partake of the meat of the sacrificial animal.

## ILOCANO

Posted by [mondong 7:43 AM](#)

- **ILOCANO**

To relieve the person of the malaise, an older relative plucks a twig from a tree, for instance, malunggay and gently brushes it on the victim's head and body while muttering to the unseen spirit to let go. If the victim's condition persists, the relatives offer atang, a ritual food to appease the supernaturals of the wilderness. Since the Ilocano traditional universe links the natural and the supernatural realms, rites of appeasement and thanksgiving are done periodically of the spirits dwelling in the loam, river and woodland. This traditional world view, which has persisted in a modified and casual manner, may incorporate traces of ecclesiastical rites. For instance, upon opening a bottle of liquor on the ground, like a priest sprinkling holy water. The intent is to offer the kadjadua (unseen partners) their share of the repast and merriment.

## GADDANG

Posted by [mondong 7:42 AM](#)

- **GADDANG**

Gaddang anitu rites are rendered to cure the sick and ensure their longevity and to avoid misfortune or illness due to breach or a taboo. Presided by the medium and usually involving the sacrifice of a pig, these rituals could also serve to indicate status and/or the occasions for kindred socialization.

# KANKANAY

Posted by [mondong 7:42 AM](#)

## • KANKANAY

There is a great variety of rites and ceremonies practiced by the Kankanay. Several types of economic activities such as planting, harvesting, house building, or digging irrigation ditches call for the performance of these rites. A whole village, or a family financially capable of throwing a feast, takes responsibility for the holding of big and elaborate rites. For determining the cause of illness or divination of events, simpler rites are performed by an individual or by a family group.

One of the ritual ceremonies already mentioned is the bayas. This canao or feast is the most important festival in northern Kankanay society, which is hosted by the kadangyan, and involves the slaughter of many animals. Only a person of means can afford the amount of food consumed. During the bayas, the kadangyan calls upon his ancestral spirits, and appeals for their continued support for his prosperity. Relatives, villagers, and visitors from other places are all invited to the bayas ritual. During times of plenty, the bayas would be celebrated at least every three or four years, but in recent years the interval has become longer. The rites observed in connection with the agricultural cycle are deemed indispensable because the whole success of planting and harvesting, i.e., survival itself, may depend entirely on such observance.

Legleg is performed to improve the growth of the plants. This is done whenever the bonabon seedlings show telltale signs of withering. A chicken is killed, and is offered to the spirits of the field, trees, rocks, and other things in the surroundings believed to have been angered or displeased. Four or five long feathers of the chicken are pulled out and stuck into the site where the bonabon are planted. If the seedlings do not show any sign of improvement, the ritual is repeated, this time with more sacrificial chickens.

The an-anito is similar to the legleg, except that it is performed to seek intercession for an ailing person.

Harvest entails a different set of rituals. On the first day, the rice fields are declared off limits to strangers. Along trails, crossed bamboo sticks called puwat are laid out as a warning to passersby against intruding. The owner of the field cuts a handful of rice stalks and recites a prayer asking for a bountiful crop. Then, the other reapers proceed to cut the rest of the harvest. Nobody is allowed to leave at anytime throughout the day, to prevent "loss of luck."

The opening of a baegl (granary) by a family for rice pounding is an event with its own ritual. The head of the household declares an abayas (holiday) which lasts two days. The father opens the granary and takes out as many bundles as required for the period of celebration.

The largest and most important of community celebrations among the Kankanay is the pakde or begnas. This is observed for a variety of purpose. When called to ensure an abundant rice harvest, it takes place sometime during May, a month before the actual harvest. It may also be observed when a person dies to ask for the protection and favors of the benevolent deities. The village elders may decide to hold the rites, after the observance of a bagat or big feast by a family to regain luck for the community. Or the occasion might be to celebrate a strange event, such as lightning, striking a tree near a house or near a spot where people have assembled, which is interpreted as Kabunian himself speaking. A pakde or begnas serves to

appease him. This usually takes place during the rainy season, when lightning is most frequent. The celebration is held for one day and one night with preparations of food and water, and tapuy (rice wine). On the day of the feast, men with bolo and spears come out of their houses and proceed to the village borders to put up barricades across all entrances. Others take up their spears accompany the mambunong to a sacred spot where there is a wooden structure called pakedlan. On this a pig is butchered and offered to the guardian deities of the village. The pakedlan is usually built by the mambunong at one end of the village. It consists of a solitary wooden post about 1.3 m in height, with large white stones laid on the ground surrounding it.

## MANOBO

Posted by [mondong 7:41 AM](#)

- MANOBO

When a diwata wishes to convey a message, it sends a spirit messenger to possess the baylan and speak through him/her. While in ebpintezan or state of possession, the baylan performs the healing ritual. However, a baylan may also be possessed by a timbusew, a bloodthirsty evil spirit. So, instead of treating the sick, the baylan kills the sick person so that the demon could devour the sick person.

There are three levels of leadership in the religious community: the baylan, terewtawan, and sangka. The baylan appoints a terewtawan, a male assistant who travels from village to village to spread the baylan's teachings. About 10 sangka, male and female, assist the terewtawan in preaching and healing the sick.

Anyone of any gender can become a baylan. One may ask to become apprenticed to a baylan by offering the tendan he idtendan, a gift consisting of the following: mirror, comb, turban, pair of trousers, shirt, a bolo, seven pieces of cloth of varying patterns, white and black handkerchief for betel chew offerings, and seven chickens.

Ref.: <http://clarkmondong.blogspot.com/>