Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events

Bodad – This is performed at the granary with three chickens and done during the ahidalu or wall-cleaning season when the rice plants are about to bear grains. It is a petition to the gods to make the plants bear abundant grains.

Pa’ad – This is performed at the granary when the rice grains are maturing. Three chickens are sacrificed. This is to bind the people to a promise to the deities not to eat fish, shells, snails and any other aquatic animal until the kahiw, a minor ritual done after harvest. They ask the gods for a plentiful yield during the pa’ad.

Ngilin – This is performed on the eve of the harvest and resumed early the following morning before dawn. A chicken is offered to the umamo, the gods of covetousness. The chicken’s carcass is stuck or skewered on a spit and fastened on a bilau which in turn is implanted on the dike of the main paddy of the rice field. This is done early in the morning before the harvesters come to start reaping. The purpose is to ask the umamo not to covet the rice harvest and to invoke the other gods and ancestral spirits to give their blessings on the harvest.

Ani – This means harvest. On the harvest day, the ritual centers on the granary. While the harvesters work in the field, the menfolk gather at the granary where they drink, discuss and argue in between the various phases of the ceremony. The priests and priestesses perform all the various steps of the ritual, ani, and narrate the myth of Balituk and Kabigat up to the point where they first harvested their rice crop at Imbiday. If the rice field owner is rich, or if he is the manon-ak (agriculture leader or chief) of the sitio or village, a pig is added to the chickens offered. The feasting comes only in the mid-afternoon. The harvesters, however, are fed earlier than those in the alang (granary).

Upin – This simple ritual is done after the harvest season. Gods are invoked to bless the rice, the granaries and the houses in the village. The mumbaki asks the gods to protect the people from sickness, famine, pestilence and to help the community to be prosperous, healthy and peaceful. The following day is a tungo. People may not go to the rice field for any reason.

Kahiw – This is performed in the house. The purpose is to release the people from their promise to the gods that they made during the pa’ad. The people may eat fish, shells, snails, etc. afterwards. The ritual ends the Ifugao calendar which coincides with the end of the agricultural season.

A mumbaki drains the blood of the sacrificed chicken into a bowl during the performance of a harvest ritual in Barangay Hapao, municipality of Hungduan.

TUWALI IFUGAO, IFUGAO PROVINCE, NORTHERN LUZON ISLAND, NORTHERN PHILIPPINES. Harvest rituals among the Ifugao differ according to the specific culture obtaining where each group dwells. In Hapao, municipality of Hungduan, where a specialized Tuwali grouping lives, a distinct harvest ritual complex developed. The ritual culminates in a tugging contest between rival communities to determine which group will have a bountiful harvest.
the night until noon time of the following day

his apprentice, the ritual is held from deep in

dumupag. Officiated by a lead mumbaki and

at the ground floor area of the house of the

of harvest, a

ripening of the grains but also by beliefs, ritual

coming from the surrounding forests above it.

transplanted in paddies constantly fed by waters

and last until December when the seedlings are

killed using an

Before killing the pig, the mumbaki and his

beside the pig is a spear struck to the ground.

A blanket is wafted by a mumbaki apprentice over a pig
to be sacrificed in a dupag ritual, as another executes a

dance.

Prior to the declaration of the commencement

of harvest, a dupag or harvest ritual is performed

at the ground floor area of the house of the
dumupag. Officiated by a lead mumbaki and

his apprentice, the ritual is held from deep in

the night until noon time of the following day

which can also be the first day of harvest if the

omens permit.

The dupag ritual has two components: first

is the honga di page where four chickens are

sacrificed, their blood drained into a bowl, and

the position of the bile vis-a-vis the liver is

inspected.

The matalitedik or the playing of three

gongyu (gong) and ritual (drum) follows if the

omen is favourable. Otherwise, the playing of

the instruments is postponed until the next
day, during which the mumbaki may sacrifice

another chicken.

Upon the successful performance of the

honga di page, the second component of the
dupag, the mongaya, proceeds at the break of
dawn. In the mongaya, the pig is the sacrificial

animal. The bound pig is laid on its side on the

ground before the house of the dupag. Just

beside the pig is a spear struck to the ground.

Before killing the pig, the mumbaki and his

apprentice perform elaborate divinations consisting of dances and chants while

encircling the pig nine times.

After the dancing and chanting, the pig is

killed using an uwik, a pointed stick made of

hilan, a wild reed, and its tail (ipos) is cut and

inserted in the wound to stop the blood from

gushing out. After a while, the ipos is removed

and placed on the pig’s body along with two

rice stalks, a cup of bayab (rice wine) and one

stem of hinanganga grass (Cyperus sp.), which

always accompany a sacrificed pig.

The mumbaki then sits beside the pig

and chants, reciting within memory the

names of all the mumbakis in the past who

have performed the same baki as he makes

his promise to continue the tradition. The

mumbaki ends the chant by drinking bayah.

After this, the mumbaki dips his finger into

chicken blood and daubs it in quick succession

on the bamboo clapper kept in the ritual

box; on one strip of rattan that will be used
to bundle harvested rice; on two rice stalks;
on the grass; on the ipos; and three chicken

feathers which are then held all together in

one grip. The mumbaki then faces the rice

fields and performs the awagah (blessing). He

waves the offerings slightly above head level

and chants a prayer to invoke the gods of

high heaven, particularly Daya, the god of the

Upper Regions, and implores for an abundant

harvest of rice from the terrace fields and
crops like taro and sweet potato that are grown

in the mountain sides or swidden.

Subsequently, the mumbaki will put the ipos,

uwik and the stem of the hinanganga inside the

kinite (ritual box), which contains offerings

from past rituals.

After chanting, the sacrificed pig is cut up,

its bile examined for the omen, and its intestine
called hinodlad is kept inside the house for
drying until the day of the punnuk. The punnuk

is the much-anticipated tugging ritual done in

the Hapao River participated in by members

of the three barangays – Hapao, Baang and

Nungulunan.

To make known to everyone that the dupag

ritual has been successfully performed, two

bundles of reeds are set up right along the

ground of the house yard of the dumupag. This

is a signal for the harvesters (strictly women)

led by the mumbag to gather at the first level

of the latter’s rice fields. But before actual

harvest commences, the dumupag, holding

two rice stalks, looks up towards the direction

of the sky and offers a chant to Daya. As she

concludes her chant, the women start

harvesting the rice.

Only after harvest is completed in the rice

fields of the dumupag can the amonun of

the family with the second largest rice fields

start harvest in his/her rice fields. Then it is

followed by the makapat or the family with the

third largest rice fields, followed by the makep-

at or the family/families with the fourth largest

rice fields. In all the foregoing, harvesting is a

cooperative labour shared by the community

members along with the respective owners of

the rice fields. Only after the rice crops of the

makapat are harvested will the small rice field-

owners harvest their own crops.

After harvest is completed in Barangays

Hapao, Baang and Nungulunan, the dumupag

determines the most auspicious time to hold

the huowah or the final ritual activities to end

the harvest season. The ritual activities are

preferably held during the first quarter moon

(nukayang) to enjoy an abundant harvest. While

waiting for the announcement of the huowah,

the women busy themselves in the terrace

fields.

The first two ritual activities – the baki and

the innun – held at the ground floor area of the
dumupag’s house, are enacted a day before the

puunnuk. The baki is a ritual divination with two

fields.
open the jars and have the first drink. The mumbaki is given the honours to four to six generations of the dumupag and his names of the dumupag. Before the jars are opened, brought to the ground floor area of the house stored in three jars of varying sizes, is then

The following day is
tungoh or a day of rest from

upon the completion of the baki, and the bile positions of the sacrificed chickens (and pig) are pronounced to be good by the mumbaki, one of the male elders stands on an elevated terrace field embankment adjacent to the paddies of the dumupag. He looks towards the houses across the lower tiered fields and nearby villages and shouts at the top of his voice inviting people to the inum or drinking of bayah or rice wine. He also announces that the following day is tsob or a day of rest from work in the fields and enjoins everyone to prepare for the punnuk.

The bayah, especially prepared by the dumupag several days before the huowah and stored in three jars of varying sizes, is then brought to the ground floor area of the house of the dumupag. Before the jars are opened, the mumbaki chants one by one the names of four to six generations of the dumupag and his spouse’s forebears, inviting them to drink the wine. The mumbaki is given the honours to open the jars and have the first drink.

The following day, just before the family of the dumupag goes to the site of the punnuk, the mumbaki performs a short baki while preparing the chicken sacrificed during the huowah together with the dried intestine (binala) of the pig previously sacrificed during the dupag ritual. Called the kapat di kina-ag, the pig’s intestine is equated to the a-e (Timapa or Timegra) vine, which is the binding and strengthening material for the kina-ag, the subject of tugging during the punnuk, and symbolizes strong ties in the community. The food offerings are placed on a buhok (basket container for cooked rice) to be eaten before going to the river for the tugging ritual.

It is recalled that prior to the late 1990s, the punnuk was held in three separate areas of the river: in Kihed (upper side of the river), pandel (boundary between Hapao and Baang in the lower part of the river) and nunhipukana (confluence of two rivers coming from Baang, Hapao and Nungulunan), and tugging was done on the same day.

The nunhipukana has been retained as the site of the now-centralized punnuk with Hapao occupying the eastern boundary; Baang, the southwestern boundary; and Nungulunan, the northwestern boundary of the Hapao River.

If the current in the nunhipukana is strong and the participants are forced to transfer to another part of the river, a group will not participate if it would mean crossing boundaries. The recognition of the kigad or boundary is very important in Ifugao society.

Traditionally, the able-bodied men, whether young or elderly, join the actual tugging ritual while the women content themselves in joining the march to the river embankment where they cheer their village mates and jeer or taunt the members of the opposing or rival communities.

The punnuk features two important material elements: the kina-ag and the pakid. The kina-ag is a figure made of bundled guyami or rice stalks. This is the object thrown into the middle part of the river and the subject of tugging between two opposing groups huddled together on opposite sides of the river across the current.

To make it strong enough to withstand the opposing forces, the kina-ag is tightly bundled with vines called a-e. Although the kina-ag often resembles the human form called tinagau, other forms such as haniu or large monitor lizard, a figure resembling a monkey, or simply a sturdy ring of rice stalks and a-e vines may be used. The kina-ag is always embellished with leaves of the dong-a (Cordyline fruticosa), a plant used to mark boundaries in terrace fields. Its bright magenta leaves are believed to be pleasing to the gods. The kina-ag can only be prepared after the baki during the huowah.

The pakid, on the other hand, is a three to five meter-long hooked sapling of the attoba tree (Callicarpa formosana) that is very durable. It is used by the opposing teams to pull the kina-ag to their side.

At around nine o’clock in the morning, the members of the three communities joining the punnuk start marching through the rice-terraced embankments towards the Hapao River. The first two groups that arrive at the designated area in the river are the first to compete. But before the game begins, a participant called munyagopah from the first group that arrived in the nunhipukana will recite a four-line verse imploring blessings from the gods: Daya of the sky, Laud of the sea, and Bagu of the earth. The prayer is not just for a good game but also for their community’s health and well-being. This is promptly followed by a recitation of another four-line verse from the munggopal of the opposing group. The recitation is delivered and composed impromptu.

After the versifications, a kina-ag is then thrown in the middle of the river by one of the groups, and in a second, the two teams strike the kina-ag with their pakid to hitch. But more
often than not, when the currents of the rivers
are strong, two elders from each of the team
hold and securely fasten the hook of the two
pakid to the kina-ag. Once done, the tugging
ensues. The winning team then faces-off with
the remaining group for another round. The
challenges for another round can go on as long
as there is still a kina-ag to pick and pull or
until everyone gets tired.

Whoever wins the most number of rounds
in the tugging ritual is declared the over-all
champion, not only in the punnuk but of the
entire harvest season. The losers go home
feeling forlorn as it is generally believed that
their harvest would be easily consumed and
thus will not last until the next harvest season.
Those in the winning side, on the other hand,
are all euphoric, completely confident that the
forthcoming year would be a year of plenty
and that their rice granary will always be full or
replenished every time.

Every kina-ag used in the punnuk is thrown
into the river to be swept away by the currents
so that when the remnants are seen by those in
the lower communities, they would know that
the harvest in Hapao has been completed.

Further demonstrating sportsmanship and
camaraderie, men with enough strength left
engage in a wrestling game called bultong or
dopap or in arm wrestling called hangul before
everybody takes a bath in the river.

There are many associated observances of
taboo and discipline during the harvest ritual.
For example, the community abstains from
eating leafy vegetables, soft covered shellfish
and fish during the entire harvest period. Leafy
vegetables are not regarded as auspicious
food since they shrink when cooked while
soft covered shellfish are shunned because
they are easily crushed. It is believed that
these characteristics can have similar effects
on the harvest, leading to easy depletion or
destruction. The smell of fish is said to be
disdained by the gods and therefore avoided.
Legumes such as beans can be served for food
since they expand when cooked and is equated
to the multiplication of harvest. The dumpug
and the mumbaki also do not bathe during
huowah nor have hair cuts until the punnuk is
over to prevent the loss or dissipation of the
blessings and the good fortune accumulated
during the entire harvest season.

The hinukhukab ritual is performed three
to four days after the punnuk. This is done
to put back the hukab (ritual box cover) and
to properly close the kinteb, which has been
left open from the time of the dupag ritual
and kept atop a bundled rice or in a corner of
the awang (granary) owned by the dumupag. A
chicken is sacrificed during the performance of
the hinukhukab officiated by a mumbaki.

A few weeks after the punnuk, the mumbaki
is called again for the performance of the
hagnong ritual where two chickens are sacrificed.
This is done to allow the people to repair
their terrace fields in preparation for the next
planting season.

TUWALI IFUGAO, IFUGAO PROVINCE, NORTHERN LUZON ISLAND,
NORTHERN PHILIPPINES. This is an ancient ritual conducted by the Tuwali
Ifugao on the occasion of a violent death. Only a simulated form is presently practiced
during festivals, although there is a version that is closely similar called dog’al, patipat,
pagpag or bangibang. Named after the wooden clapper used, it is performed to drive
away rats and evil spirits from the rice terraces and the villages.