

THE RICE RITUAL IN THE EAST VISAYAN ISLANDS, PHILIPPINES

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I. RICE PLANTING RITUAL IN THE PROVINCE OF LEYTE (Christianized Rice Ritual)

Rice is the staple food of the Filipino. Any meal without rice is incomplete and unsatisfactory even for the wealthy Filipino. That the planting and harvesting of this valuable food has been surrounded by colorful rituals is therefore not surprising. Old and new beliefs are intertwined in the manifold and varied ceremonies. The sumptuous feasts merriment, and colorful dresses of the planters in some parts of the country make the planting and harvesting seasons the main events of the year. During these times it is difficult even for the most kind and generous landladies in town to keep their maids. The saying goes that maids feel an "itch" to leave overnight for their barrios. They will return after the season.

There is a variety of rituals in planting rice on the island of Leyte. Two basic forms can be distinguished: 1) the animistic rice ritual, and 2) the christianized rice ritual. The animistic rice ritual is the older form. The Christianized rice ritual has given it a new meaning although ancient elements are still noticeable. The animistic rice ritual will be dealt with in chapt. IV.

The Christianized rice planting ritual which prevails today is the object of this chapter. The writer calls it christianized if the banquet in honor of the spirit and the invocations of “*anitos*” (Spirits of ancestors), “*Encantados*” (fairies) and other spirits are omitted. In the christianized ritual the invocations are directed to God and the amulets or charms used now are the symbolic expression of a prayer to God that He may bestow on the rice certain qualities similar to the symbols. In some cases—even in the christianized ritual—farmers still attribute to the charms themselves the power of giving the rice these qualities. In other rituals there is only a superficial coating of Christian influence, and in some even this is absent.

The Province of Leyte has upland rice which is planted by seeding the field, and lowland rice which is planted by seedlings taken from the nursery. In the lowland the fields either are artificially irrigated or wait for abundant rain to make planting possible. The rituals of the upland and lowland vary slightly. In this article mainly the lowland rice ritual is considered which again in different municipalities has plenty of variations.

1) **Sowing** (*Pagsabod*):—The sowing of the nursery is done before All Souls Day, (November 2). It is the belief (so in Julita, Leyte) that if this is done in the month of All Souls (November), the seeds will sprout but soon dry up and perish. Besides, insects might live in the plant. The sowing should be done on an odd number day such as the first or third day of the month; (in *cassava* planting, no planting on odd number days is permitted, so in Tacloban).

At the time of sowing, a comb, a needle, and a plant (*tabog*) are placed in the middle of the seedbed (so in Julita, Dulag). The “*tabog*” is planted there to serve as a scarecrow. The needle will make the rice seedling straight and vigorous. The teeth of the comb will make the leaves of the rice plant straight so that they do not interlace with other leaves. Before sowing, in San Isidro, on the West Coast of Leyte, there exists the custom of mixing the rice with blessed rice which has been kept since Holy Week. At the time of sowing the farmer also throws fine ashes from the “*abo*” (Filipino stove) in all directions. By this act the farmer wishes every grain of his seed to be scattered to every nook and corner of his field as these fine ashes are blown by the wind into all directions so that every grain will have a chance to sprout.

2) **Transplanting** (*Pagtanom*):—After a month the seedlings are ready for transplanting. The date is fixed according to the position of the moon. It must be either fullmoon (*kabog-os*), new-moon (*guimata*), or first quarter of the moon (*maghiabot*). In municipalities close to the sea the tide (*kata-ob*) is also considered. Since not all barrios of these municipalities reach the sea-shores and can observe high or low tide, another device is being resorted

to. The people look at the pupils of the cat. Large pupils signify to them high tide; small pupils indicate low tide (so in Dulag and Tanauan municipalities at the East Coast of Leyte.) Special care must be taken to avoid planting anything during the last quarter of the moon (*kawara*) because results of such planting would be poor.

Planting rice has to be a happy affair, therefore some neighbors bring their musical instruments and play early in the morning at the gathering of the planters (so in Barugo). Before the sun rises, the "*paratikang*", i.e. the leader or master of ceremonies, performs the initial ceremony. He goes in silence to the field carrying the following: *tanglad*, *calipayan*, *panbauli*, and *bagacay* (photo 1). Arriving at the field he makes the sign of the cross and prays the Credo, one Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory in honor of the Blessed Virgin; then another Our Father to San Isidro; lastly, one Our Father to the Patron Saint of the parish. Thereafter he prays the Hail Holy Queen. Immediately after saying the prayers he plants the herbs he has brought along (photo 2), expressing symbolically what he wants to beg of God during the planting (*mga bongod*):

Tanglad—that the rice be as bushy as the plant *tanglad*;

Calipayan—that there be happiness during planting;

Panbauli—that diseases be driven away;

Bagacay—that pests and insects may find the rice plant itchy and thus be prevented from eating the rice plants. These symbolic plants are used in most municipalities of Leyte. Other plants used are "*Ticol*", "*Mamban*", and "*Tanghao*" (so in La Paz).

After these herbs have been planted the "*paratikang*" prays: "My God, I offer unto Thee this work of mine; bless me with thy holy benediction." The "*paratikang*" takes now a bundle of rice seedlings from the nursery for the first transplanting. Before he plants the seedlings he throws one seedling or a bundle of seedlings away for God; the second for the evil spirits which bring pests; and the third, for the soil itself (so in La Paz). In Basey (Samar) this ceremony is accompanied by shooting firecrackers. One firecracker for each bundle of seedlings is offered.

The first planting varies widely in different municipalities. In Tacloban seven groups of seedlings are planted in a very fast manner¹⁾ (photo 3).

1) "In the Philippines, the sowers bend from the waist, many times not flexing the knees, holding the seedlings in the left hand, in small bunches, at about knee level, swinging the right hand down to grasp sometimes one stalk sometimes as many as three in a triangular grasping position of the thumb and first two fingers, near the root of the stalk, pressing it quickly and firmly into the mud of the field. They work rapidly and steadily, the younger folk keeping up banter and gossip, sometimes humming to the music of the *rondella* (orchestra)". *Journal of East Asiatic Studies*, Vol. III, No. 3, April, 1954, p. 288. Charles O. Houston.

The group of seven is in honor of the seven joys and sorrows of our Lord and Our Lady. This should secure happiness and success in planting and harvesting.

After planting the seven groups, the "*paratikang*" jumps a few meters while joyfully exclaiming "*aboy*". This is done to beg God that those who will follow him in planting will be fast (so in Tacloban, Julita). Then the "*paratikang*" continues to plant three more rows backwards and forwards. With this the ceremony ends and the "*paratikang*" takes his breakfast after which he leads the planters to the field. In other places he has already taken his breakfast and the helpers continue right where he stopped.

In San Isidro the rice planters at this moment address the seedlings with these exhorting words:

Humangad ka ban bulan
Sumunod ka ban pannigon
Kay ban Paraon ka nag gabi
Kan San Isidro nga parauma

A free translation is as follows:

Look upward to the moon above;
Be swayed by seasons' smile and sob;
For thou wert by Pharaoh sold;
Seeds of San Isidro of old.

The first line reminds the seedlings to look upward to their helper and patron, the moon, which the early Filipino farmers regarded as one of the "good gods" that gave them rice.

Then the seedlings are told to grow and to be swayed and nourished by rain and sunshine.

The third line alludes to the great famine in Egypt, during the time of Joseph the Patriarch. The planters then exhort the seedlings to grow as luxuriantly as Pharaoh's rice which saved Egypt from the famine.

Finally in the last line, the patron saint of farmers, San Isidro, is invoked to protect the field.

These verses having been recited, great din is made by all present. Then the planters bend their backs and begin the labor. The ceremonies have come to an end.

A happy mood prevails during the whole day in spite of hard work (photo 4). Whenever the work slows down, musical instruments bring new excitement and speed to the worker. Meanwhile in the farm house a sumptuous meal is prepared; roasted pig and *tuba* (palm-wine) are a must. Sweet cakes are baked and served because the people believe that then the rice will produce a specially fine and sweet flavor. A banquet and dance are

given in order to honor the rice. It is the belief in Burauen that if the owner of the field does not honor the rice in this way, the rice field will yield very little at harvest time.

Rich and poor, young and old join to sing or recite a "*balak*" poem, dine and dance after a day's work. People enjoy the happy atmosphere of the planting until the day ends with pleasant good-bye's and hopeful good-luck's from the leave-taking people to the owner of the newly planted rice field.

II. RICE HARVESTING RITUAL ON LEYTE ISLAND

After studying reports and observing practices in different municipalities of Leyte it seems that the ritual of beginning the rice harvest can be traced to certain ancient rites of nature worship. Four hundred years of Catholic influence have christianized and altered some of the practices through the addition of prayers, the use of Christian symbols and a shift of emphasis from nature symbols as powerful magic instruments to God the author of all blessing. To analyze and trace the origin of the different practices would be too big a scope for this article. Pointing out some of the similarities or differences in various municipalities in Leyte may stimulate further investigation.

1) **Timing the ceremonies**:—The exact time to start the harvesting ceremonies varies in municipalities. It may be on the same day on which the actual harvest starts or two weeks before harvest time as is the case in Palo (East Coast) and Villaba (West Coast). Any other time between these two extremes is also possible. Sometimes the ceremonies are even extended over several days. In the Tacloban area the master of ceremonies goes for three consecutive days alone to the field to harvest daily at least a handful of rice. If he fails to do so people think he is "*nahabago*" tired of work, and will not profit from the harvest even if the rice is well grown.

It is a general practice in Leyte and also in Samar that the one who starts harvesting must see to it that it is either on a day of "*Cabog-os*"—full moon, "*Guimata*"—first quarter of the moon, or "*Maghi-abot*"—moon rise at sunset. On those days the ocean tide is specially high and the farmer begs God (*ipimamomoga*) that the harvest might be as abundant as the tide. Should the high tide come at night the ceremonies are performed during the daylight tide. Towns in the interior of this island do not time the ceremonies with the hour of hightide, although they observe the day of "*Cabog-os*", "*Guimata*", or "*Maghi-abot*".

2) **Secrecy**:—Some municipalities are rather strict in enforcing the secrecy of the ritual. Villaba requires that the master of ceremonies must

not be seen. If he is talked to on the way to the rice field he is not permitted to respond, otherwise the ceremonies are invalid. La Paz in the center of Leyte also strictly enforces secrecy. Other places such as Tacloban are not so rigorous; even a second person may attend the ceremonies. But also here the master of ceremonies should perform the rites in silence, because they are a sacred act.

3) **The Master of Ceremonies** :—The master of ceremonies in Villaba is the landowner. In other places old women and men who know the ceremonies are requested to perform them (photo 5); a close relative is preferred, so in La Paz, Palo, Tacloban. The master of ceremonies conceals the way of performing the ritual. At old age he confers the secret to the one in his household he judges best fitted. This is not necessarily the oldest son or daughter. The ceremonies as such have many variations. Two basic types may be distinguished. First, the old type—worshipping nature; second, the newer type—worshipping God. The latter type is more common, and has transformed and christianized nature worship.

4) **Preparations** :—The articles used in the ritual vary according to customs of the master of ceremonies; thus, in the same municipality various objects are used by different persons. Generally speaking the variety is based on articles which symbolize *heavy weight*—like stones; *strength*—like the leaves of “*tagbag*”; *plenty*—like fine sand; *closeness and density*—like “*tacob*”, a shell sticking to the stones. The articles are sometimes hidden in a little secret bag, so in La Paz. In Villaba and at the West Coast in general this is called “*libi*” which is an amulet protecting against evil. “*Libi*” is a general term, there are “*libi*” for taking a bath, childbirth, first walk of children, etc. The “*libi*” for harvesting rice is called “*ga-id*”; it is made up of fine sand; of “*dool*”—roots sprouting from the ground near the seashore; of “*tacob*”—shells sticking firmly and closely to the stones in the sea.

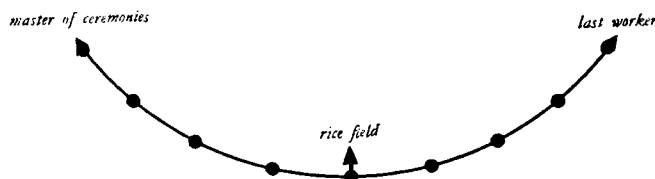
These objects taken from surrounding nature are a carry over from ancient times and are nowadays accompanied by religious articles, like a blessed candle (Palo and Villaba), a cross made out of blessed palm-leaves from the last Palm Sunday (Tacloban) and (Villaba).

5) **The Ceremonies** :—The selection of the spot in the rice field is left to the master of ceremonies. He selects a spot where there is plenty of rice (Tacloban), but for reason of convenience it is mostly the corner of a rice field. In Villaba the “*ga-id*” is placed where the water starts its course, preferably east. Opposite where the “*ga-id*” is placed the master of ceremonies stands and begins the rites. Upon arrival he lays down his instruments and articles, then he either kneels down, thus in Tacloban, Palo, La Paz; or he keeps standing by facing East—when possible—thus in Villaba,

and starts praying (photo 6). Most often it is the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary which is said, so in Palo, Villaba, Tacloban. In Abuyog the Rosary is recited. After the prayer and in some places during the prayer the first rice is cut. The left hand carries symbolic objects like "tagbag", stones,¹⁾ shells, etc., to secure plenty of rice (photo 7 and 8). The right hand using the "cayog" cuts the rice ears from the stem (photo 9 and 10). This is done in a careful and symbolic way. In Tacloban the cutting is done in silence, lightly bending from the left to the right side and viceversa, making short steps hoping that there will be a handful of rice at each step. The master of ceremonies has to be careful not to drop any ear because that symbolizes waste and it is feared that the workers who do the harvesting will also waste much rice.

In Tacloban the rice is cut in three shifts, first six ears, then seven and finally nine; these are laid upon each other, symbolizing abundance²⁾. Thereafter three rice stalks are taken, bound in one knot and then hidden among the other stalks from where the ears were taken. This hiding is symbolic for the wish that there should be more ears than stalks.

In places where the actual harvesting starts right after the ceremonies, the workers are called now to the field. It is interesting to notice that in the harvesting process with many helpers "mananabang" a certain ritual is followed. In Villaba the master of ceremonies stays always at the left side of the "mananabang" seeing to it that the last man or woman from him is a little bit advanced of the group and always directly in line with the master of ceremonies. In this way a curve is formed in the center (see figure)



1) Stones are widely used in the rice harvesting ceremonies in Leyte. Besides symbolizing plenty, they are used for other symbolic expressions. An 80 year old rice farmer in Tacloban at Km. 4 towards Babatngon uses in his ceremonies several stones. One stone to beg God that the rice will dry as easily as the stone. A second stone to beg God that the rice will be easy to pound. A third stone to beg God that the rice will not easily spill from the mortar when pounded. The old farmer uses in addition three other magic white stones "mutya" to beg God that the harvest might work wonders and that the rice be heavy.

There is still another use of stones in Tacloban; the master of ceremonies returning home from the rice field after performing the rites should see to it that the first thing he touches is a heavy object, preferably a stone to indicate increase in weight of the rice.

2) Another practice in Tacloban is to cut seven rice stalks at every corner of the field. These 28 rice stalks are laid on two "togop" leaves and covered with two other "togop" leaves, then placed in a row facing East where the sun rises, because—as the informant said—the Savior is there.

symbolizing the weight of the rice because of its abundance. The harvesting continues until 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. If not finished, the helpers have to continue the following morning. When the field is harvested, everyone who participated in the work threshes the rice he has harvested and the work is ended with each one getting his share.

The share varies from municipality to municipality. It is depending on the classification of owner, tenant and helper. A further consideration is the capital invested in seedlings, work animals and labor.

In other places where the main harvesting does not start at the same day when the ceremonies are finished, the master of ceremonies goes home taking along the newly cut rice ears; he dries them; he takes care that chicken and pigs cannot reach the rice. Dry banana leaves are put on the rice hoping that all rice in the future will dry as well and fast as these banana leaves (Tacloban). In Villaba a match is lit over the rice, symbolizing fast and quick drying. After this first rice is dry, it is pounded with the fist or feet (photo 11), thereafter with the pestle, care being taken that no grain scatters which would mean loss (photo 12). Thereafter the rice is cooked. In Tacloban this is done by mixing in some sugarcane to make it tasty, hoping that in the future all rice will be as tasty. Special care is taken in cooking sufficiently so all family members can eat and still some of it be left over, symbolizing that the family will have plenty to eat in the future. In other municipalities the same custom of leaving something in the pot prevails. In La Paz, however, the master of ceremonies eats the first rice alone and without any other course. After a few weeks neighbors are invited for a meal in honor of San Isidro; quite often a *novena* is held and Holy Mass is said. In Abuyog and Burauen the first cut rice is given to the priest.

The "*Pasalamat*" or thanksgiving dinner at the end of the harvesting season is in some towns (Jaro, Burauen, Abuyog) well observed. A symposium dinner is prepared in honor either of San Isidro, the Blessed Virgin, or the deceased owners and tenants of the rice field. Some families still follow the custom from pre-Christian times to bring a part of the dinner to the rice field that the spirits might have their merriment. This custom is discarded by most families; instead, relatives and friends are invited to join the "*pasalamat*".

In conclusion it may be stated that the ritual of the rice harvest on the island of Leyte has a strong personal note insofar as nature symbols and prayers are used according to the taste and experience of the master of ceremonies.

A common feature with all rituals is the symbolism expressed in the articles employed from surrounding nature. Formerly a magic power was ascribed to the different articles and it was believed that these articles transmitted certain qualities to the rice by their mere presence. Today these

articles are used as symbolic expression of such qualities as the landowner or master of ceremonies may ask God to bestow on the rice. One might call the use of these articles—symbolic prayer.

Pure nature worship is to the educated Christian Filipino farmer no longer acceptable. In the new form this ritual may survive in the same way as the "Wettersegen" and the "Feuerweine" (Holy Saturday) in Germany survived, which both received a new Christian meaning in the Middle Ages and are now found in the official Roman Catholic Ritual.

III. RICE STORING RITUAL IN LEYTE

A colorful rice ritual accompanied the planting, the growing and the harvesting of rice. The ritual of storing the rice has been developed in Carigara—a prosperous and good Catholic community in Northern Leyte—to an impressive ceremony.

After harvesting the farmer with his helpers will bring the *palay* bundles to a *nipa*-shack, the rice granary. This rice granary, called "*dapa*", is located near the rice field. Large containers called "*likid*" and woven out of bamboo are placed in the "*dapa*".

The farm-owner or his substitute starts the ceremony. The *palay* which has been harvested first, is placed in the form of a cross in the "*likid*". The leader performs the act seriously and acts like a priest functioning at Holy Mass. Silence is strictly observed during the ceremony by the members attending the performance. Certain prayers are recited by the master of ceremonies.

After the first bundles of *palay* have been arranged inside the "*likid*" in the form of a cross, the helpers begin to place carefully the rest of the *palay*. The farmer believes that in performing this ceremony the *palay* will not be easily consumed and rats or insects will not eat it; nor will the *palay* rot in the container; starvation will be kept away and this *palay* will last till the next harvest. The *palay* in the "*likid*" is never totally used up. A few handful must remain to be mixed with the first *palay* of the coming harvest. They believe that in doing so the *palay* will continue to pour into the "*likid*", and the next harvest will always abound. The process of combining the old *palay* with the new one is called "*gin papa-abut-aleutan*."

IV. ANIMISM IN THE RICE RITUAL OF LEYTE AND SAMAR

The pagan Filipino farmer made offerings to the sun and moon, rain, thunder, and lightning as the gods who gave him rice. He offered sacrifices

of good will to them during the planting season and again of thanksgiving in one form or another during the harvest season.

Hand in hand with nature worship went the ancestor or “*anito*” worship. The farmer considered his dead ancestors, who had been farmers also, as the guardians of his field; or he believed that blessed spirits, *encantados*,¹⁾ lived in the field protecting his crops. The farmer, therefore, worshiped them too.

In places where the influence of the Catholic Church has only been sporadic and loose this ritual is partially preserved. In Catholic strongholds like Tacloban and Palo the “*anito*” worship is practically no longer in existence.

1) **Securing permission for clearing a field:**—In Kawayan (Northwest Leyte) the farmer asks before clearing a new rice field the permission of the spirit who is dwelling on the land. He kills a pig and a white rooster to feed the spirit. After this he proceeds to clearing the field.

In Northwest Leyte a story is told of a farmer who wanted to clear a piece of forest to plant rice. When he started working, he became suddenly afraid that “*agtas*”,²⁾ black spirits, might dwell in this place, so he stopped working and tried to get home. But the “*agtas*” punished him. He could not find his way back to the house and was lost in the forest. When he had wandered around and become tired he remembered the old cure for finding home. He changed on the spot his clothes by turning them inside out.³⁾ In this way the farmer found home, but he was afraid that “*agtas*” might further punish him, if he continued clearing the forest. He, therefore, called a quack doctor who told him to secure a white pig and a red rooster. At six o'clock p.m. the quack doctor and the farmer went to the place where

1) “*Encantada*” is a fairy of white complexion. According to the belief today in Leyte, these fairies or *encantados* are spirits who live like men with their belongings in big trees and other selected places. They can appear to men they like. They come out of their places at moonlit nights and appear to men. If offended they may do harm until they are pacified by sacrifices which consist of a brown hen, a pig, or a goat. The food has to be brought close to the place where “*encantados*” are supposed to live.

2) The “*agta*” is a spirit of black complexion who accepts the form of man. He lives in forests and swamps. In Leyte these black spirits are believed to be small people, in Samar they are believed to be big, tall, and black.

A similar spirit is the “*agboy*”. The *agboys* are dwarfs and possess magic power. They usually live in forests and in the farms far from town. They eat fruits of trees, but they also like the food of men. They are friendly towards men and visit them often in their house; they eat their food, but they will not sleep in the house. They are specially useful in finding lost articles. If there is a quarrel in the house, the *agboy* will disappear, he likes to make friends only with those who are peaceful and calm. He whistles as a signal for his coming. (Folk-belief in Leyte and Samar).

3) This is to fool the *agta*, who does not recognize the farmer anymore. Another explanation: The spirits make fun with the bewildered farmer.

agtas were believed to reside. Upon arriving the quack doctor in a squatting position uttered his prayers and then shouted: "You *agtas*, living in this place where my friend is making a clearing I command you to go away. Here are the payments for your home. Go right now, for if you will not do so, I'll kill all of you." Following his words he threw the white pig and the red rooster in the forest and went home. On the following day the farmer continued the clearing.

In another place near Pastrana (Central Leyte), the farmer when clearing a forest for planting, in a polite way addresses the "*encantados*": "I would like to cut down these big trees; if you are living here, please move out; look for another forest." If the farmer hates his neighbor or any other person who owns a forest or has big trees growing in his parcel, the farmer would mention the name of his enemy so that the "*encantados*" would move to his enemy's place and molest him.

2) **Spirit meal before planting**:—A barrio 45 kilometers away from Abuyog has still an elaborate ritual of "*anito*" worship. This barrio is secluded and can be reached only by a "*sakayan*" or "*banca*" (small boat). Most people of this barrio come to town only once a year during Lenten Season. This explains partly the adherence to old practices.

Before the planting season the owner prepares a big meal with meat, fish, rice, rootcrops, and other delicacies. Relatives and friends are invited to this meal. Before the meal actually starts, the farm owner with the members of his family and visitors bring the most delicious food and drinks to the place where planting will take place. There they pray and sing and offer the delicacies to the spirits of their dead and to the invisible owners of the land. They call strange names and invite the spirits to take their meal. After this ceremony they go back to the farmstead for a celebration which includes eating, drinking and dancing.

The following day the owner wakes up early and goes to the field. If he finds out that there is still plenty of food left from the previous day he will not proceed with planting, because he believes that the spirits do not favor his intention to plant, and would punish him for doing so. In case he finds most of the food consumed (which is often done by hungry neighbors, friends and wild pigs) he goes home, calls his helpers and planting starts. He believes that the spirits favor him and that the harvest will be abundant.¹⁾

In Balangiga (West Samar) the ceremonies for planting differ slightly. When the field is cleaned for planting and the seedlings are ready, rice and two chickens, male and female, are cooked in a pot. Early in the morning, the master of ceremonies who according to Balangiga farmers' belief is

1) Similar meals for the spirits are held in Pastrana, Leyte-Leyte, and Burauen. And especially in many places in Samar: Darangan, Basey, Homonhon, Balangiga.

endowed with extraordinary powers, goes alone to the place of planting with his cooked rice and chickens. He places the food on a small table facing the rice field. Then he prays to God for the dead, and against the evil spirits. Nobody knows the exact words of the prayer except the master of ceremonies, because according to the farmers these powers are inherited. The farmers were told that the theme of this prayer is to call for the dead and let them feast on the rice as their share of the past harvest. They hope that in the next planting the spirits will help them to have a better harvest.

The master of ceremonies also calls for the evil spirits to feast on the chickens so that the chickens will fly with the evil spirits away to a far distant land where they could no longer bother the farmer.¹⁾ After inviting or summoning his dead ancestors to feast, the master of ceremonies leaves the place for four or five hours. Then the master of ceremonies goes back and takes the food from the table to his house where his family eats all believing that the spirits have already eaten. The next day rice planting can begin.

Referring to the extraordinary powers of the master of ceremonies, the farmers of Balangiga say that for decades these powers have run thru one family and its close relatives. At present there is only one man in Balangiga who has these powers. When he dies, his son will succeed him. If he should refuse because of education and position, he would suffer the consequences. The farmers believe that the spirits would punish him. He either would become blind, crippled or his face would rot. Then the successor will be a relative who is closest to that family.

3) **Promoting growth**:—After the planting is finished the owner picks a handful of rice and throws it in all directions saying: “This is for the animals and insects which intend to taste my plants. I hope that you defend my plants from harm, and watch over my plantation until harvest season so I can serve you once more in payment for your goodness and cooperation.”²⁾

When the rice plants have grown seven inches high, the farmer kills a red rooster. With its blood he goes around the rice field. At every corner of the field he puts a drop of blood on the rice leaves. Upon reaching the place where he started he prays to the spirits that they may take good care of his plants. This performance is called “*Pagpumas*”.³⁾

4) **Curing sick rice**:—Should the rice in one place of the planted field not grow well, the owner calls a “*tambalan*” (quack-doctor). He believes that in that particular corner of the field a spirit got angry and killed some

1) Similar belief in the Povice of Leyte in the towns of: Alangalang, Pastrana, Santa Fe, San Miguel.

2) Practiced in Calubian, Leyte.

3) *ibid.*

of the rice plants. The owner, therefore, securing the help of the “*tambalan*” prepares a meal for the spirit and apologizes to the spirit, trying to pacify him with a good meal. He also apologizes to the souls of the former landowners and asks forgiveness for his having neglected them.¹⁾

Another method of curing diseased rice plants is the method of “*pagluon*” (smoking) which is practiced in many municipalities of Leyte and Samar. The owner with a kind of incense, “*camangyan*”, goes around the rice field. The incense is placed in a coconut shell with a fire in it to keep it smoking as the farmer goes around the field. While walking he prays to St. Isidro (this is Christian influence; in other places there is the invocation of spirits) that he may drive away the diseases, watch over his plants, and make the rice field productive.²⁾

In some places of Western Samar, the farmer of an infested rice field employs the only son or daughter of a family to cure this sickness. This person builds a fire at the corner of the rice field using the skin of animals (nowadays also old tires of trucks) and leaves which produce plenty of smoke. In addition he places some lysol on the sides or boundaries of the field. After this he goes three times around the field. This is done at twilight when nobody can see it and even the birds have gone to their resting place.

5) **Protecting the growth of rice:**—If the rice is putting on grains the farmer again is afraid that spirits from the forest might be envious seeing the golden grains of rice. The farmer in Basey believes that these spirits have the power to reverse the growth of the rice so that at harvest time one will find empty ears without any rice.

To avert this calamity the farmer builds open fires around the rice field. This fire is fed with wood and other substances deep out of the forest. The smoke of this fire and its odor keeps the spirits away, so that they may not harm the growth of the crop.

6) **Spirit meal before harvest time:**—As soon as the rice is ripe for harvesting the landowner calls his most trusted tenent to serve as master of ceremonies “*paratikang*”. The wife of the tenant reaps a few *gantas*³⁾ of the new *palay*⁴⁾ and makes rice cakes “*suman*” and many other delicious dishes. She also prepares a strong black tea, strong chocolate, a few cups of *tuba*⁵⁾ together with cooked chicken or pig. Afterwards this food is placed in small rations at the center of a small portable table; surrounding

1) Practiced in Burauen, Leyte.

2) Practiced in Calubian, Leyte.

3) *Ganta*, is a volume measure. One *ganta* cleaned rice contains 2.30 kg; one *ganta* of *palay* contains 1.72 kg.

4) *Palay* is the unhulled rice grain.

5) *Tuba* is a fermented drink from the sap of the coconut tree.

them are the drinks in small cups or glasses. The master of ceremonies accompanied by members of his family, relatives and friends, brings the food to the field where the *palay* is to be harvested. Only the master of ceremonies and two close assistants go into the field, the rest stay about 50 feet away. The master of ceremonies with a loud, but polite voice calls the names of the spirits inviting them to come and eat. The master of ceremonies and his two assistants taste a bit of every kind of the food and nib at the drink on the table to assure the spirits that the food and drinks are all right. After tasting, they all leave the scene with permission of the spirits who are already supposed to be enjoying the party. Food and table are left in the same position until the following morning; then the same persons who performed the ceremony in the evening dispose of the food and table.¹⁾

Similar practices exist in many places of Western Samar, but the arrangement of foods and drinks vary slightly. So is in Basey the food prepared without any spices, because spirits, it is believed, do not like spices and salt.²⁾ In Basey the master of ceremonies starts around six o'clock in the evening. He calls the spirits of the rice fields, of the mountains, and the dead ancestors. He thanks them for not having done any harm to his rice. If this thanksgiving ceremony is not performed, the people believe, the rice would be, little by little, taken away by the spirits.

The animistic elements in this Rice Ritual of Leyte and Samar are evident. They are practiced in barrios distant from the municipality where Catholic influence has been weak. The people are baptized Catholics but mostly uneducated in Catholic doctrine. They have no difficulty in combining their Catholic religion with the spirit worship. It is to be mentioned that these spirits are not adored or venerated in the strict sense. God alone, who is believed to be the creator of these spirits, receives the supreme worship of adoration. The spirits are believed to be powerful; therefore the people like to play safe both with God as well as with the spirits.

Many of middle and high class Filipinos are unaware of this animistic worship; they did not believe the writer until confronted with facts. Some rich landowners were aware that their tenants performed some strange rites, but few had knowledge of what it was all about. They stated that they have to permit their tenants to perform these ceremonies, otherwise they would become worried and unhappy.

There is a Christianized Rice Ritual in Leyte which is only a few steps away from animistic worship. This ritual is better known and has already been treated by the writer.

1) Practiced in Leyte, Leyte.

2) Saltless cooking for spirits is practiced also in other municipalities of Leyte, for example Calubian.

V. GLOSSARY OF THE RICE RITUAL IN LEYTE AND SAMAR

(For checking the field notes and additional explanations the author is indebted to the members of the Faculty of St. Paul's ColleSe, Tacloban City, Leyte Province)

LEGEND:

- W—Waray-waray dialect (Samar and Eastern Leyte)
 C—Cebuano dialect (Western Leyte, Bohol or Cebu)
 T—Tagalog (National Language)
 S—Spanish
 E—English

1) Names and Description

A—

1. *Abo* —Stove (W)
 Fine ashes from the stove used in Rice planting ritual.
2. *Anito* —Spirits of ancestors (T)
 Worship of the spirits of ancestors.
3. *Anting-anting* —Charm, amulet.

B—

1. *Bagacay* leaves —A type of slender bamboo (W)
 Kinds :
 a) *bagacay*—smallest, softest
 b) *patong*—biggest, hardest
 c) *tangnan*—thorny, rough
 d) *kawayan*—smooth and shiny
 A type of bamboo, soft, and the smallest of them
 all, joints are longer than on the other types.
2. *Bakod* —Yard, fence (T)
 Kudal or *atabay* (W)—fence
 Natad (W)—yard
3. *Banda* —Orchestra in Waray-waray
4. *Binbe* —A well selected grain of *palay* for planting or sowing
 (seedling).
 Gabi—seedling (W)
 Semilla—seedling (S)
5. *Boro-boro* —Spring, or sand around a spring which is used in the
 Rice planting ritual (W)
6. *Bugas* —Uncooked rice (W)
7. *Bubat* —To thank the spirits who were responsible for the
 good harvest (W)

- C—
1. *Caingin* —Slash and burn migratory farming.
 2. *Calipayan* —A certain kind of shrub used in Rice planting ritual.
(W) (Symbol of happiness, also used for medicine, put into bathing water).
- D—
1. *Daba'* —Cooking pot for rice, made from clay (W)
 2. *Dapa* —Rice Granary (W)
 3. *Dawa* —A kind of brown rice (W)
One kind of rice, small, round and brown
 4. *Diwata* —Superstitions in general (W)
- G—
2. *Gani* —Rice seeds (W)
 2. *Ginpapaabut-abutan* —Process of mixing old *palay* with the new one (W)
 3. *Guimata* —New Moon (W)
- H—
1. *Hap-ong* —Stacked grain stalks (many forms). A pile of *palay*
(W)
 2. *Hinasok* —The finished hole; the planted rice (W)
Hasok—A piece of wood for making holes
 3. *Hongot* —Coconut shell like a dipper used for drinking (W)
 4. *Hongod* —Religious ritual performed before planting rice, corn
and root crops (W)
 5. *Humbas* —Low tide (W)
- I—
1. *Ipinamomogas* —A magical word for opening a new kind of work
(W)
- K—
1. *Kabog-os* —Full Moon (W)
 2. *Kaboy-non* —Spirits of trees (W)
 3. *Kamangyan* —A kind of incense—is placed in a coconut shell with
a fire in it to keep it smoking. The process is
called "*Paglu-on*" (W)
 4. *Karatong* —A bamboo instrument used for calling the people
in the barrio (W)
 5. *Kata-ob* —High Tide (W)
 6. *Kawara* —Last Quarter of the moon (W)
 7. *Kayog* —A small blade with handle used in cutting the grain
stalk (W)
- L—
1. *Libi* —Amulet used in harvest ceremonial (C)
 2. *Likid* —*Palay* container for storing purposes. *Likid* or *bang-
kat*—large, hollow basket used for storing rice of
corn (W)

3. *Linopak* —Pounded *pinipig* with grated coconut and sugar (W).
Camotes may be pounded also to make *linopak*.
- M—
1. *Mabagoban* —Instrument used for calling tenants (W)
 2. *Maghiabot* —First Quarter of the Moon (W)
 3. *Magbobongod* —Master of ceremonies at the Rice Planting Ritual (W)
 4. *Mamban* —Plant like a rattan used for tying (W). Sometimes used in basket weaving.
 5. *Mutya* —Magic white stone
- N—
1. *Nabahago* —Tired of work
 2. *Nigo* —Instrument used for winnowing. (Note: *Nigo* and *takyab* go together; *Palid*—act of winnowing; *paliran*—place of winnowing)
- O—
1. *Obay* —Grain stalk (W)
 2. *Opong* —Bundle of grain stalks. Size dependent on locality. Usually as much as one hand can clasp. Rice is bundled to measure share of harvesters (W)
- P—
1. *Pagbalos* —To repay (not only in money but in work and kindness) (W)
 2. *Pagbari* —To harvest (W)
 3. *Paghap-ong* —To stack the stalks to dry to make threshing easy (W)
 4. *Pagkawat* —Stealing (planting of the seedlings without the knowledge of the owner; Samar Rice Ritual) (W)
 5. *Pagkutos* —Act of separating grain stalk from plant by using the *kayog*.
 6. *Pagligid* —To go around. (They harvest one meter around the field) (W). Samar Rice Ritual
 7. *Paglo-on* —To smoke; to dry
(*Paglo-on* does not only refer to or is not done only for rice fields but also to copra, fish, to babies, when something frightens them, or even adults) (W)
 8. *Pagdalos* —To cut grass with a *bolo* (W)
 9. *Pagmayaw* —Ceremony of offering food to the Spirits (W). Spirits' meal in the forest. *Caingin* system.
 10. *Pagsabod* —Sowing in the rice bed (Act of dispersing) (W)
 11. *Pagtanom* —Planting the sprouted seedlings (W)
 12. *Palay* —Unhusked rice (W-T-E)
Different names :—
a) *humay*—many grains of rice (W)
b) *tipasi*—one grain of rice (W)

13. *Palayan* —Rice field (whether or not holding rice) (T)
14. *Palid* —Winnowing. (*Pagpalid*—to winnow or separate the good grain from the chaff). *Takyab*—also to winnow (W)
15. *Paliran* —Winnowing platform (W)
16. *Pamabin* —Distributing shares—to harvesters at harvest; to threshers at threshing (including tenants share), etc. (W)
17. *Pamogas* —Planting time—to scatter the seeds (W)
18. *Pamoro-boot* —To think over (W)
19. *Panabi* —Asking excuse or permission from the spirit dwellers. (Example: If a tree is to be cut where spirits are to dwell, their permission is asked) (W)
20. *Panara-on* —To harvest in other peoples' land on share basis (W). (People from one barrio may go to the neighboring or even farther barrios)
21. *Panggih* —Harvest time (W). (Can also be "*katbari*")
—Pulling seedlings from seed beds, beating them on the ground to remove ground from roots and bundling them for the planters (W)
22. *Panba-uli* —A kind of shrub with long, reddish-brown leaves used for medicine.—Drives away diseases (W)
Panhauli means to recover. Used also for treating sprains by wrapping around injured parts.
23. *Panbiligad* —Used to denote the act of harvesting *palay* which was left behind during the regular harvest because they were still young or those left behind by careless workers (W)
24. *Paratikang* —Beginner. Technical term for master of ceremonies at rice harvesting (W)
25. *Pasalamat* —Thanksgiving (W-T)
26. *Pinipig* —Pounded young *palay* (T)
Pilipig—(W)—Young harvested, fresh *palay* is toasted and then pounded until flattened.
27. *Pinudlanan* —Killing of a red rooster and offering it to the spirits of the tree, which will be cut down.
- S—
1. *Sabod* —A term applied for sowing of rice (W). Denotes the rice bed with growing seedlings (W)
Sabot—abaca fiber (W)
2. *Soni* or *Pagsoni* —An old term, not in use anymore. It means Thanksgiving Ceremony. *Pagsoni*—to thank. (Samar Rice Ritual).
3. *Suman* —Rice cakes mixed with sugar and coconut milk (W-T)

T—

1. *Tagaytay* (W) —(*Pilapil*—T) Terrace around level ground to hold water.
2. *Tagbak* —A long-stemmed, long-leaf plant. The fruits is creamy-white, round and with a crown on its head. The flowers are dangling from its stem resembling an orchid (W)
3. *Tanglad* —A plant whith long slender leaves with an aromatic flavor, also used to improve the flavor of a soup. Used in Rice planting ritual (W)
4. *Tigol* —A plant with thorns wherein the devils or pests will be pierced in case they attempt to eat the plants. Used in Rice planting ceremony (W)
5. *Togop* —A tree with broad leaves (similar to the bread fruit tree). The leaves of this tree are used to cover the newly cut rice ears, used also to place the first cut rice.
6. *Tuba* —Native intoxicating drink made of the juice of the coconut palm.
Kinds :—
a) *Babalina*—a well-prepared *tuba* constantly relieved of the sediments and drunk after weeks or even months of preparation.
b) *Lina*—*Tuba*, the white one without “*barok*”. Instead of the “*barok*” the young leaf is used to provide color to the drink.
c) *Babal*—real *tuba* with *barok* (the red coloring) usually drank the next morning after gathering.
d) *Cutil*—*Tuba* mixed with eggs and sugar.
7. *Tubay* —A charm against evil and a symbol of the lushness of the *palay* to grow. It consists of several plants collected by the farmer and is planted at the middle of the field. (C)

U—

1. *Umo-ukoy* —Unseen spirits (*Encantados*) (W)

Y—

1. *Yatak* —One of the steps in the preparation of the rice fields for planting—to make the field muddy. (W)

2) Topical Arrangements

I. Instruments used in rice culture :

- a) *Arado* —plow
- b) *Haro* —harrow
- c) *Pala* —spade

- d) *Cayog* —a small, sharp blade used for cutting rice stalks.
- e) *Sangod* —amulet or charm
- f) *Bolo* —a blunt-edged instrument for tilling the soil.
- g) *Pakaras* —an instrument made of wood with iron teeth placed inches apart used to clean the rice fields of grass.

II. Musical Instruments :

- a) *Sista* —guitar
- b) *Celindron* —harmonica
- c) *Flawta* —flute
- d) *Cumbanchero* —a group of boys each one having a different instrument. The drum used is a can. Other instruments are *maracas*, *tom-tom*, harmonica, guitar, etc.

II. Names of Different Rice Cultures in Waray-waray :—

- a) *Tugas* —hard
- b) *Hagna* —Lowland, rice field
- c) *Tanuman* —not exactly lowlands because rice can also be planted in uplands.

IV. Preparation of the Soil :

- a) *Sangrot* —to cut the grass and lay it flat to facilitate plowing (W)
- b) *Pag-arado* —first plowing (W)
- c) *Pagpakaras* —Harrowing (W)
- d) *Pagbali* or *pagbalabag*—cross-plowing (W)
- e) *Pag-gubal* —to pulverize the ground or break remaining big cakes of mud to even the ground.
- f) *Payatak* —Breaking of remaining big cakes of mud to even the ground (W)
- g) *Pagsorod* —with the use of a tooth-pegged comb pulled by a *carabao*, the ground is levelled to hold water better. (W)

V. Spirit Names :—(W)

- a) *Encantada* —Fairy of white complexion
- b) *Dewinde* —Giants
- c) *Agboy* —Kind of bird who whistles in the night. It is believed that when you imitate the whistle of this bird it will come to you and scratch you with its long claws. This is a harmful bird.
- d) *Agtá* —Black, small people (spirits) living in the swamps. (In Samar, it is said that these *agtas* are big, tall, black people living in the forest).

VI. Threshing :

- a) *Giri-okan* —Platform for threshing (W)
- b) *Tagik* —Split bamboo flooring with platform (W)
- c) *Pag-gi-ok* —To thresh (W)

VII. Winnowing :

- a) *Pagpalid* —To winnow (makes use of the wind. Separates the good grains from the bad grains) (W)
- b) *Pagtabop* —To separate the rice from the chaff by the use of the *nigo* (W)
- c) *Pagtakyab* —To take out the remaining chaff. Rice is already clean.
- d) *Pagsisig* —To separate the rice from the remaining grains.

3) Species of Rice on Leyte Island

<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>
A—	
1. <i>Abaa</i>	—Short husk. Grain is short. Sweet odor.
2. <i>Agaw-buhay</i>	—Tiny grains with slippery husk. (T)
3. <i>Apostol</i>	—Grain is long and white. Husk is yellowish.
4. <i>Aragon</i>	—Brown husk. Grain white.
5. <i>Australian rice</i>	—It is white. Big and long. Husk is yellowish.
B—	
1. <i>Baa</i>	—Round and white grain.
2. <i>Babay</i>	—Yellowish husk. Long grain.
3. <i>Baranay</i>	—Longer grain. White.
4. <i>Bayanghang</i>	—Big and long. White grain. It is soft.
5. <i>Binagakay</i>	—Red husk. Red grain.
6. <i>Binangabon</i>	—Grain red. White and Long.
7. <i>Binnaya</i>	—Long. White grain.
8. <i>Binubuwa</i>	—Husk yellow. White grain.
9. <i>Binulawan</i>	—Yellow husk. Oblong, white grain.
10. <i>Buratnaga</i>	—Small and long and the seed is white.
D—	
1. <i>Diamante</i>	—Golden skin. White grain.
H—	
1. <i>Hamanti</i>	—Very tiny and slippery, white grain.
2. <i>Hantik</i>	—Black grain, white husk.
I—	
1. <i>Ilon-ilon</i>	—White and long.
2. <i>Inuring</i>	—Black, skin spotted black.
K—	
1. <i>Kaagbon</i>	—Black grain. White skin.
2. <i>Kabato</i>	—Hard, white and very small.
3. <i>Kabo-ong</i>	—Round. Red grain.
4. <i>Kaboret</i>	—Black grain. Used in <i>suman</i> (a kind of rice-cakes).
5. <i>Kabting</i>	—The seed is fine and pointed. White husk, white grain.
6. <i>Kabunay</i>	—Yellow husk. Yellow grain.
7. <i>Kaburaw</i>	—White Husk. Short. White grain.

8. *Kabus-ok* —Red skin and white grain. Round in shape.
9. *Kabuyok* —Yellow husk. White grain.
10. *Kabusay* —Long and white in color.
11. *Kagui-us* —Small and very white in color. Planted upland.
12. *Kaluis* —White husk. White grain.
13. *Kalumot* —Sweet odor. White grain.
14. *Kanegra* —Black husk. Black grain.
15. *Kaningo* —Small, long, yellow husk. White grain.
16. *Karawi* —It is big and white.
17. *Kawagwag* —Big, white grain.
18. *Kinarabaw* —Big, white grain.
19. *Kinarapi* —Black grain. Colored husk.
20. *Kinuto* —Very small seed. Black husk. White grain.
21. *Kuturan* —Yellow skin and white inside. White grain.

L—

1. *Lakba* —All red. (Unpolished rice)
2. *Linawa-an* —White grain. White skin.
3. *Lingkod* —White grain. Big size.
4. *Linomero* —White grain. White skin.
5. *Liporok* —Round. White grain.
6. *Lubang* —Long grain and white.

M—

1. *Macan* —Red grain. Brown husk.
2. *Magaya* —White grain. Stout. Has sweet flavor.
3. *Malang-ay* —Oblong in shape. Cream color.
4. *Mimis* —Small, long and white.
5. *Minas-ay* —White skin. White grain.
6. *Misamis* —Long and big. White grain.
7. *Mudbod* —Round and small. Yellow inside.

P—

1. *Panggasinan* —Long, white grain.
2. *Pilit*

Kinds :

- a) *tapul* —Violet grain.
 - b) *Ininsika* —Big seed. Long, white seed.
 - c) *Inarmi* —Large and long size.
 - d) *Minantika* —Large long size.
3. *Pinagaban* —White husk. White grain.
 4. *Purikit* —White husk. Fruit in cluster.
 5. *Putyukanon* —Spotted.

R—

1. *Ramilad* —Long and white seed.
2. *Remilletes* —Small seed. Very white.
3. *Rice Brook* —Round seed. White.

4. *Rinomiro* —Tiny and white seed.
- S—
1. *Samulawon* —White seed. Skin white gold.
2. *Saygon* —Long and white seed.
3. *Seniorita* —White seed. White husk.
4. *Simwak* —Small and long white seed.
5. *Sto. Nino* —White husk. White seed.

Illustrations to: Arens, Rice Ritual. Photos by A. van Gansewinkel, s.v.D.



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

1. The master of ceremonies carries two kinds of symbolic plants to the rice planting ceremony: 1) *tanglad*, that the rice be as lushy as this plant, 2) *panbauli*, that diseases be driven away.
2. The master of ceremonies plants the *panbauli* and *tanglad* herbs for the protection of the rice against plant diseases.
3. The master of ceremonies plants the first seven groups of seedlings in a very fast manner.



4. Groups of planters in a joyful mood.

Photo 4



5. The master of ceremonies enters the rice field to perform the rice harvesting ritual.

Photo 5



Photo 6

6. The master of ceremonies prays holding the *tagbag* leaves, the cross made of dry and blessed palm leaves.



Photo 7

7. The master of ceremonies puts down the *tagbag* leaves, the cross made of blessed palm leaves, and prays kneeling amidst the rice in one corner of the rice field.



8. The master of ceremonies hides a rice stalk under the rice hoping that there will be more ears than stalks. In the foreground cross, first cut rice ears and *tagbag* leaves.

Photo 8



9. The master of ceremonies cuts the first rice ears.

Photo 9



10. The first rice ear is cut with the *cayog*.

Photo 10



11. Rice is threshed in a primitive way by trampling upon the ears.

Photo 11



Photo 12

12. Pounding rice. The trough and pestle method.