

Let's Hope the Bile Is Good!

Aurora Ammayao with Gene Hettel

Naam-ami ya naguyud di himbulan ta potlang;
bilyon da'y pinanal;
ya napyuk ya kimmali da:
"Ay mabolnat di page."

After a month and a half,
they visit and inspect the rice seedlings,
and the leaves are bent down and they say:
"Ay, we transplant already the seedlings." [Dulawan 2003, ll. 487–90]

It seems like only yesterday that I last heard the chanting of the *Huuwa'n di Nabugbugan di Page*, the Ifugao account of the *Myth of the Origin of Rice* (as it has been translated; see Dulawan 2003). In my mind the voice of my father, Ammayao Dimmangna, rises above that of the other priests (*mumbaki*). This memory is particularly meaningful to me as I recall the life of my father, who passed away in April 2002. Nearly forty years earlier, in late June 1963, my father and his fellow *mumbaki* officiated at the annual Ingngilin, the rite (*baki*) for the rice harvest. They were in the granary of the richest or leading family (*tumoná*) in Tucbuban village of my home town (*barangay*) Amganad, nestled in the Cordillera Mountains of north central Luzon in the Philippines. Our family had no rice fields of its own, but my mother (Indanum Kinadduy), sisters, and I still lent a hand to our wealthier landowning neighbors in the various field activities throughout the Ifugao agricultural calendar. My father, a respected *mumbaki* at the time, officiated during many of the rituals associated with these activities (fig. 31.1).

Ipiya da'y baya da ya mangin-innum da;
painglayon da ya tobalon da'y
nundomang ya nunhalug;
hi nabugbugan di page.

They pour the wine and they drink;
after a while, they pray to and invoke
their ancestors on both sides
for the rite on the origin of rice. [Dulawan 2003, ll. 494–97]

Mumbaki Ammayao Dimmangna drinks rice wine during the Ingngilin/Ani harvest ritual. The striped cloth, or uloh an bayya-ong, that he wears is part of the traditional garb of the mumbaki. Photograph by Mervyn Keeney, Amganad, Banaue, Ifugao, 1975.

I remember hearing my father chanting one portion of the myth in which the ancient Ifugao brothers Wigan^I and Kabigat pour and drink rice wine (*baya*). They are



celebrating after having transplanted—for the very first time—our esteemed Ifugao rice, which was obtained earlier in the story in trade for fire from the gods of the Skyworld. As a twelve-year-old girl, I disliked the recitation of this ancient folk epic as an excuse for drinking rice wine—which is exactly what my father, the other *mumbaki*, and all the men present were doing at this stage of the harvest rite. I thought they were having all the “fun” above in the shade of the granary—telling stories, arguing, and getting drunk. Below in the fields under an intense midmorning sun, we women and girls, perhaps thirty-five in number and ranging in age from eight to seventy-eight, were actually harvesting the rice—much of which would end up as more wine to drink.

Across the valley I could hear reverberations of the loud squeals of the unfortunate pig that was being ritually sacrificed by one of the officiating *mumbaki*. This meant that it would be another three hours until early afternoon, when my fellow field hands and I could participate—at least in a small way—in the ongoing rite underneath the granary on the hill above us. Then we would be able to have our lunch, consisting of only some of the less-than-choice pieces of pork. The *mumbaki* and their male assistants would be given the best pieces of meat—although as one of the officiating *mumbaki*, my father would also get to take home a few of the finest cuts for the rest of us to eat later.

It was during those days that I asked myself: what kind of culture is this? I saw no merit or purpose in preserving such traditions, not that there was any sign of them disappearing back then. Nearly forty years later, the situation has changed dramatically. Many aspects of Ifugao culture seem to be on the brink of oblivion. My late father had given up the ways of the *mumbaki* for Christianity in the mid-1980s. In contrast, I, with three children of my own, have come full circle and feel that all Ifugao will lose an essential part of themselves if their culture is permitted to slip away.

Rice Rituals—Relegated to the Fading Memories of Retired *Mumbaki*

At one time detailed rituals covered all important facets of Ifugao life. There were rituals for birth (Wa'lin or Bagol); engagement (Moma); marriage (Tanig); prestige (Baya or Bumayah), such as inheriting rice fields; sickness (Honga); an aging father's final blessing over his children (Yabyab); headhunting (Ngayo), in a bygone era; and death (Nate). The various rituals associated with the growing of rice tied to the agricultural calendar, were once considered the most important of all from Lukat to Kahi (Barton 1946; Dulawan 2003; see box, pp. 453–54). Now it seems that some of the nonagricultural social rites (such as Honga and Tanig) are weathering the encroachment of modern society into our hinterlands better than most of the rice rites. The rice rituals, for the most part, have been relegated to the fading memories of retired *mumbaki* turned Christian, such as my father, or descriptions in musty old books written more than half a century ago.

Ifugao rice rituals evolved over centuries and were unfailingly performed throughout the year to protect the rice plants from pests and envious spirits, to ensure a good harvest, and to bless the rice. Traditional Ifugao deeply believe that these rites were taught to their ancestors by the gods, especially Dinipaan (the god of agriculture). The performance of these rites follows Dinipaan's teachings about the religious nature and significance of the culture of rice and is a means of honoring the covenant that the forebears of the Ifugao forged with the gods. The Ifugao once believed that neglecting to perform any or all of these rites would result in crop failure and/or grave illness in the family. Nowadays, however, few if any of these rites are observed on a regular basis; Kulpe/Kulpi and Ingngilin/Ani appear to be surviving the longest.

The names of these rituals and their content vary by location within Ifugao Province. The particular rites listed in the box on pages 453–54 are a composite of those



Mumbaki Buyuccan Udhuk sacrifices a pig during the Ingngilin/Ani harvest ritual. In the foreground, some of the first harvested rice bundles are also offered to the gods. The latter are represented by the *bulul* figure that is partially visible behind the raised hand of the participant at the left of the photograph. Photograph by Gene Hettel, Lugu, Banaue, Ifugao, 1995.

Representative Rice Rituals of the Ifugao

1. Lukat*

(October)—This rite accompanies the first weeding of the fields. With the sacrifice of a chicken, the *mumbaki* invoke the ancestral spirits and the deities to make sure that the field dikes are strong enough to hold the water so that the crop “abounds in life.”

2. Pudung*

(October–November) Just before the seedbed is planted, *runo* grass stalks are stuck upright and set all around the bed within the field. With a chicken sacrifice, the *mumbaki* implore the ancestral spirits and the deities to allow the field to be continually flooded, so that the crop will be plentiful when the seasons change and pests (such as rats, mice, birds, and other crop destroyers) and diseases will be “ashamed” to come to the field.

3. Loka*/Lukya†

(October–November)—The *mumbaki* perform this rite, sacrificing three chickens, in a family’s granary just before the start of the first working phase of the rice-growing season. This rite is the first one of the agricultural calendar in some districts and marks the first time that rice may be taken out of the granary for family consumption or for sale (Lukya) and as seed for planting (Loka). The *mumbaki* invokes the gods and ancestral spirits to bless the rice so that even a small amount will be enough to satisfy those who eat it.

4. Ugwid*/Hipngat†

(October–November)—The *mumbaki* perform this rite in the granary either before men begin spading the fields (Ugwid) or after the general field cleaning (Hipngat), when the fields are robust with vegetables planted on the mounds of decayed rice stalks and grasses. The purpose is to invoke the gods to bless the rice in the granary so that it will be safe, last a long time, and give the family strength and prosperity.

5. Panal†

(November)—This ceremony includes the sacrifice of four chickens in the granary. During the Panal (lit., “sowing”) the *mumbaki* ask the gods to bless the rice seeds so that they will all sprout and grow into robust

seedlings. The day after the ritual performance, a ceremonial period of idleness is observed. After this holy day of rest, the seed bundles called *binong-o* are taken to the seedbed (*panopnakan*). After being separated from the bundles, the panicles are carefully laid by hand on the mud four to six inches apart from one another in a vertical line. The first seed-laying in a given village must be done in the fields of the richest family (*tumoná*); other owners’ fields are seeded later.

6. Bolnat*†

(November–December)—In this rite, performed in the granary immediately prior to transplanting the rice seedlings, the *mumbaki* offer three or four chickens to the gods and ancestral spirits, asking them to bless the seedlings so that they will not wilt and die.

7. Kulpe*/Kulpi†

(December–January)—When the transplanting season is over, one or more *mumbaki* perform this rite, moving from house to house in the village and/or adjacent villages. It culminates at the granary of the *tumoná*, where the public feast (*hamul*) takes place. (In some districts stories from Ifugao’s oral literature [*liwliwa*] are chanted for entertainment while people wait for food to be cooked.) Villagers contribute chickens for the ritual, which marks the end of labor in the rice fields. Men and women are now free to do other necessary work—the men start clearing land for their swidden farms (*habal*) while the women weave.

8. Hagophop*†

(February–March)—About one month after the Kulpi, the *mumbaki* ritually sacrifice three chickens at the granary to open the weeding season (*ahikagoko*). They petition the gods to make the rice plants *humaping*, or robust with many tillers. After the rite, the women enter the fields to remove weeds and to replace dead or stunted rice plants with seedlings maintained in the *inhuj-un*, or reserve seedling bed.

9. Bodad†

(March)—Chickens are offered during this rite, which is performed in the granary during the wall-cleaning season (*ahidalu*). It is at this time that the rice plants are about to develop grains. The *mumbaki* petition the gods to make the plants bear as many grains as possible.

10. Paad*†

(April–May)—The *mumbaki* sacrifice a chicken during this rite, which takes place at the granary while the rice grains are maturing in the field. The people promise to abstain from eating fish, shellfish, snails, and other aquatic foods and legumes until after Kahi/Kahi. During the Paad, the gods are beseeched to make sure the rice plants yield a plentiful amount of grain.

11. Pokol*/Ngilin†

(June–July)—This rite is performed on the eve of the harvest in either the house (Pokol) or a given rice field about to be harvested (Ngilin). The Pokol is a feast that is meant to ensure the general welfare. It lasts all night and includes an *alim*, or ritual chant performed by high-ranking *mumbaki*, and invocations shouted very late at night. The ritual resumes the following morning before dawn. In Ngilin, the *mumbaki* offer a chick to the gods of covetousness and envy, the Umamo. The carcass is skewered and attached to the stem of a *bilau* reed with the leaves intact. The reed is then inserted into the dike of the main paddy where the rice is to be harvested before the female reapers arrive. The main purpose of the Ngilin is to implore this particular set of gods not to “covet” the rice harvest.

12. Inngilin*/Ani†

(June–July)—On harvest day, the ritual celebration is centered at the granary (fig. 31.2). While the women harvest the rice below in the field, the men gather at the granary to drink, talk, and argue in between the various phases of the ceremony performed by the *mumbaki*. They narrate the *Myth of the Origin of Rice* with variations that involve the discovery and planting of the original Ifugao rice by, alternatively, two brothers named Balituk and Kabigat (or Wigan and Kabigat) or only Wigan. If the rice field owner is affluent or is the first planter or leading family (*tumoná*) in the village or region, a pig is offered in addition to chickens. When a pig is sacrificed, a more elaborate version of the rite is performed. The pig is cut up and the meat is boiled until it is heated clear through. The women are called in from the field and each is given a piece of meat, which they carry to a basket of cooked rice. They squat around the basket and eat. Huge servings of the choicest cuts of meat are placed in baskets for the *mumbaki* and their assistants.

13. Upin†

(July)—This is a simple rite performed after the harvest season. The gods are invoked to bless the rice, the granaries, and the houses in the village. The *mumbaki* ask the gods to protect the people from sickness, famine, and pests and to help the community to be prosperous, healthy, and peaceful. The following day is a sacred day (*tungo*). No one may go to the rice fields for any reason whatsoever.

14. Tuldag*

(July)—When the village's rice crop is dry and ready to be stacked in the granary, a three-day period of ritual idleness is declared during which no one may leave the village. Each household that has a granary performs the Tuldag. In some districts, the rite includes the making of rice cakes sweetened by sugarcane juice.

15. Pompon*

(July)—Immediately after the Tuldag (or on the last day of ritual idleness), the rice is stacked in the granaries without further ritual. The one who stacks the rice must be a man whose fields supply him with enough rice to last his household the entire year, since the Ifugao maintain that there is a magical bond between the rice and its stacker. The rice stacker must observe continence until after the Takdog rite, and he may not bathe because the loss of anything from his body at this time would entail the loss of some of the rice.

16. Takdog*

(August)—This rite is performed communally by villagers from the whole region at the house of the *tumoná*. Certain fields in each region are, by custom, planted first, and the owner of those fields determines for the whole valley the time of spading, repairing the dikes, and planting. In central Ifugao, where this rite precedes either the Pompon or the three days of ceremonial idleness associated with the Tuldag, several mats are spread in a shady place in the village of the *tumoná* and the idols from all the granaries of the village are placed on them, together with ritual chests and any number of wine bowls. The granary figures (*bulul*) are doused with rice wine and their faces smeared with rice cakes, the making of which is a feature of the preparations. This rite marks the ritual termination of both the harvest and the rice year in many locations in central Ifugao.

17. Kahi*/Kahi†

(August)—Performed in the home, this rite is intended to release the people from their promise to the gods, made during the Paad, not to eat aquatic foods or legumes. After this rite, the people may eat fish, shellfish, snails, and legumes. In some locations, a ritual sweeping of the house also takes place and marks the end of the Ifugao calendar, which coincides with the end of the agricultural calendar.

enumerated and described by Roy Franklin Barton (1946)* for various districts in central Ifugao and Manuel Dulawan (2003)† for areas in and around Kiangan and Asipulo.

What If the Bile Is Bad?

Gibuwan da ya alan da'y manuk;
ya yabyaban da'y mabolnat;
gotngon da'y manuk ya ilugan da;
hupwikon da ya tibon da'y buwa na;
ya maphoda' abu.

They finish invoking and take out the chickens;
they fan-bless the seedlings to be transplanted;
they slit the chickens and singe them;
they cut them open and inspect the bile sacs
and the signs are good. [Dulawan 2003, ll. 498–502]

Most Ifugao rites, be they agricultural or social, have common threads, such as the *mumbaki* checking the contents of the bile sac of a chicken or pig for a good omen. Back in December 1984, because he wanted to understand my culture—and perhaps his future wife as well—Gene Hettel, my then soon-to-be-husband, hailing from America's Ohio heartland, welcomed an opportunity to partake in the Moma engagement ritual. This took place in Pugo village, near Banaue, where the Ammayao family had relocated in the 1970s.

My second cousin Gambuk Ballogan—still a *mumbaki* then (see fig. 31.12) from nearby Lugu, Amganad—inspected the bile sac of a just-sacrificed pig that Gene had purchased through the traditional mediator. I still remember him asking my cousin, “What if the bile is bad?” His response was, “It means the gods do not favor your pending wedding.” Now very concerned, Gene asked, “If the bile is bad, do I get another chance?” Gambuk replied, “Yes, you can buy a second pig!” Gene suspected that this could be a ploy for continued feasting on pork and rice well into the next day, but mercifully the first pig yielded “good” bile and the *mumbaki* blessed our engagement. Our relatives and friends in attendance declared, “Hiya peman, tinamtaman ta-uh chi inyali na” (Indeed, we bear witness; we tasted the pig he brought). We now had approval to carry out our planned wedding a few days later in the lowlands.

From *National Geographic* to UNESCO World Heritage Site

My husband is not alone as a foreigner with a keen interest in the Ifugao, who have been the subject of articles that date back to the early days of *National Geographic* magazine. Dean C. Worcester, then the secretary of the interior of the Philippine Islands, featured the Ifugao in a special issue of the publication, devoted entirely to the headhunters of northern Luzon. In it, he considered the Ifugao to be barbarians and excellent hydraulic engineers, as demonstrated by their marvelous rice terraces (Worcester 1912).

Nine decades later, foreigners are still fascinated with headhunting. The practice was abandoned long ago by the Ifugao, but we still have not escaped that moniker. In the book *The Last Filipino Head Hunters* (Howard 2001), we are described, along with our sister tribes the Bontoc and Kalinga, as having among our elders the last living headhunters in the Philippines. I seriously doubt that anyone now alive has ever been a headhunter.

Harold C. Conklin, a Yale University anthropologist who has devoted half a lifetime to studying the Ifugao, observed that “very few culturally distinguishable and similarly situated populations in Southeast Asia or the whole Southwestern Pacific, in general, have been written about more voluminously. The Ifugao are thus well known

for their intricate ritual and legal systems; for their distinctive patterns of bilateral organizations, sex, and warfare; for their rich oral literature and other artistic achievements [such as wood carving and basketry; see Capistrano–Baker et al. 1998]; and for their skills in agricultural terracing. Ifugao is a visually impressive, remarkably pagan and culturally persistent area” (Conklin 1968, iv).

Since Conklin wrote his observations in 1968, Ifugao culture has continued to generate fascination and curiosity. Although I am not necessarily implying that this has been a good thing or even a particularly welcome circumstance, my people have continued to attract the attention of government officials, missionaries, historians, artists, writers, travelers, celebrities, and even Hollywood film directors (*Apocalypse Now*, though ostensibly set in Vietnam, was filmed using an Ifugao cast).

Throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, there has been continued interest in the state of our rice terraces, which are threatened by erosion and neglect, and the related culture and rituals. In 1995 there was a flurry of activities and meetings in Manila and Banaue—some of which I attended—to formally nominate our rice terraces for inclusion in the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List as a protected cultural landscape (fig. 31.3). In one paper presented during these meetings, the Ifugao rice terraces were characterized as the very first magnificent “skyscrapers” and said to represent a unique living model of comprehensive integration of economic, sociocultural, and environmental processes (Concepcion 1995). Later that year the terraces joined the two other Philippine sites—Tubbataha Reef Marine Park and the Baroque churches of the Philippines—already on the UNESCO list.

In adding the terraces to the list, UNESCO stated: “For 2,000 years, the high rice fields of the Ifugao—which include by the way those not only in Banaue, but in Hungduan, Kiangnan, Mayoyao, and Asipulo—have followed the contours of the mountain. The fruit of knowledge passed on from one generation to the next, of sacred traditions and a delicate social balance, they helped form a landscape of great beauty that expresses conquered and conserved harmony between humankind and the environment.”² During its annual summit in December 2001 in Helsinki, UNESCO noted its continued deep concern for the rice terraces by putting them on its List of World Heritage in Danger. It stated, in part: “Despite efforts to safeguard the site by the Banaue Rice Terraces Task Force (BRTTF) and the Ifugao Terraces Commission (ITC), the BRTTF lacks full Government support and needs more resources, greater independence, and an assurance of permanence.”³

According to provincial governor Teodoro Baguilat (fig. 31.4), the terraces’ inclusion on UNESCO’s endangered list only six years after being designated a World Heritage Site is an embarrassment for the Philippine government (Cabreza 2001). Indeed, it seems that local authorities have done little or nothing to implement the necessary comprehensive management plans and corrective measures to help the Ifugao save the terraces. Since the beginning of 2002, there have been mixed signals from the Philippine government. In January President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo transferred jurisdiction of the terraces’ development from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of Tourism while at the same time releasing P 10,000,000 (US\$200,000) to start the preservation efforts (Ventura and de Yro 2002).

Baguilat has said that he would prefer to have fewer tourists in the area to facilitate the terrace’s preservation (Visaya 2002). He also stated that once the terraces are commercialized, more hotels and establishments will sprout like mushrooms. During a conversation I had with him at his Lagawe office in May 2002, he clarified that tourism could be a good strategy to help develop the rice terraces and provide additional income for the people. However, he still preferred that the terraces’ development be placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture instead of the Department of Tourism.



31.3

Women engage in the backbreaking work of transplanting rice. The Ifugao rice terraces were added to UNESCO’s World Heritage List as a protected cultural landscape in 1995. Photograph by Gene Hettel, Nabyon, Banaue, Ifugao, 1991.

“Although part of the country’s cultural heritage, the terraces are still primarily agricultural land,” he said. He is afraid that the goals of tourism officials may not always support what is really needed to preserve our rice terraces and best serve the people. “Let’s not preserve the terraces for the tourists, but for the Ifugao themselves,” he told me emphatically. I agree with Baguilat that the government should focus on issues of concern to Ifugao rice farmers, including infestations of rats and golden snails as well as enhancing the irrigation systems for mountain farms. Perhaps most important of all is educating our youth to appreciate that their culture revolves around rice cultivation—and to consider staying in the region instead of moving to the lowlands to make their fortunes.⁴

In February 2002, to the chagrin of many, the president abolished the BRTTF with Executive Order 72. This development has caused great alarm in the international community, particularly the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Archim Steiner, the IUCN director general, stated, “Mismanagement of this World Heritage Site is at a crucial stage. The abolition of its management body so early in its mandate could be a substantial threat to its future as a site of international and national outstanding universal value” (“Rice Terraces” 2002). If the Philippines continue to proceed down this path, we risk having the rice terraces removed from the UNESCO list altogether (Due 2002). In the meantime, politicians continue to discuss what to do. Some ordinary Ifugao citizens, for their part, express a wide range of feelings and are engaged in a variety of activities related to the preservation of Ifugao traditions and culture.

“We will make do with watching your tapes on television”

Since 1995, when my husband was stationed in the Philippines as a science writer and editor for the International Rice Research Institute, we have made an effort to record on videotape the various rituals associated with the rice-growing calendar. With the help of Ana Dulnuan-Habbiling, the matriarch of the same *tumoná* family in Tucuban for whom my late father sometimes officiated as a *mumbaki* at various rice rituals, we have been able to document many hours of ceremonies, particularly the post-transplanting rite (Kulpe) and the Ingngilin harvest rites (see fig. 31.10). We felt that we could at least show these tapes to our half-Ifugao children and future grandchildren, giving them a glimmer of understanding of what their mother’s culture once was.

Some professional Filipino videographers and filmmakers—namely Fruto Corre and Kidlat de Guia—have had the same idea. Corre recently won recognition from the Film Academy of the Philippines for his ethnographic work *Ifugao: Bulubunduking Buhay*, a forty-five-minute video that documents the painful dilemmas experienced by my people today. He skillfully establishes the connections between the terraces and our traditions—indeed, how they enrich and nourish each other. The video’s message is that if the terraces disappear, so will our tradition and culture. This tape has been commercially packaged and is sold in many video stores and bookstores in Manila and elsewhere.

De Guia’s work debuted internationally on the Discovery Channel on December 26, 2001, as part of its *Young Filmmaker* series. In it he shows how we Ifugao ourselves can document our disappearing rituals and traditions using small, handheld video cameras. This is exactly what Gene and I have been doing since 1995, albeit as amateurs. At the end of the Discovery Channel program, the narrator states: “Up to now, uninterested youth are showing a new enthusiasm for some of the old ways and practices, even if initially only on the video screen. For the next generation of Ifugao seeing people videotaping their rituals and then watching themselves on television, they maintain their interest in the old customs and traditions. The Ifugao heritage will not just fade away in the snapshots of tourists, but might be carried on once again by a new generation of proud Ifugao. Like the ancient rice terraces that have lasted for thousands of years, the Ifugao culture will live on.”



31.4

Ifugao governor Teodoro Baguilat has said “Let’s not preserve the terraces for the tourists, but for the Ifugao themselves.” Photograph by Aurora Ammayao, Lagawe, Ifugao, 2002.

31.5

Ritual box in human form.
Ifugao people. Luzon,
Philippines. Carved wood,
organic ritual contents. H:
41 cm. FMCH X85.443a-c;
Gift of Mrs. W. Thomas
Davis.



31.6

Ritual box in pig form.
Ifugao people. Luzon,
Philippines. Carved wood.
L: 40 cm. FMCH
X78.L951a,b.





31.7 Imported rice-wine jar.
Ifugao people. Kinnakin,
Luzon, Philippines. Porcelain
with rattan lid. H: 32 cm. ©
Copyright 2003, Peabody
Museum of Natural History,
Yale University, New Haven,
Ct., ANT.262793.
Photograph by W. K. Sacco.



31.8 Rice-wine jar (*binoghogan*).
Ifugao people. Luzon,
Philippines. Clay, rattan,
wood. H: 16 cm. FMCH
X76.1065a,b.

The Material Culture of Ifugao Rice Rituals

At Ifugao harvest rituals, priests (*mumbaki*) sing the appropriate epics in the presence of various ritual objects. Typical paraphernalia includes carved granary figures (*bulul*, see figs. 8.6, 26.1), ritual boxes, and rice-wine jars. The dried remains of offerings, including areca nuts and the blood or feathers of sacrificial animals, are left inside the boxes from year to year. Rice wine is always present, too, contained in imported Chinese jars or locally made vessels. The Chinese jars are highly prized and are ranked according to their value, condition, and rarity, as well as aesthetic considerations. Today, with ritual practice diminishing, many Ifugao families have elected to sell their heirloom ritual possessions.



31.9

As the matriarch of the *tumoná* family in her village, Ana Dulnuan-Habbiling is determined to continue the rice rituals. Here she reads some passages from the *Myth of the Origin of Rice* to her eldest granddaughter. Photograph by Aurora Ammayao, Amganad, Banaue, Ifugao, 2002.



31.10

Mumbaki Yogyog Dogapna (left) and Buyuccan Udhuk (see fig. 31.2) take a break during the Kulpe rituals at the rice granary of Ana Dulnuan-Habbiling to reflect on the fate of their culture. This would be the last time that they would perform together. Photograph by Gene Hettel, Amganad, Banaue, Ifugao, 2001.

Even though the production of these programs may have, in part, been motivated by profit, I think it is still a good thing that our rituals and culture are being documented for both Ifugao and the world at large. In viewing these programs, however, I could not help noticing that many of the rituals depicted appear to have been staged expressly for the camera. This is something that Gene and I tried to avoid—at least initially—in our own videotaping. In 1995, this was still possible when, in July, we taped several hours of the rice harvest ritual in Lugu, performed by local *mumbaki* Yogyog Dogapna and Buyuccan Udhuk. The ritual would have been held regardless of whether or not it was known that we were coming to record it.

Only six years later, in 2001, in an attempt to rerecord the Ingngilin ritual with better camera equipment and from different angles, I had to pay three *mumbaki* from outside Amganad to perform the ritual at Ana Dulnuan-Habbiling's family granary. If we had not come, it would have been the first time that a harvest ritual was not held in Ana's granary. That past April, Gene and I shot some good footage of the Kulpe ritual performed at the granary by Yogyog and Buyuccan. Only seven weeks later, these two *mumbaki*, both in their eighties, were too ill to come to perform the Ingngilin. The aging of *mumbaki* is not unique to Amganad but a problem across Ifugao Province in such major towns as Lagawe, Mayoyao, and Kiangnan and to a somewhat lesser degree in Hungduan and Banaue.

I asked Dulnuan-Habbiling, who has been a practicing Catholic for many years, why she still persists—seemingly against all odds—in preserving the post-transplanting and harvest rituals in her family granary. She replied that it is her *tumoná* family, after all, that has been traditionally responsible for taking the lead in performing the rice rituals. “I do not want to be the one remembered for ending this centuries-old tradition here in Amganad,” she said. Most likely neither Yogyog nor Buyuccan will be able to continue their *baki* duties. So, emulating de Guia's effort, she requested that Gene and I provide her with a copy of the videos of the rituals that we recorded in her granary over the years. “We will make do with watching your tapes on television—it will be better than nothing,” she said. “And if someone wants to revive some of the rituals at a later date, they can use the tapes as a learning guide!” Dulnuan-Habbiling believes that Christianity and traditional ways of the Ifugao can coexist, citing the example of how her family handled the Kulpe in April 2002. “We said some Christian prayers, butchered the chickens, and then played the Kulpe tape while eating,” she told me a month later.

“I will perform the rituals until my last breath”

In April 2001, just after Gene and I had recorded the Kulpe ritual in Ana's granary performed by Yogyog and Buyuccan, I chatted with Yogyog—before he became ill—about the deterioration of our culture (fig. 31.10). He knows that he is among the last of a dying breed. “It is sad,” he said, “but there is nothing anyone can do.” Unlike many *mumbaki* who have become Christian and given up the old ways—such as my own father and second cousin did—he has continued practicing the ways of the *mumbaki*. “I will perform the rice and other rituals until my last breath,” he reaffirmed. Yogyog had come from a long line of *mumbaki*, his father and grandfather both served the people in the old ways. He is perplexed that none of his children or grandchildren have chosen to take on his family's *mumbaki* role. Interestingly, he said he has no problem with anyone becoming Christian, as many in his family have—however, he is always ready to conduct the traditional rituals if anyone gets sick.

A Dichotomy in My Own Family

After my discussions with Dulnuan-Habbiling and Yogyog, I wanted to talk with some other people in Ifugao society about the status of our culture. Among members of my own family there existed an interesting dichotomy (fig. 31.11). My mother still thinks it

Ammayao Dimmangna (left) and Indanum Kinadduy raised nine children—including the author—over a marriage lasting more than fifty-five years. Nonetheless, they represented opposing views within the cultural struggle that is taking place among the Ifugao. Photograph by Jon Lee, Pugo, Banaue, Ifugao, 1999.



best to adhere to the old ways. She does not say this in so many words, but it is evident in her actions. Gene and I have some very interesting videotape of her contributing to some of the stories and debates that comprise Ifugao's oral literature (*liwliwa*) as she sat underneath Dulnuan-Habbiling's granary during the Kulpe ritual. My father, however, from around 1985 up until his death in 2002, was a faithful go-to-church-on-Sunday evangelical Christian. I asked my father why, since the mid-1980s, he no longer attended the rice rituals with my mother and, in general, shunned the ways of the *mumbaki*—or the “pagan” priests, as he now called them. He replied that he had finally seen the light and truly believed that the only way to attain true salvation was through Jesus.

Nevertheless, toward the end of his life, I think my father decided to “cover all the bases.” In December 2001, perhaps sensing he did not have many more days on earth, he summoned his five daughters, four sons, and nineteen grandchildren home to Pugo village for what was essentially the Yabyab ritual. Although a Christian minister was present during certain times of the two-day affair, various activities were tied directly to Ifugao tradition, including the ritual slaying of pigs, the sharing of specific pieces of meat with the attending relatives, and the recitation of a special Yabyab blessing on the second morning. Seventeen weeks later, during his five-day wake, to the singing approval of a few of my “born-again” sisters, some of the visiting Christian ministers declared that Ammayao Dimmangna's greatest accomplishment in life was his renunciation of his ways as a “pagan” priest in order to follow the Lord. My mother remains silent on the subject.

Christianity Has Truly Changed Our Culture

My cousin Kinadduy “Jose” Binwag, a sixty-three-year-old retired rice farmer with seven sons and twenty-five grandchildren, regards the gradual disappearance of Ifugao culture with mixed emotions (fig. 31.20). A converted Christian, he uses the term “pagan” priest instead of *mumbaki*. His father was a *mumbaki*, but Binwag himself never was and none of his sons has any interest in the old ways. “I actually wanted to learn the ways of the *mumbaki* from my father, but he died suddenly in April 1966 at a relatively young age, and I lost interest after that,” he said. “The introduction of Christianity is truly changing our culture. Because of the different religious sects that have recruited relentlessly since the mid-1980s, I would have difficulty teaching the old ways to my children and grandchildren even if I were so inclined,” he added (personal communication, 2001).



31.12 Gambuk Ballogan, the *mumbaki* who inspected our engagement pig back in December 1984, is now a Christian and has given up officiating at rituals. "I now think having a good rice yield depends on how one tends his fields, not through protecting the crop from envious spirits by sacrificing a chicken," he said. Photograph by Aurora Ammayao, Pugo, Banaue, Ifugao, 2002.



31.14 Tomas Liton of Mayoyao does not believe in the *baki* anymore. "Look at us now," he said. "We take a bath every day and are clean. When I was a *mumbaki* years ago, I sometimes was forbidden even to touch water, much less wash my hands or take a bath—especially if an important ritual was about to be performed." Photograph by Aurora Ammayao, Mayoyao, Ifugao, 2002.



31.13 Bognadon Bimmala and wife Rita still occasionally arrange for the performance of the Honga (health) ritual when someone in the family is very sick. "How much we can afford at the time will determine if we butcher one, three, or five pigs," Bognadon said. "I didn't pursue becoming a *mumbaki* myself because I saw what my father went through," he added. "I recall so many dos and don'ts about a specific ritual. I didn't want to deal with it." Rita mentioned that the family has decided to spend most of their limited funds on their children's education, not rituals. Photograph by Aurora Ammayao, Kiangian, Ifugao, 2002.

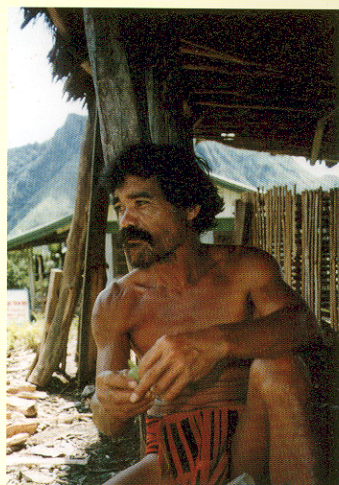


31.15 Francisco Niwanne would like to see the *baki* continue. "But," he said, "with the old folks dying everyday and with few young people learning the proper procedures and memorizing the long epics like the *Myth of the Origin of Rice*, we rarely witness rituals of any kind nowadays." Photograph by Aurora Ammayao, Pugo, Banaue, Ifugao, 2002.



31.16

Diego Chugasna believes the *baki* itself is no longer of any use. "However," he said, "it is still useful to have *mumbaki* around to trace our ancestral lineage. When they are all gone, we will no longer know who is related to whom." Photograph by Aurora Ammayao, Mayoyao, Ifugao, 2002.



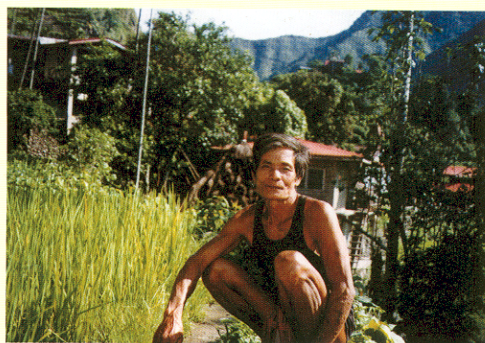
31.17

Romeo Nabannal's family operates Rita's Mountain Lodge in Batad. "We don't perform rituals anymore," he said. "We are all Christians here and have forgotten our pagan ways." Photograph by Aurora Ammayao, Batad, Banaue, Ifugao, 1999.



31.18

Mario Lachaona, member of the *tumoná* family in Mayoyao, now organizes rituals without benefit of a *mumbaki* since none can be found. "We play an audio-tape of the chants," he said. "We still butcher the pig and check the bile sac, conducting this aspect by recalling memories of the past." Photograph by Aurora Ammayao, Mayoyao, Ifugao, 2002.



31.19

Mario Hengnger from Batad practices the *baki* when he can afford it. "Pigs—even chickens—are so expensive nowadays," he lamented. "On top of this, the older folks are dying and there are few of them left who know how to properly perform the rituals. I guess for the future we need to be flexible." Photograph by Aurora Ammayao, Batad, Banaue, Ifugao, 1999.



31.20

None of the seven sons of Kinadduy “Jose” Binwag have shown any interest in the old ways. He himself calls the *mumbaki* “pagan.” Photograph by Gene Hettel, Pugo, Banaue, Ifugao, 2001.

Binwag’s reference to the large variety of Christian churches and sects in Ifugao Province is accurate, and all of them are vying for new members to add to their flocks. As Gene even thought the goal of increasing membership was on the agenda of all the various ministers—a Baptist, an Evangelical, a Lutheran, a Methodist, and a Catholic—who preached during my father’s five-day wake.

Despite such internal tensions, some people feel that the old traditions can coexist to a certain extent. As Binwag told me, “For example, when the Christian ministers arrive for an event, the pigs are being butchered simultaneously and the meat distributed, but there is no longer any pagan chanting that goes along with it, as in the past.”

During my father’s wake more than twenty pigs were killed with their meat either consumed on the spot or distributed to visiting relatives and friends. Our sixteen-year-old son, Chris, even participated in the butchering when some of his cousins dared him to do so—perhaps they saw him as a soft city boy. Chris experienced his culture firsthand when he successfully sacrificed one of the pigs, stabbing the traditional sharp stick into the heart.

The Disappearance of the Rituals Is No Great Loss

In late December 2001, Gene and I visited Carlos and Maria Luglug in Lagawe (fig. 31.21). In their late seventies with eight grown children and twenty-five grandchildren, they do not believe that the disappearance of the rituals is a terrible loss to Ifugao culture. “We don’t mind that most of the old rituals are no longer being performed,” said Carlos.



31.21

Although their parents were *mumbaki*, Carlos and Maria Luglug do not find the disappearance of the old rituals disturbing. Photograph by Gene Hettel, Lagawe, Ifugao, 2001.

We stopped performing the rice rituals when our parents died more than twenty years ago simply because we did not believe in the old ways of appeasing a myriad of gods in the Underworld and the Skyworld. It was not the Christian way. Our parents were *mumbaki* of the highest order, but they knew we were not interested and would stop when they died. We even urged them to stop the *baki*, but out of respect we still assisted them whenever they asked us to.

Maria also explained that the way of rice planting is different now:

We were able to perform the rituals when our parents were still alive because there was only one crop—a season for planting, a season for cultivating, and a season for harvesting. But now, rice grows any time of the year. Even in our rice fields at Piwong, Hingyon, now tended by our children, we no longer have only one crop annually and so it would be difficult to time the rituals—even if we were interested.

The couple told us that the only rituals surviving in Lagawe are some that are not related to rice, such as the Moma, Tanig, and Honga—and these are now mostly Christian prayers and do not include the *baki* chanting to appease the traditional Ifugao deities. Maria also pointed out that nowadays it is simply too expensive to perform the rituals, which require chickens and pigs if they are to be carried out according to tradition. “With the economy the way it is, families cannot afford to buy a pig if someone is sick. It is less expensive to go to the hospital. I think it is best that the culture has changed in this way,” she concluded.

Most of the people we talked to shared the Luglug’s opinion, that the ebbing away of the *mumbaki*, the traditional rituals, and the culture they represent is of no great concern. However, two persons we interviewed—Manuel Dulawan and Juan Dait Jr.—are

not content to allow Ifugao culture to disappear so easily. I had noticed their names in the Philippine press (Tarcelo-Balmes 1999A,B; Lolarga 2001) and decided to look them up where they both live in Kiangnan, less than a kilometer from each other.

The Ancient Practices Are a Part of Our Identity

Gene and I found Manuel “Manny” Dulawan on his front porch during Holy Week 2001 (fig. 31.22). Now a retired high school teacher, he continues to be a student of the Ifugao culture. Among other accomplishments, he is responsible for the English translation from the Ifugao of one version of the *Myth of the Origin of Rice* and has completed an extensive work on the oral literature of the Ifugao (Dulawan 2003). Baptized as a Catholic as an infant, he was named after his maternal grandfather Dulawan, a respected *mumbaki* who attained a high social rank. “As a child, I enjoyed going along with him whenever he was invited to perform rice and other rituals in the surrounding villages,” he said. “This early exposure to our socioreligious rites gave me an understanding of the rationale for their performance. I miss these rituals now as an old man, especially when our young people are so totally ignorant of our past.” Dulawan had stated recently in the Philippine press (Lolarga 2001) and repeated to me that day:

The Christian missionaries made us hate our own beliefs, telling us that these were satanic and pagan. But we’re learning to question. It is interesting that wine is an element in the Catholic Mass *and* in the *mumbaki*’s rituals. Our parallel culture should not be in conflict with our adopted Christian religion. Religion should not divide us. If we preserve the dignity of the *mumbaki*, the future of the Ifugao would be very well served.

Dulawan went on to say:

Here in Kiangnan, we have dispensed with many of the Ifugao rites, especially the rice rites, but we still exhume the bones of our parents, butcher chickens and pigs, and welcome friends to come to pray. We sing hymns, which are either in English or translated to Ifugao. So, in this fashion we retain our culture, but we have adopted some other practices along the way to combine with the ancient rituals. I think that there is nothing wrong or anything unchristian in this practice.

Dulawan told me that he regrets not having become a *mumbaki* himself so that he could have learned all of the rice and prestige rituals. “Even a Christian should have no reason not to learn the ancient practices because they are a part of our identity,” he pointed out. He thinks that the *mumbaki* system could still be used to maintain part of our identity as a people, especially through the singing and reciting of our oral literature, such as the *Myth of the Origin of Rice*.

Putting on a Show for the Media

“Reviving Old Rituals to Preserve Ifugao Terraces” was the banner headline for a lengthy feature that ran in a February 2001 issue of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (Lolarga 2001). The story opened with a description of a quiet Saturday morning in Asipulo interrupted by the heavy percussion *tokotok-taktak* sounds of forty men and boys beating wooden planks and line dancing. The original intent of this old Patipat ritual—which hadn’t been performed in Ifugao in almost fifty years—was to drive rats away from the rice fields. The revival of this ritual did not scare any rats but did attract a bevy of newspaper and television journalists, which was exactly the design of the man responsible for the event, Juan Dait Jr. (fig. 31.23).



31.22

Retired school teacher Manuel Dulawan suggests to the author that seldom-performed Kulpe and Ani rice rituals be taught to children in school. Photograph by Gene Hettel, Kiangao, Ifugao, 2001.

Whereas Dulawan promotes Ifugao culture through academic writing and translation projects and encouraging schools to teach our ancient myths, Dait takes a more controversial approach by attracting media attention. When he was the executive director of the IRC in the mid-1990s, he played a major role in getting the rice terraces inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage Site list. Now at every opportunity Dait stages events aimed primarily at the Manila media. When Gene and I met with him on Easter Sunday morning in April 2001, he noted, “Resulting stories in the local press and on television written and produced by the visiting journalists are getting the message out about the plight of the Ifugao culture.”

“Following the Patipat, we had the ordination of an Ifugao *mumbaki* in March [2001],” he continued. “There were eight full-fledged *mumbaki*—that we had to search high and low for in the region—who ordained this new priest—a very rare event. Seventeen journalists from Manila came and stayed the whole night from dusk to noon the following day. It was all properly documented by our local media.” He pointed out that, often, foreign writers get only a superficial version of what the *baki* is all about. “They don’t wait long enough to see the full picture,” he said. “The perspectives of foreigners will often differ from those of the Ifugao themselves because our own interpretations come from our own feelings about how and why our rituals are done—and that is why when documents and articles come out, many aspects are often not correct.”

The *Mumbaki*—Repository of the Ifugao Culture

Frank Lawrence Jenista (1987) characterizes the *mumbaki* as the repositories of Ifugao culture. He stated that the most valuable interviews for his book *The White Apos*—which details the American colonial authorities’ interaction with the independent, headhunting, terrace-building Ifugao—were those with “the *mumbaki* priests with their trained memories and traditional perspectives.” Since the Ifugao do not have a written language or dialect, everything is in the heads and hearts of the *mumbaki*. When I spoke with Dait in April 2001, he expressed similar admiration:

You ask them about taboos, customs, and traditions—they know! They are also the best arbiters when there are disputes because they are respected. There may be lawyers or politicians around, but the people respect the *mumbaki* in the locality more because they are the ones who hold the culture of the people—and they cannot be bribed.

Many Ifugao now feel that *mumbaki* prayers are unchristian. Dait, however, emphasizes the ways in which the role of the *mumbaki* is not unlike that of the Catholic priest or the Protestant minister:

When you hear the *mumbaki*, what are they praying to the gods for? They are asking for the rice fields to be blessed so that they will yield a good harvest and fill the granaries. They are asking that no sickness will afflict the people. And they are asking that the children will grow up to be good and that the wicked will be punished. So, now I ask, are these not the prayers of Catholic priests and Protestant pastors? So, I think that it is certainly a wrong impression to give to our children that an Ifugao in a G-string is ignorant or maybe even backward.

Dait feels we should practice what he calls *inculturation*, that is, mixing the good values of the Church with the good values of our traditional culture. “I think this is a perfect combination,” he said. “We should not turn our backs to either one. To



31.23

A promoter of traditional Ifugao culture, Juan Dait Jr. proudly displays a prized family *bulul*. Photograph by Gene Hettel, Kiangao, Ifugao, 2001.

what extent we should preserve the Ifugao culture is a very debatable issue. But a dialogue should continue among what I call the integrated indigenous peoples—or Ifugao like myself who embrace Christianity but at the same time feel that the values of our *ancestors should not be lost*.” *Dait believes that with the proper education of Ifugao youth, including exposure to the old rituals, it will be possible to preserve the Ifugao culture for future generations.*

Back in Tubbataha, if Yogyog butchered a pig today and then checked the bile sac for an omen to determine if there is a future for our culture, I hope that he would declare the bile to be good. It will be interesting to see what the next twenty years will bring.

Epilogue, a Museum Experience Twenty Years Hence, April 2023

Ifugao culture will of course continue to evolve in ways that no one can foretell. I fear that twenty years from now, perhaps the only experience of our rich heritage of Ifugao rice traditions that any future grandchildren of mine might have may be during a visit to a museum. I have a sad future scenario in my mind's eye: My two little grandsons and I amble down a path along a museum diorama that artistically depicts the breathtaking landscape of the terraces. Up ahead, an Ifugao hut—built at about three-fourths actual scale to fit the cramped museum setting—is silhouetted against this artificial scene. From inside the hut we hear the recorded voice of *mumbaki* Yogyog Dogapna chanting a portion of the *Myth of the Origin of Rice*:

Kimmali ama da'n hi Tad-ona: “Mu ya ngana dakayu ke ya nadijyunan di nige yu? Haj-oy ke ya kawwiliyok di bagbaguwan.” Wada da'y hintulang kimmali da: “Mu maid di inanup mu page. Man dakami ke ya inanup mi'y page.” Wada ama da'n hi Tad-ona ya kanana: “Ukaton yu.” Ukaton di hintulang di inanup da'n pagen' di I-Kabunyan. “Ay, hiya peman,” an kanan ama da'n hi Tad-ona.

Their father Tad-ona speaks:

“Why has your hunting taken so long?

In my time I always brought home my quarry early.”

The brothers answer:

“But you never hunted rice.

In our case we have hunted rice.”

Their father Tad-ona says:

“Bring it out.”

The brothers bring out what they hunted

which is the rice from Kabunyan.

“Ay, it is so,” says their father Tad-ona. [Dulawan 2003, ll. 244–54]

The kids run ahead to the hut and then climb up the rickety ladder to peer inside at Yogyog of long ago as he prepares to sacrifice a chicken as part of the Kulpe ritual. Ironically, the luminescence of the television monitor, showing the video clip of Yogyog, adds a realistic glow to the hut's interior—much like real flames in the fireplace of bygone days.

I had seen Yogyog perform this very same ritual many times before. The last time was nearly twenty-one years ago when Gene videotaped the rites in Lugu. We linger a few more moments at the entrance to the hut to watch some more of the ritual on the videotape; then we move on to let other museum visitors lined up behind us have their turn to look inside to see what once was.

