

Agricultural Rituals

ILOCANO, ILOCOS NORTE, ILOCOS SUR AND LA UNION PROVINCES, NORTHWESTERN LUZON ISLAND, NORTHERN PHILIPPINES. *In the northwestern coast of northern Luzon island is a narrow plain where one finds the provinces of the Ilocano: Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur and La Union. The only desert area in the country is located here. The Ilocano, a hardy people living in a constricted land, have rituals to mitigate agriculture.*



© Renato S. Rastrollo (Ilocos Sur, 1990)

Rice threshing the hand way in an open field.

MANUNEC – The opening ritual before transplanting is officiated by an adult other than the owner of the land. When chosen, he or she takes a bath, puts on new clothes, eats a full meal and wears his/her hair loose. The person goes to the field and recites the Roman Catholic Lord's Prayer. When he reaches the part of the prayer that says, "give us this day..." he plants the first set of ritual seedlings. He then plants a small bamboo cross close to this site to ensure a bountiful harvest.

Pagringpasan – This is the finishing ritual done on the last day of planting; a form of thanksgiving for the successful conclusion of another planting season.

Manipulpul – One of several rituals at harvest time, it is done a day before the harvest begins. Any member of the family may officiate, usually male. Taboos are observed: not to talk to strangers, not to lose temper on the day of the ritual and not to defecate within the hour. The officiator gathers twenty stalks of rice while praying for God to bless the harvest. He places the stalks either above the

stove (to hasten the ripening) or buries these in one of the corners of the rice field in gratitude to the soil for a good harvest.

Agniniogan – The name is taken from the ritual food – *niniogan* – prepared for the occasion. This is performed on the last day of the harvest, done as thanksgiving to the spirits. A few stalks of full-headed palay are burned in one corner of the field. Sometimes, a few stalks are left in the field to share with small creatures, e.g. birds and insects, to ensure a safe harvest next time.

Mangipastrek – This means to put something inside. This is performed while placing the palay in the granary. It is done early in the morning when there are no people around. The farmer and wife go to the granary together and open it. They are forbidden to communicate with each other except by signs. Two stones are inserted and secured into the first *pungo* (bundle) which the two place jointly into the granary – to control the power of supernatural beings.

JTP



© Renato S. Rastrollo (Ilocos Sur, 1990)