

Bakid Ritual

ITNEG*, ABRA PROVINCE, NORTHWESTERN LUZON ISLAND, NORTHERN PHILIPPINES. *This ceremony is held to celebrate the completion of a new dwelling, or to remove any bad sign, which may have been received during its construction.*



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THE MEDIUM and her assistants fasten a bamboo pole or rattan cord across one portion of the room. On it, numerous pieces of cloth are placed: skirts, blankets, belts, a fish-net and a quantity of false hair. This serves as an offering to the spirits, but it is also explained that, if the immortals are unable to count all the gifts, they will be powerless to injure the occupants of the dwelling. Should an evil being desire to make trouble for the owner, he must count every hair in the switches, as well as every hole in the fish-net. If he fails, he will be compelled by the other spirits to celebrate the *bakid* ceremony five times at his own expense.

Beneath the line of offerings, a bound pig is laid. With oiled fingers, the medium strokes the

(spread photos) In anticipation of a propitious divination, sugarcane juice is extracted in a carabao-driven crusher to produce the fermented drink, *basi*, that will be distributed to the guests.

side of the animal and repeats a *diam* in which she tells of misfortunes of a family that failed to observe the signs sent by *Kaboniyan* and of his instructions as to how they can overcome their troubles. The family listens respectfully until the story is finished, then they lift a door from its socket, place it in the middle of the floor and proceed to sacrifice the pig upon it. Some of the blood is immediately sprinkled on the house timbers, particularly those which may have given the builders trouble, either in transportation, or during the erection of the structure. The greater part of the blood is mixed with rice and is dropped through the slits in the bamboo floor slats, or scattered about for the spirits; while for an hour or more, a portion of the meat, the heart and the head, are placed below the offerings on the cord or on the house-beams. Later, these portions will be cooked and served to the guests. Immediately after the killing, the liver is removed and is examined for a sign. Should the omens be unfavorable, another animal will be killed, or the family will celebrate *sangasang* within a few days. If the signs are satisfactory, the host begins to distribute *basi* (sugarcane wine) and soon good fellowship reigns. One after another, the guests sing the *dal-eng*, in which they bespeak for the owner a long and prosperous life in his new home. The *bakid* always ends with a feast, in which the flesh of slaughtered animals plays an important part. Upon its completion, the medium is given a portion of the meat, some unthreshed rice and other small gifts as payment for her services. The guests return to their homes and for two or three days are barred from entering the new dwelling. During this period the family must remain indoors.

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