

Kankanay Agricultural Rituals

KANKANAY, MOUNTAIN PROVINCE, NORTHERN LUZON ISLAND, NORTHERN PHILIPPINES. *The planting cycle in the highly elevated Cordillera mountain ranges of northern Luzon differs from that in the lowlands due to the varying modes of adaptation of specific plants to the amount of precipitation during the year. The highland peoples sow their rice during the onset of the rains, toward the end of the year, the opposite in the lowlands. Also, the highlanders, like the Kankanay, practice multi-cropping and intercropping.*



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Due to the highly textured environment in the Cordillera mountain ranges, agricultural cycles and the attendant rituals vary in different ways. The northern Kankanay too, have their own set of practices in their particular niche.

THE AGRICULTURAL cycle of the Kankanay starts past mid-year during the height of the rainy season especially for crops that need a great deal of water at the onset of planting.

Lakat – This is the first ritual that starts in early August. This involves the planting of *gabi* tubers in the rice fields as supplementary food.

Binatuto – This is done in September. They sow about a half of a handful of *palay* seeds (*bonobon*) to test the percentage of germination to determine the success of their seed sowing. It is tested in a stone-made bowl with mud and water to act as a mini-rice field.

Ginabo – It is the third ritual held in October. This signals the actual sowing of palay (rice) in the actual seed bed. The sowing of the palay is called *asi-pana*. The preparation of the rice fields is called *asi-sama* which comes before the planting season.

Tepeng – The fourth ritual held in November signifies the start of the planting season. The rituals of the four major activities is signaled by *tepeng*. Villages contribute rice, vegetables, meat and chicken and together, they have lunch in the *dap'ay*. The *asi-toned* is done by groups of relatives or neighbors in an *og-ogbo* (community labor exchange). If all the fields are planted, there is the *say-at* in January. A ritual to announce the end of the planting season may be undertaken, like the *lebek* or milling of sugarcane, then *obaya* or holiday as rest day for all, while the elders perform other rituals highlighted with prayers of supplication for peace and bountiful harvest. After a month of the *asi-toned*, the cleaning of the weeds called *asi-kames* follows. In the month of March, when water becomes scarce, there is a peculiar water management system called

banbanes where owners of fields are grouped together with designated schedules.

The *asi-lidas* comes next. This is the cleaning of the field stone walls and the surroundings to keep the rats away, usually done during the time of the rice booting stage. The *panag-buweo* is done to drive the birds away. Scarecrows are placed in the fields, accompanied with prayers. Before the harvest season, a *ngilin* is held, which usually coincides with the Lenten season. The second day of the *ngilin*, which is the strictest, is the *ngitingit* where all the people in the village observe silence – working, dancing or shouting are prohibited.

The harvest season ends with the *a-aw* where chicken and pig sacrifices are done in the fields and elders may declare a *begnas*.

There are several significant and related agricultural rituals:

Linapet – This is done in Agawa, Besao on the 30th of September to signal the start of the sowing of rice in the seed beds. Food, also called *linapet*, is prepared and shared. It is made from glutinous rice and roasted peanuts wrapped in banana leaves and steamed.

Panag-obeh – This is the time to catch mudfish in the rice fields using bamboo traps.

Panagsasagada – This is the catching of fish and crabs in the rivers among the Kinali group of western Besao.

Panagsilew – This is the catching of mudfish in the rice fields at night using lighted kindling wood (*saleng*).

JTP