A FAMILY WISHING to hold a pala-an summons a medium. The medium begins to gather saklag (Justicia gendarussa L.), siklag (Lygodium sp. near scandens) and a grass known as biltid, while the men secure the bamboo and other materials used in building the spirit structure. One corner of the living room is screened off with a large white blanket called tabing, behind it, the medium places unthreshed rice and jars which she has decked with vines and leaves.

Meanwhile, the men are busy building the pala-an. This consists of four long poles—three of bamboo and one of a resilient tree, anteng, set in a square. Supporting this, near the top is a platform of bamboo.

Women invited to assist the family proceed to pound sufficient rice to serve the guests. After this, a rice-mortar is set out in the open and a little rice is placed in it. The women, armed with long pestles, gather around and keeping time to the music of copper gongs, they circle the mortar counterclockwise, striking its edge three times in regular beats of 1, 2, 3. On the first and second beats, the leader strikes the bottom of her pestle against that of her neighbor. On the third, she pounds the rice in the mortar. This is repeated by the woman on her right and so on around the circle. Then, the leader strikes the top of her pestle against the top of the one held by the women next to her on two beats and on the third, pounds rice. This is repeated by all. The music now becomes faster, and, keeping time with it, the leader strikes first into the rice, then whirs clear around and strikes the pestle of the woman on her left; again she turns and strikes that of the woman on her right. Each follows her in turn and soon all are in motion about the mortar, alternately pounding the rice and clashing pestles. This is known as kitong, the method prescribed by the great spirit Kabonijan for the breaking of a part of the rice to be used in this and other ceremonies.

As soon as the pounding is finished, the medium places some of the newly broken rice in a bamboo dish and places this on a rice winnower. She also adds a skirt, five pieces of betel-nut, two paper leaves and a little dish of oil then carries these below the pala-an, where a bound pig lies. The betel-nuts and leaves are placed on the animal then the medium dips her fingers in the oil and strokes its side while she recites the following diam:

The spirits who live in Dadaya lies in look; he looks at his igam and they are dull. He looks again, ‘Why are my igam dull? Ala, let us go to Sudipan, where the Tinguian live and let us take our igam, in that someone may make them bright again.’ After that they laid them (the igam) on the house of the Ipoqan and they are all sick who live in that house. Kabonijan looked down on them. ‘Ala, I shall go down to the Ipoqan,’ he said. He truly went down to them, and said: ‘What is the matter with you? We are all sick who live in the same place,’ said those sick ones. ‘That is true, and the cause of your sickness is that they (the spirits) laid down their igam on you. It is best that you make pala-an, since you have received their igam, for that is the cause of your illness. After that they made pala-an, and they recovered from their sickness, those who lived in the same place. (Here the medium calls the spirits of Dadaya by name and then continues). ‘Now those who live in the same place make bright again their igam which you left in their house. Make them well again, if you please.’

As soon as she finishes her recital, the pig is stabbed in the throat, its blood collected and mixed with cooked rice. The bristles are singed at once. Five men carry it to the top of the pala-an, where it is cut up. The suet and the hind legs are handed to the medium who places them behind the screen in the room. The family may then rest assured that the spirits will free them from headache and sore eyes. After the flesh has been cut into small pieces, most of it is carried into the house and cooked for the guests, but a portion is placed at his igam and they are dull. He looks again, ‘Why are my igam dull? Ala, let us go to Sudipan, where the Tinguian live and let us take our igam, in that someone may make them bright again.’ After that they laid them (the igam) on the house of the Ipoqan and they are all sick who live in that house. Kabonijan looked down on them. ‘Ala, I shall go down to the Ipoqan,’ he said. He truly went down to them, and said: ‘What is the matter with you? We are all sick who live in the same place,’ said those sick ones. ‘That is true, and the cause of your sickness is that they (the spirits) laid down their igam on you. It is best that you make pala-an, since you have received their igam, for that is the cause of your illness. After that they made pala-an, and they recovered from their sickness, those who lived in the same place. (Here the medium calls the spirits of Dadaya by name and then continues). ‘Now those who live in the same place make bright again their igam which you left in their house. Make them well again, if you please.’
pala-an. When it is ready to serve, the five men again go to the top of the structure and eat it, together with cooked rice, then they take the bamboo cooking tube, tie some of the sacred vines from behind the curtain and fasten it to one pole of the pala-an. The men in the house are free to eat and when they are done, the women dine.

In the afternoon, the people begin to assemble in the yard where they are soon joined by the medium carrying a spear in one hand, a rooster in the other and a rice winnower on her head. She places the latter on a rice-mortar, close to the pala-an. Uncovering it reveals a small head-axe, notched chicken feathers, shells, five pieces of betel-nut and two leaves, a jar cover, a dish of oil and a coconut shell filled with rice and blood.

At the command of the medium, four or five men begin to play on copper gongs, while the wife of the host comes forward and receives the spear and rooster in one hand. The medium takes the head-axe and then the two women take hold of the winnower with their free hands. Keeping time to the music, they lift it from the mortar, take one step, then stop, strike the spear and head-axe together, then step and stop again. At each halt, the medium takes a little of the rice and blood from the winnower and sprinkles it on the ground for the spirits to eat. When they have made half the circuit of the mortar, they change places and retrace their steps; for “as they take the gifts partly away and then replace them, in the same manner will the spirits return that part of the patient’s life which they had removed and he will become well and strong again.”

The blood and rice that remain after this dance are placed on nine pieces of banana sheaths. Five of these are carried to the pala-an; one to the east and one to the west gate of the town; one is put on the talagan, a miniature seat erected nearby for the convenience of visiting spirits; and one in a little spirit house known as tanggup. For an hour or more, the medium performs the dawak and summons many spirits into her body. When the last of the superior beings has made its call, the medium goes to her home, carrying her payment for the day’s work. The townspeople remain to drink basi (sugarcane wine) and to sing dal-eng until well into the night.

Early the next morning, the medium goes to the house, removes the jars and the bundle of decorated rice from the tabing, carries them to the family’s rice granary and places them in the center of the structure, covering them with six bundles of rice. This is an offering to the spirit residing there. For the next five days, the granary must not be opened.

Nothing more of importance takes place in the morning, but late in the afternoon, the people assemble in the house to drink basi, while one or more mediums summon the spirits. After a time, a sterile female pig is brought in and placed in the center of the room. Two men armed with long knives slice the animal open along the length of its stomach. An old man quickly slips in his hand, draws out the still palpitating heart and hands it to a medium, who in turn stokes the stomachs of members of the family, thus protecting them from intestinal troubles. She also touches the guests and the articles which have been prevented from enjoying the feast.

The medium mixes the blood of the slain animal with rice and scatters it on the ground. She also touches the guests and the articles which have been used during the day. For the second day, the medium receives the head and two legs of the pig, a hundred fathoms of thread, a dish of broken rice and five bundles of unhulled rice as payment. She is also given a small present in exchange for each bead she received when the spirits entered her body.

Following the ceremony, the members of the family are barred from work, usually for one moon. During this period, they may not eat wild pig or carabao, lobsters or eels. An infraction of this rule would incur the wrath of the superior beings and result in sickness and disaster.

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