**Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events**

The kawin starts with the sound of a gong. This is done on a lavishly decorated raised platform. Prominent members of the society are present. The bride and groom each have three sponsors. The bride sits first. The officiating imam recites the Fatiha (opening chapter of the Koran). The groom is queried about his religious duties. The imam grasps the thumb of the groom and presses their thumbs together. He steps on the right foot of the groom and presses their big toes together. The clasped hands are covered with a scarf then the imam asks the groom if he is willing to marry and to take care of the bride, to which the groom replies, “Inshaallah”. The groom goes to the bride and presses his right thumb onto her lips, then her forehead to indicate submission of the bride. The imam recites a final prayer which concludes the ceremony.

The guests offer wishes to the couple and give gifts. There is dancing and a final thanksgiving to the guests.

**Death and burial**

The Kalagan recite the shahada to the dying person. Relatives and friends are informed about the death. Aid in any form is solicited (nagpalimos) from them.

The dead is cleaned by the uztadj. If female, this is done by females; while if male, by males. Tiwalan water (holy water) is poured in three cups. Unused needles are stuck on three pieces of ginger and placed in the cups while the balyan recites prayers. The water is then drunk from these cups. Water can be added when the original amount is consumed. This blessed water can also be sprinkled on persons possessed by evil spirits or used for washing them.

The dead is laid down on his right side, keeping his face in the direction of the holy Kaaba in Mecca. If the man is bearded, this beard is tied down onto his chest using a piece of cloth, his eyes closed gently. The hands and feet are laid straight and the body is wrapped in a white piece of cloth. The bench used in washing the body must also be washed and perfumed three to five times. While the cadaver is being washed, it is covered with cloth from the waist down to the ankles. There are no restrictions in washing a baby. A wife may be allowed to wash her husband, but not otherwise. The body is buried within 24 hours in accordance with Islamic practice.

The body is taken out through a window of the house for interment. At the burial site, an imam reads from the Koran before the body is lowered into the grave (kobor). A sacrificial animal (aqiqa) is offered to serve as the dead’s transportation to the next world. A three-night wake follows where the Koran is read by several people. On the third day, a kandari is held. The imam prays for the soul of the dead. The family wears white; the color for mourning. The family gives sadaka to protect the deceased from punishment. This involves giving offerings to the poor. A cow is slaughtered to be feasted upon by the community. Food is also taken to the grave and the imam pours water over the marker to quench the dead’s thirst. Nobody should shed tears. It is also taboo to weed or cut branches near the grave. Those who witness the burial must not look back at the grave when leaving. Those who joined the procession are obliged to bathe later. Rice is thrown at those who return to the bereaved family’s house.

**Mo-ninum Ritual**

This is the grandest of the wedding rites of the T’boli, rooted in the belief of spiritual healing through wedding celebrations. It literally means the “feast of making wine” from sugarcane. It is a day of feasting and drinking of wine and a celebration of propitiation, soul cleansing and renewal of spiritual life.

A T’boli woman demonstrates how a mo-ninum bride uses the t’nalak during the ritual.
THE MO-NINUM, the last of a series of wedding feasts, is a set of six ceremonial and reciprocal feasts where two families take turns in being host and guest. This reciprocal arrangement may last two to seven years. This is the most significant ceremony of the people of Lake Selu. It involves wealth distribution, repaying of social debts and redistribution of goods that are received among participants, including relatives. A major feature is the construction of a huge gono mo-ninum (mo-ninum house) that may measure 25 to 35 meters long and can accommodate up to 250 people. This takes place in both the bride’s and groom’s communities when the moon is at its fullest.

The mo-ninum house is partitioned with the musicians and dancers in one end where numerous t’nalak cloths are hung (called the tahu lawohen – the true body of the house). This is where the belgal actually takes place, contiguous with the central post of the house (tudblungon). T’nalak are hung on three sides of the house, the central area of activity where a row of six gongs are suspended. This forms a sectioned off portion of the house called tahu (true dance). When the drummer pauses to rest, she continues but in jest. She soon stops and so does the ensemble. She picks up the benglung (boat lute) and begins to dance the madnal benglung (lute dance) to her own accompaniment.

During a lull, a young girl may go to the dance area and begin to dance. She will also be accompanied by a drummer. This sometimes leads to a contest of skill and endurance between the drummer and the dancer. After this performance, gong playing follows. Then a company of older people may sing the Tboli epic, Truthful, into the wee hours.

The entire cycle is completed in six harvest seasons, that is, in six years. The first grand mala of a wedding feast is held at the bride’s house. The cycle of setting the actual celebration will take two months from the start of the first hunting or the night when the ratten knotting was done at the bride’s house to officially start the celebration. The cooking, singing, dancing, exchanging of gifts and doveries, and healing of the sick usually take four days at the bride’s house first, and then the following year at the groom’s house.

Mo-ninum is celebrated when there are families whose sick kin are in a state of benahung – a sickness that cannot be cured by herbs and other forms of medicine. This is determined by a ritual specialist as an illness caused by spirits enraged by acts of the ailing person, or due to a violation of taboos, e.g., reneging on doveries, etc. In this healing ritual, the spouse is called upon to renew his wedding vows and offer gifts to appease the spirits. Only the ritual specialist of the ethnic group is appointed to perform the ritual of absolution of the soul of the sick person.

Before the mo-ninum is called, the family of the sick must first perform other forms of healing rituals in various stages. The first is called sentengel which is done by offering cooked rice and an egg, together with water and betel-nut to the spirits. If this does not work, the kesah is done. It entails the offering of all edible living creatures found in lake water: crabs, shrimps and snails cooked with rice. If the sick is still not cured, a third grand healing ritual is performed.

The nelos bu tonok (literally, make hole in the ground) calls for the offering of live chickens. The family constructs a decorated bamboo booth where the sick is placed. The healer dances around the booth with the live chickens in his hands, all of which will be butchered, except for the hen which will be fed to bring back the soul of the sick. If this still fails, the ritual specialist declares that the sick is in a state of benahung, which now requires the celebration of a mo-ninum to cure the person.

The first step is to set the date for the sogu, the prayer ritual to petition the gods to heal the sick person with the promise to comply with all the taboos asked by the sacred ritual. A prayer called sulu is said by the ritual specialist and the members of both families of the bride and groom. They say, “Ní ku na boly bolokhom down asto mo no ninum bu lawohen?” (Let his sickness be cured as we vow to celebrate mo-ninum for his body).

During the sogu, both families exchange their kinum (wealth). A kesetal, tulo or sword, is handed by the groom’s family to the father of the bride; a t’nalak cloth is handed by the bride’s mother to the mother of the groom. They are assigned to the sacred ritual. The sick person says a prayer petitioning the spirits to cure the lingering illness of the groom or the bride. Both sides say this prayer alternately: “Now we exchange this holo and cloth as a vow to celebrate mo-ninum”. All the couples who vowed to join the mo-ninum give gifts to the tau bak (host), also called the sulu, beside from the prayers. It is taboo not to give gifts to the tau bak before the start of the mo-ninum. Two ritual specialists conduct the sogu ritual, one for each side of the family.

With the sogu finished, the celebration of the mo-ninum is announced. There may be several sets of marriage couples. The couple who first vowed to conduct the mo-ninum is designated the tau bak. They are assigned to call the attention of those who are suffering from the state of benahung to join. The husband becomes the leader of the groom’s group, while the wife becomes the leader of the bride’s group. Each of the families holds meetings of their own to determine doveries and others.

Two houses will be built: one for the grooms at the place of the groom, the other for the brides at the host bride’s residence. The houses will have to be spacious enough to accommodate more or less 300 persons. Taboos are observed during the construction of the houses: materials should be cut during the full moon; if someone dies during the cutting, the construction has to be postponed until the next full moon; when a member goes hunting and obtains a catch (for example, a wild pig), it is not a good time to butcher it. The laying of eggs of chickens at night is also a bad sign.

The mungkaw is the ritual done next to determine the fate of the people who will live in the mo-ninum house during the celebration of the healing ritual.

During the building of the houses, all the parties involved begin planting root crops, rice and sugarcane. They also raise chickens. This takes eight to twelve months. The sugarcane planted must be in large quantities for the making of sugarcane wine. The only varieties of sugarcane allowed is the moko temono, which is used as posts of the meligey (house of food) and called the datau of all sugarcane, and the moko tebelan. They also raise fighting horses which are valued as wealth for dowries. Horse fights are done after the end of each ritual. Every family recites a planting ritual for a good crop, after which a rooster and two heads of chicken are offered during the ritual dedicated
for mo-ninum. This activity is repeated each year. After the first year, a date is set for another mo-ninum. Then the planting, raising and other preparations are done for the next festivity.

The serving of wine is done on the fifth year of the mo-ninum – this delay allows the sugarcane to mature and be ready for preparation. Sugarcane is harvested eighteen months after planting, but mo-ninum wines must be harvested during the flowering stage – at twenty-four to thirty months old. The wine is done on the fifth or sixth year to be assured of an adequate amount of wine. The fifth year is the last celebration at the brides’ house while the sixth year is the last one at the grooms’ house.

The preparation of the wine is the most tedious of the rituals. This starts on the fourth year to allow the wine to ferment and be ready by the fifth year. This is prepared at the grooms’ house. A small place is built for winemaking near the house where there is accessible water supply for the cleaning of the sugarcane before pressing. Inside the house is a sugarcane press made of two pieces of wooden slabs from the kibutal tree, an endemic hardwood. No other species of wood is used. The lower slab is about two meters long while the upper one is four meters. There is a taboo against the breaking of these wooden slabs. These are tied with unsplit rattan. A knot is loosened for each day that has to be done to appease the spirit of the tree and prevent harm from coming to the families involved. The sugarcane juice is kept in large earthen jars. The juice is left to ferment for at least one to three months. Thus, winemaking must start at least six months before the grand feast.

When the houses are built, the women start weaving t’nalak clothes needed for the rituals. A skilled weaver is elevated to the status of ibihan-bui, princess.

When the two houses are built (the brides’ and grooms’), traditional wares, musical instruments and implements are brought into the houses before the start of the mo-ninum. These include a traditional drum of deerskin, a gong, earthen jar (to stock in the traditional wine from sugarcane and native palm) and traditional plates (to be used during the t’ahele bergeg). The absence of these may cause illness.

First year mulu

The mo-ninum starts with the tying of the rattan knots (mowol buteng) which are used in counting the days of the celebration and the days in between the first and the next celebrations. The start of preparations is signaled by the fet buteng. The groom’s party ties the knots at the mo-ninum house. This time, the bride’s party goes to the groom’s house and prepares simple food for the ritual.

Both parties will then agree on when to start the first mo-ninum party (mula) at the brides’ house. When the date is set, the grooms will start tying the rattan knots equal to the number of days (as a calendar) they would wait for the occasion. After the knotting is done, the brides’ party will bring one set to the bride’s house for the ritual specialist to use in counting the days. The mowol buteng is sacred. It must be wrapped in a t’nalak skirt, placed inside a gong and sling carefully when brought out of the house. It is taboo for a knotted rattan to fall out of the gong. If this happens, a ritual will have to be done to appease the spirit of the rattan. A knot is loosened for each day that passes. The last knot to be unloosened will be the day of the mula.

After the fet buteng, both families and the ritual specialist would have agreed on the date to start the grand feast. The preparations are done in accordance with the schedule prepared by the ritual specialist. Any deviation is taboo. The fet buteng is done after each celebration to set the date for the next one.

The wedding feast starts when all preparations are done and the weaving of the t’nalak clothes is finished. The ritual specialist officially announces the start of the actual celebration. This is usually done during the harvest season of rice and lasts for four to six days at both the grooms’ and brides’ houses. Usually, the mo-ninum is celebrated in the months of August to October when the rice harvests are in during the new moon until full moon. The complete mo-ninum cycle is six grand celebrations: three at the bride’s house and three at the grooms’ house, alternating until the cycle is completed.

The first mula celebrated at the brides’ house usually lasts for one day. Simple food is prepared such as lahid which is sticky rice wrapped in awon lehek, a kind of tree leaf. Ordinary rice is wrapped in lemon leaves. Only fish and chicken are prepared. Pork is taboo. Sugarcane is cut into pieces (a foot long) and offered to all participants, instead of sugarcane wine.

Arrangements of dowries are then discussed. The bride will offer their dowries to the grooms’ party. This arrangement is called los. The bride’s los are heirloom pieces, embroidered dresses (kayal menyi, mading, demlat or t’nalak tube skirt, or cloth. The grooms’ party will select from among the dowries and all concerned will discuss how much they will have to give in return on the next mula. This will start the discussion on when the next mula will be held. The rest of the day is spent dancing, singing, eating and horse fighting.

Second year mulu

For the second year, the mula celebration is held at the grooms’ house. The grooms’ party prepares simple food, similar to those prepared by the brides during the first mula, including the footlong pieces of sugarcane. Dowries are discussed. This time, the los will be paid to the bride’s parents in dowries they received and as agreed upon during the mula at the bride’s house the first year. Usually, the dowries offered are horses and other large animals, gongs, kefilan, betel-nut, klintang and/or appliances. Land is never offered as dowry; this is taboo. Another set of arrangements for the exchange of dowries is agreed upon at this time. When all these are done, the rest of the day is again spent dancing, singing, horse fighting and ends with a fet buteng. The ritual specialist, together with the party of the bride, will do the rattan knot tying of the grooms’ part, equivalent to the number of days agreed upon to hold the third celebration at the brides’ house. The mowol buteng will again be carried with care to the house of the brides.

Third year mulu

The third year is celebrated at the bride’s house, but this time, with more people joining in the celebration. Simple food and chicken are served and still no wine. Dowries, los, from the bride are again offered, and the setting of previous dowries is also taken up. The chants and songs express challenges on payment of dowries or exchanges of bargaining of dowries. Each party will have its own singers/chanters, with performances judged by crowd responses. Arrangement of dowries takes longer now. The whole-day affair ends with the usual mowol buteng, tying of rattan knots and its careful transport to the grooms’ house.

Fourth year mulu

The fourth year feast is done at the grooms’ house with the sugarcane wine served for the first time. The ritual practitioner presides over the ritual of wine tasting. This ritual is a feast in itself. The people indulge in food, horse fights and wine tasting. The ritual specialist starts the tasting by filling his bamboo cup and offering the first toast. Having said his ritual prayers, he fills all the cups of the grooms and guests present for a mass toast. The men judge if the wine is ready for drinking or not.

The dowries are given in exchange of the los the grooms received from the bride.
The night after the wine tasting, all the men and the brides go home. If there are ten couples joining the mo-ninum, ten houses of food will be prepared. Each bride will be assigned a place by the ritual specialist. The meligey, is made of sugarcane as posts and sticky rice wrapped in a sacred leaf called khek as roof. Cooked rice with pots of chickens are placed inside the booths. Roasted chickens are hung around the booth for the grooms’ party to bring home after the mulu. Each of the booths has an earthen jar full of sugarcane wine for the grooms and relatives to drink.

This is the last celebration where the dowries by the bride’s party are discussed. This time, the bride’s family helps each other cope with the dowries given to the groom’s party. The singing and chanting is done as a form of debate called temulu lehavan. Apart from exchanging and arranging dowries, some families talk about arranging the marriage of their children. The mulu ends with betung and its transfer to the brides’ house.

The fifth mulu

The fifth mulu is the last mulu to be done at the brides’ house. This lasts for three to four days depending on the availability of food and sugarcane wine (wine tasting takes place a day before the actual mulu at the brides’ house). Before the drink fest (teminun), all the grooms and their relatives sleep at the brides’ house. For the tasting ritual, the groom’s party goes home to the grooms’ house with their relatives.

The procession of the newlyweds is preceded by the procession of the grooms’ and brides’ sides performing the dances and gongs. The procession takes place after the breakfast, with the grooms’ and brides’ sides passing by each other. The procession will take place along the main road and will pass by the houses of the elders and grandparents.

Fifth year mulu

The fifth mulu is the last mulu to be done at the brides’ house. This lasts for three to four days depending on the availability of food and sugarcane wine (wine tasting takes place a day before the actual mulu at the brides’ house). Before the drink fest (teminun), all the grooms and their relatives sleep at the brides’ house. For the tasting ritual, the groom’s party goes home to the grooms’ house with their relatives, as well as the brides’, to participate in the activity. All the wine is brought to the brides’ house for drinking and from then on, the making of wine becomes a continuous activity. Feasting and horse fights last throughout the day.

At this time, the brides and their relatives prepare food for the setting up of the meligey (the house of food), inside the brides’ house.

The night after the wine tasting, all the men and the brides go home. If there are ten couples joining the mo-ninum, ten houses of food will be prepared. Each bride will be assigned a place by the ritual specialist. The meligey, is made of sugarcane as posts and sticky rice wrapped in a sacred leaf called khek as roof. Cooked rice with pots of chickens are placed inside the booths. Roasted chickens are hung around the booth for the grooms’ party to bring home after the mulu. Each of the booths has an earthen jar full of sugarcane wine for the grooms and relatives to drink.

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Sixth year mulu

This is the final stage of the cycle of the celebration of the mo-ninum. It is held at the grooms’ house. The event lasts from three to four days. Here, all rituals of the mo-ninum are celebrated.

The kandar mulu, the wedding feast day, is the most awaited day of all the days. In the early morning of the grand feast, the host bride pounds the rice to be used by the ritual specialist for the sewing ritual. Only the host bride does this.

As the sun rises, the brides, relatives and their beautifully adorned horses march to the grooms’ house led by the ritual specialist. The groom’s party joins the procession. The women carry the bamboo poles for the house of blankets and the t’nalak pants they have sewn for their husbands.

While the procession is going on, there is revelry. All the taboos are recited by the participants. Warnings are set and instructions from the ritual specialist are stated. On this day, the house of plates, the house of blankets and the ritual for casting of the taboos of the t’nalak are done. The house for the food would have already been set by the brides and the grooms to accommodate all the food being prepared for the occasion.

Tebule heligo (The house of plates) –

When all are gathered in front the mo-ninum house, the ritual specialist starts the ritual of setting up the tebules.

The tebules are of two kinds. One is the heligo or “the house of plates,” made of six bamboo posts (kling variety) and three bamboo (lasek variety) as trusses, put up by the grooms a bit farther from the house. The cutting of the bamboo poles for this house has a sequence. These are cut more or less eighteen days before the Grand Mulu. First, three posts of the tebule heligo are cut. Eight nights must be counted using rattan knots before the other set of three bamboo for the right side of the tebule is cut. Three bamboo poles will also be cut for the sides and the top trusses of the house after observing another eight-day interval.

All the china porcelain placed shall be tied to the roof. On each of the bamboo poles are the spears tied in an ‘x’ form with a scarf tied like a flag on each spear. On top of the plates, a mat is prepared to provide the canopy for the house of plates. Later, the fully decorated booth will be carried by the grooms near the mo-ninum house. The carrying of the booth is a form of ritual.

Tebule kumu (The house of blankets) –

While the tebule heligo is being set up, the women are also setting up the second type of tebule, the “house of blankets”. Following the day of the gathering of the lekek leaves, the men will cut the seben on the lasek, a bamboo variety required for the posts of the tebule kumu. The men will cut many poles to hang the t’nalak cloth woven by all the brides. This is all done in one day. The taboos, as instructed by the ritual specialist during the cutting, must be observed. The poles must be brought by the brides to the grooms’ house on the day of the Grand Mulu. About six poles are needed to set up the posts of the tebule kumu and another three will serve as its trusses. This must be assembled a few meters away from the house. Hung on the posts are small pieces of t’nalak cloth.

Meeting of the tebules – When all the tebules are set, the grooms carry the two booths on their shoulders to an area designated by the ritual specialist near the mo-ninum house.

During the procession, a set of dancers perform the temuluok dance between the two booths. Two pairs of dancers from the grooms’ and brides’ sides perform the dances respectively. From upstairs, a woman will dance to meet the coming dancers and then they dance together where the booths are placed. From here, a pair of dancers will call for a competition to dance. There, the myor or the warrior dance is performed where two men
with shields and keflan do the ceremonial hacking dance. Whoever falls down is a loser. The winning dancer is interpreted to have won and is allowed to marry the women dancers. Both parties are represented in the warrior dance. When both houses are settled, the dancers kiss each other as a pact of peace after the invitation to fight in a dance.

**Ritual of the meko lii kumu – Casting away of the taboo of the t'nalak blanket.**

When all the tebules are already on the ground, the ritual specialist stands in the middle of the tebule kumu. He brings with him a sling bag which is actually a tube skirt made of t'nalak called denoli. The bag contains four pieces of blongon or cooked rice wrapped in a sacred leaf, while four pieces of these are left upstairs. He also brings down the right thigh of a roasted chicken, an anahaw leaf (adult) and a tiny jar filled with sugarcane juice. The other parts of the chicken are left upstairs. The specialist slings the denoli with care.

When the brides and grooms are gathered, the ritual specialist spreads the anahaw leaf on the ground and puts on it the wrapped cooked rice, the chicken thigh and the earthenware jar with sugarcane wine. To cast away the taboos of the t'nalak blankets, the weavers are called to fall in line and step over the food offerings going toward the east. The brides sit around the specialist forming a circle from east to west, with the specialist at the center. The specialist pinches an amount of cooked rice, the chicken thigh and the earthenware jar with small particles. He distributes the bones to all the women dancers, working bolo, t'nalak tube skirts and other valuables on their anahaw leaf. Every woman is requested to dip her fingers on the sacred sugarcane wine. After everyone has eaten, the specialist places the bone of the chicken thigh to his mouth then slices it in small particles. He distributes the bones to all the men with the belief that these will bring them good fortune. The cooked rice is left uneaten and must not be brought up to the house.

He then instructs all the weavers to offer their baskets of t'nalak cloths, which the specialist's assistant (tan mugu) pulls out one by one and hangs on the tebule kumu. The hanging of the t'nalak shall again be in accordance with the sequence determined by the specialist. Those who do not follow the instructions faint and are healed by a specialist with herbs.

The specialist slices the sacred anahaw leaf and distributes these among the women. The number of slices received depends on the number of baskets of t'nalak brought. Each of the brides lay down offerings such as small knives, bracelets, embroidered blouses, working bolo, t'nalak tube skirts and other valuables on their anahaw leaf. Every woman is requested to dip her fingers on the sacred sugarcane wine. After everyone has eaten, the specialist places the bone of the chicken thigh to his mouth then slices it in small particles. He distributes the bones to all the women with the belief that these will bring them good fortune. The cooked rice is left uneaten and must not be brought up to the house.

After this, the specialist sings the *malak lang*, the sacred song which is sang only during this part of the feast:

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Alah lang se ben
Tebo Esmam
Tebo Landjapaw
Ne Matsuung Kibung
Ne mele Kuanan
Ne metalu, ni sen brunokaga
Nemo-u ni Len-ganay u
Olon sembo tet lagan
Olon gazed lagan
Tengonem ko denalang
Mebaga Ubo Kebulan
Mebaga Ubo Kebulan
Nin don gel denalang
Denalang ko ni betek kayaw (betek kunam)
Olon Sembo tet lagan
Olon sembo tet beluhan
Tengonem ko denalang
Mebaga Ubo Kebulan

(Song for the bamboo pole [seben]
Late Esmam
Late Lendayaw
And the Mt. Matutum mixed white and black
And the stone, river
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The weaving of the tie-dyed t’nalak abaca textile is one of the prominent features of this extended grand festival of the mo-ninum.

After this, the specialist sings the *malak lang*, the sacred song which is sang only during this part of the feast:

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Tebo Esmam
Tebo Landjapaw
Ne Matsuung Kibung
Ne mele Kuanan
Ne metalu, ni sen brunokaga
Nemo-u ni Len-ganay u
Olon sembo tet lagan
Olon gazed lagan
Tengonem ko denalang
Mebaga Ubo Kebulan
Mebaga Ubo Kebulan
Nin don gel denalang
Denalang ko ni betek kayaw (betek kunam)
Olon Sembo tet lagan
Olon sembo tet beluhan
Tengonem ko denalang
Mebaga Ubo Kebulan

(Song for the bamboo pole [seben]
Late Esmam
Late Lendayaw
And the Mt. Matutum mixed white and black
And the stone, river
```

After the malak lang, the host bride goes upstairs to perform the sowing of rice ceremony. The specialist invites everyone to go upstairs. While they are doing this, the host throws rice at them. All the people upstairs eat the remaining rice and chicken used during the ritual, pinching the morsels in small amounts. The host groom slices the roasted taro (a special variety called the *blongon*), hence this
must also be planted as part of the mo-ninium preparations), which he dips into the sugarcane wine and distributes among the grooms. After eating the taro, all the grooms put on the t’nalak pants woven by their respective wives. After the rituals upstairs, the host will gather the thrown rice and bury this in a place where no one can come near. When the host returns, all the grooms go downstairs to tighten up the tebule heligo and bring it up to the mo-ninium house. All the brides fix up the tebule kumu to bring the t’nalak cloths upstairs.

All the brides are instructed to keep their woven t’nalak in their respective baskets and bring them up to the house for the ritual called temenes kumu lem abi.

During the ritual, the specialist takes the baskets of cloth from each bride and hangs them one by one on the east side of the house and the west side where the hearth is located. This is done in sequence based on their confirmation in joining the mo-ninium during the announcement and invitation done by the groom’s relatives and visitors. The grooms and brides stay on to continue the exchange of dowries and bride price. It is also dedicated to the sacred jar called lebewon that is filled with wine.

The brides’ party usually reminds the grooms’ party of their incomplete dowries, challenging them to give this before the mo-ninium ends. This continues until the wee hours of the morning.

The kesebas tau mula (The farewell party)
The second day of the grand feast is still a day of merriment. Cooking, eating, singing, dancing and horse fights continue. After lunch, the ritual specialist performs the farewell ritual for the grooms’ and brides’ relatives and visitors. The grooms and brides stay on to continue the exchange of dowries and bride price.

The feast for the tau bak (The host)
The second night of the grand feast is dedicated to the host family. The other participants offer their tokens of gratitude in the form of food and gifts, such as a horse, a sword, gong, t’nalak cloth and others.

The mewas lem-el (Washing in the river)
The last day of the grand feast is the cleansing ritual done in the river. This is believed to cast all taboos away so that every participating family will lead a normal life after the ritual is over. All the participants go back to the brides’ mo-ninium house to do the cleansing ritual.

The tenolu libewon (The singing and debate) – At night, the dancing continues while the cooking is going on. After dinner, the singing and debate called tenolu libewon starts. The song is about the bargaining of dowries and the bride price. It is also dedicated to the sacred jar called lebewon that is filled with wine.

The tenolu libewon starts.

The brides and grooms are instructed by the ritual specialist to prepare a pair of red and black abaca fibers in balls. They use natural dyes. The red is from the roots of the lobo tree while the black comes from the leaves of the kenalum tree.

At the river, the couples place the fiber balls in a basin of water. They then wash their faces and other parts of their body with the water from the basin. After the washing, the balls are thrown into the river to be carried away by the current so that evil fortunes will not affect the couples and their families. The throwing of the balls cast away all the bad fortunes and omens of the mo-ninium. Then they all go back to the mo-ninium house.

After the washing ritual, the specialist instructs the people to fall in two lines: one for the grooms and their families and the other for the brides and their families. The ritual specialist stands in front of the lines, and as each person passes him, they are given the kuloy leaf on their heads. This is a variety of a shrub that looks like a talahib (a kind of weed) flower. The kuloy serves as a charm to protect them from illness.

When everyone has gone back to the mo-ninium house, the ritual specialist gets all the offerings and ties them with his herbs and medicine.

The cleansing ritual is usually done in the morning of the last day of the celebration. This is to ensure that the participants will not be drenched by rain. In Lake Sebu, rain usually comes in the afternoon. In case the last day is rainy, the cleansing is postponed for the next day or when the sun is up.

Lake Sebu Tourism Office