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KABAYAN MUMMIES



A glimpse of Benguet



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GABRIEL PAWID KEITH • EMMA BABAN KEITH

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MUMMIES

*Flesh clinging to life
defying centuries,
they wait for tourists
in Timbac Caves.*

*Drinking tafey, chanting
bac'diws —
Eons lose their meaning
as in the beginning
amen.*

*Kabunian perchance
visited volatile Sadat
evolving guardians
for Mount Pulag.*

*Still they grin
while evergreens moan
on moonlit nights —
defying centuries,
waiting for tourists,
seeking life everlasting.*

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MURAL

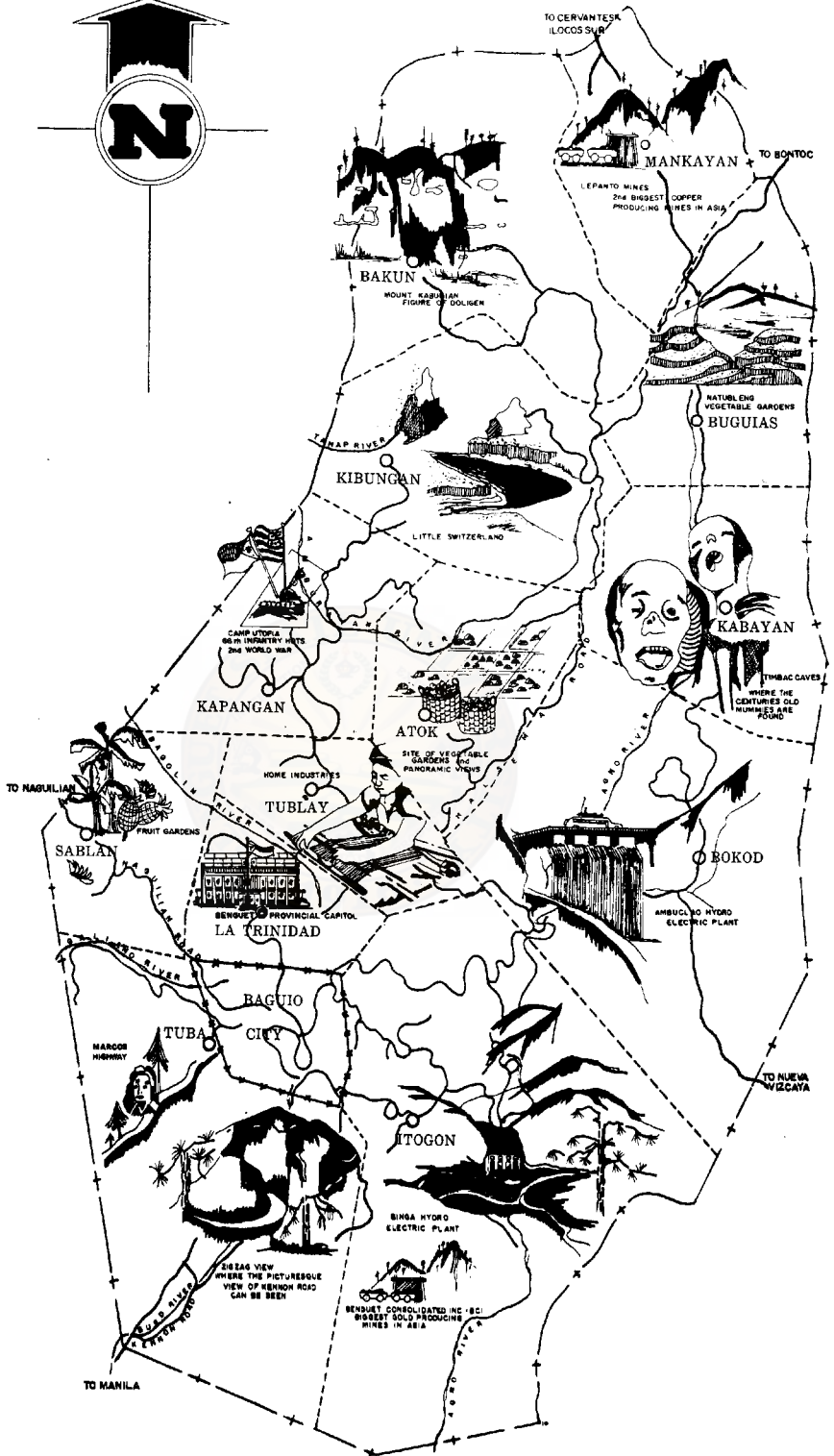
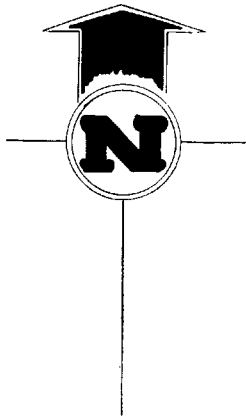
*Chiselled images
of a folkloric era
vibrate in rhythmic cadence
to pak'kong melody
while the limping artist
maltreat concrete walls
with expletives of devotion.*

*Crudely the wherefrom
of my people emerges
from debris and chaos
and I see me
in muted stone form
etching hillside stairways
to golden skies.*

*Past becomes present
and future beckons,
while exhausted, the artist
hibernates . . .*

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I. INTRODUCTION

THE NEW SOCIETY of the Philippines is aimed, among other things, at integrating into the national body politic the various cultural communities. Its guiding principle is to provide economic development and social justice and to instill in the Filipinos pride in their Asian identity.

Since the beginning of the effort to build a New Society, the government has taken various steps to bridge the gap between these cultural communities. At the same time, it has taken strong measures to ensure equality of opportunity for all these communities, with special reference to redressing the imbalance in the distribution of the rewards of society.

In the task of bridging the gap between these diverse cultural groups, the government rejects the idea of assimilation and goes beyond the mere concept of national integration, proceeding from the principle that integration connotes an interpenetration of cultures. This means that it is the intent of government to strengthen and reinforce all ethnic groups that each of them may be able to acquire the capacity to transcend its particular interests and commit itself to the larger community which is the Filipino nation.¹

In the Philippines, one of the major concerns of the government has to do with the preservation of what the nation has, in terms of what the Filipinos possess of their Asian part. And this means not only preserving but also developing, giving new dimensions to the creative spirit that produced the past, so that it may continue to enrich the present.

Enjoying this protection are some five million Filipinos classified into 60 ethno-linguistic "national minority groups," the most unique of these are the Tasadays, an ethnic group in the highlands of Southern Cotabato in the Philippines, that had eluded modern man for a thousand years before first contact in 1971. The coming of the first outsiders to the Tasadays' cave home marked the end of centuries of isolation for this unique people.

¹"Mindanao Situationer: Seeking Peaceful Solutions to Problems of Development," *The Republic*, Manila: Department of Public Information (Vol. 1, No. 8, 1-15 March, 1976), p. 8.

The largest minority groups are the Muslims — the Taosug, Samal, Maranao and Maguindanao — who number around three million. These groups, while belonging to the minority, actually constitute the dominant society in their areas of habitation and are represented in the national government. They elect their own provincial governors, town mayors and village chiefs.

The rest of the minority groups are non-Christian, Non-Muslim peoples who are equally extended medical, material, advisory or developmental assistance.

In order to allow the Filipino ethnic groups to lead a life of their own choice, President Ferdinand E. Marcos decreed the ownership of ancestral lands by the cultural minorities.

President Marcos has decreed that lands of the public domain occupied and cultivated by members of national cultural communities, either by themselves or their predecessors or ancestors for a minimum of 30 years before March 11, 1974, shall be granted to such minorities. Aside from this, the President proclaimed the reservation of lands for settlement purposes of the national cultural minorities.

The government's policy of encouraging the minorities to develop their own cultures, and at the same time to fuse with the mainstream of Philippine society, is reflected in the educational program for cultural minorities. The educational program for the minorities meets the real needs of their environment and, because their ancient values and cultures are given importance, deepens their appreciation of the more valuable aspects of their own rich culture.²

²“Preserving Living Traditions”, *The Republic*, Manila: Department of Public Information (Vol. 1, No. 11, 16 May — 14 June, 1976), p. 14.

II. BENGUET PROVINCE

Benguet is the gateway to the Mountain Region or Igorotland, which includes Ifugao, Mountain Province and Kalinga-Apayao. Created June 18, 1966 by Rep. Act 4695, she is bounded on the south by Pangasinan, on the east by Ifugao and Nueva Vizcaya, on the north by Mountain Province, and on the west by La Union and Ilocos Sur.

The province has 13 municipalities: Tuba, Sablan, Itogon, La Trinidad, Tublay, Atok, Bokod, Kabayan, Kapangan, Bakun, Kibungan, Mankayan and Buguias. La Trinidad is the provincial capital.

As of May, 1980, Benguet has a population of 236,174 with 122,550 males and 113,624 females. Population density is 1.1 hectares per individual, the province having an area of 259,240 hectares.

The native people of Benguet are the Ibaloy and the Kankanays, peaceful, hardworking and hospitable. Generally introverts, they often answer queries with smiles. Aside from their native tongues, they can converse in Ilocano and are not far behind in English repartees.

Despite the onslaught of civilization and christianization, centuries-old culture still permeates the lives of the barangay people. The sound of the *solibaos* (native drums) accompanied by the *kalsa*, *pinsak* and the *palas* frequently announce the holding of *canaos* or native feasts. Everyone is invited to partake of the preparations usually consisting of boiled beef, carabeef or pork with boiled rice, gabi and camote. *Sili* or pepper makes everything really hot.

Visitors are welcome to join in the *tayaw* and *bendian* dances while elders tell stories or engage in friendly debates through *bac'diws* (native songs) and womenfolk provide the *asbayat* or choral accompaniment. The night passes unnoticed as jars of *tafey* or rice wine are distributed around.

The Kankanays occupy northerly Benguet and are traditionally the native miners. Their speech is closely related to the Lepanto dialect.

The Ibaloy occupy the agricultural valleys and have their seat of culture in Kabayan. They are traditionally the agriculturist with a dialect having similarities with that of the Pangasinan speech.

III. KABAYAN MUNICIPALITY

Kabayan is one of the oldest inhabited towns of Benguet. It is bounded on the north by the municipality of Buguias, on the south by Bokod, on the west by Hungduan, Ifugao. It is further bounded by mountains, on the south by Palanza, Atep, Socong and Parengal mountains; on the north by Aponbirang and Tabayo mountains; on the west by the Bucao, Paoay and Bagingey mountains; and on the east by Mount Pulag, the second highest mountain in the Philippines (at 9,610.40 feet above sea level, shy by only 75.44 feet of Mount Apo in Mindanao) and Mount Tabayo.

The early settlers of the town described it as "Kaba-ayan", meaning land of vines called "ba-ay". However, when it was registered as a town by Spanish authorities in 1846, the name was written as "Kabayan".

This municipality is predominantly occupied by Ibaloyos. A few people from neighboring provinces and towns have settled here as a result of intermarriages and migration. Kabayan has a population of 9,073 as of the May 31, 1980 census: 4,650 males and 4,423 females. It has a land area of 19,490 hectares.

If Kabayan is known as "the seat of Ibaloy culture", this is because oral accounts transmitted from one generation to another claim that the first Ibaloy settlement was at Imbossi, Kabayan. The Ibaloyos who first settled there were believed to be a part of the second wave of Malay migrators who landed in the shores of Pangasinan. The accounts go that several families of the group followed the course of the Agno River and temporarily settled at Baloy, Itogon. Because of a chicken pox epidemic, several families continued moving northward until they finally settled on a plateau which they called Imbossi.

In no time at all, these families constructed rice terraces and made *kaingins* on fertile hills and valleys. Soon they built their houses after finding that the place was rich in animal life and wild fruits and that its fertile soil was suited for agriculture. As the small group multiplied in number, many moved to nearby places. Thus was the birth of the Ibaloy culture which started at Imbossi.³

³Ursula Cariño Perez, "The Social World of the Ibaloyos" (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Baguio, 1979), pp. 50-52.



RICE TERRACES punctuate the attractions of the poblacion of Kabayan. Here kintuman and other cash crops are grown.

Kabayan is a fifth class municipality per 1975 classification with an average income of P136,571.90. It has 13 barangays, namely Adaoay, Anchokey, Ballay, Bashoy, Batan, Duacan, Eddet, Gusaran, Kabayan Barrio, Lusod, Pacso, Poblacion and Tawangan. Elected in the January 30, 1980 local elections were: Florentino Merino, mayor; Ernesto T. Matuday, vice mayor; and Mariano Cadsap, Melecio Baucas, Victorino L. Bauzon, Milan Chapdian, Isabelo Kingay, Peter Bas-ilan, Alfred Luciap, Paulo Daoal, Amancio Mendoza and Bryant Bodikey, members of the Sangguniang Bayan.

Kabayan is not only noted for its aromatic Arabian coffee and *kintoman* (native red rice), but more so for her centuries-old mummies. A tourist spot some 84 kilometers away from Baguio City and La Trinidad, capital of Benguet, the Ministry of Tourism has seen fit to earmark the construction of a P300,000-hostel in the area. Minister Jose A. Aspiras himself made the promise when he visited Kabayan during her fiesta on December 10, 1975. The town fiesta held on December 3, 1980 featured native dances like the Palis, Bagel, Tinaktakyad, Sagawsaw, Pakshel, Pasang, Bajog, Diyas/Kinalbering, Hinaguigui, Bino-bu-lo, Guinalding and Bendian. The *Angba* was also sang as background music.

In his book, *Outline Review of Philippine Archeology*, published in 1947, Beyer wrote of Benguet, then a subprovince of Mountain Province:

One of the most interesting types of remains in this Subprovince, however, is the great number of burial caves and niches, containing wooden coffins, bones, and especially (in some places) dried mummies. These mummies have remarkable lasting qualities, considering the climate; and the history of several specimens, at least, has been traced back to from 150 to over 200 years. (The preservation used is the "sablut" concoction, also known to the ancient Ilokos and to the Ifugaos.) One cave on Mt. Sto. Tomas, near Baguio, was found to contain more than 20 mummies, of which at least half were in a fair state of preservation. Near Buguias and Loo, in the northern part of the Subprovince, the famous mummy of Ano — long kept in a burial niche in a nearby cliff, treated with respect, and made frequent offerings by the people — was stolen by a missionary from San Fernando, La Union, and later became the object of a court case. The specimen, having been placed in my charge for some time, was examined by me carefully and its history investigated. It proved to be over 200 years old, and was still in perfect condition, having been kept in a wooden coffin in a dry niche, and an elevation of nearly 7,000 feet above sea level. The body was completely tattooed, from the top of the forehead to the soles of the feet, with an intricate pattern of the type illustrated by Han Meyer in his monograph on the Igorots in 1885. (All mummies still existing should be scientifically studied and photographed.)⁴

The mummies in what used to be called the Mummy Cave on Mount Sto. Tomas are long gone. But various burial caves are strewn across Benguet, particularly in Kabayan.

⁴Beyer, *Outline Review of Philippine Archeology*, (July-August), p. 219.

Recent Developments

Visitors, both foreign and local, have been flocking to the Governor's office at the Provincial Capitol in La Trinidad, Benguet to pay their respects to Governor Ben Palispis and to have a glimpse of three of Kabayan's famous mummies conveniently situated in a corner.

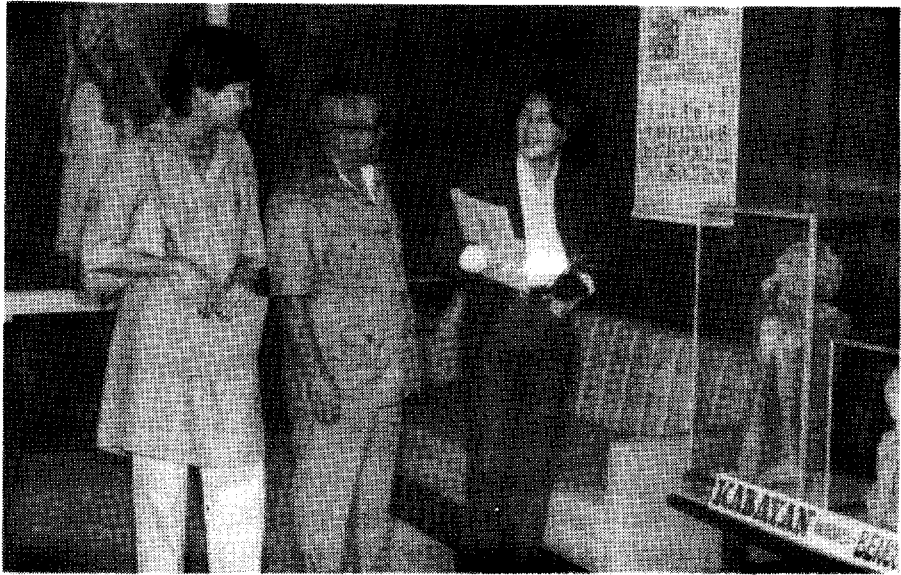
The mummies are those of an elderly couple and another whose sex has not been determined who appears to be of much smaller stature than the two. Enclosed in glass cases, the male and female mummies are flexed in position with mouths agape, arms and hands pressed to the chest, and faces turned upwards as though in supplication to Kabunian, the Benguet Igorot's pagan god.

The presence of the mummies at the Governor's office was in some way made possible by President Ferdinand E. Marcos' birthday celebration at his hometown on September 11, 1978. A day before the occasion, thousands from all over the nation embarked on the long trek to Batac, Ilocos Norte. Officials of Benguet were among the well-wishers. A few days before the occasion, Kabayan "loaned" the mummies so they could be taken to Batac to lend color to Benguet's participation. The plan was shelved, however, because the Benguet delegation had misgivings that something untoward might befall them, if not the mummies. Benguet Igorots believe that the mummies possess something akin to a sacred nature.

After the Batac happening, the mummies were made to "lie in state" at the Capitol until Kabayan shall have constructed a safe museum. This situation has worked to the advantage of tourists who are on budgeted time since they are spared the trouble of negotiating the five-hour ride to Kabayan. This is just a temporary arrangement, however. Definitely, tourists will have to motor to Kabayan for a more enlightening look at the burial caves and the mummies in their wooden coffins.

Mummification

What makes the Benguet mummy so attractive? The most plausible reason may be because it is only the Benguets (and the Ifugaos) who are known to have practised and perfected the art of mummification in this part of the world. Historically, there are only three areas in the world



IRENE MARCOS, youngest daughter of the First Couple, shares some light moments with Governor Ben Palispis during her visit to the Benguet Provincial Capitol in La Trinidad. She was intrigued by the presence of mummies in the governor's office.



MUMMIES FROM KABAYAN, three of them, are displayed in glass cases. Tourists have been flocking to see them at the Benguet Provincial Capitol.

where dead bodies are preserved through mummification which are Egypt, Central and South America. The Philippines could validly claim the distinction as another land where mummies are found.⁵

The word "mummy" is applied to bodies which have been so preserved as to defy disintegration for a long time; it is applied to bodies whether of human beings, animals, fish, reptiles and even insects found in Egypt particularly which have been so preserved by the use of *bitumen, spices, gums, or natron*. Instances are known in which bodies have been preserved by immersion in honey.⁶

"Mummification" is the art of preserving bodies after death which was carried to a great perfection by the ancient Egyptians. "Natron" is a substance made up of carbonate, sulfate and chloride of soda; mixture of salt, saltpetre and sodium sulfate. "Bitumen" is a kind of mineral pitch which consists mainly of compounds of carbon and hydrogen; e.g. natural gas, naphtha, asphalt, petroleum and others.

The different materials used to preserve the body produced different results in the body of the mummy. The use of resin gave the skin a greenish color and render it like tanned leather, but renders the body easily breakable when freed of their wrappings. The use of bitumen to fill the body cavity rendered the body hard and black, while natron cause the flesh to fall from the bones.

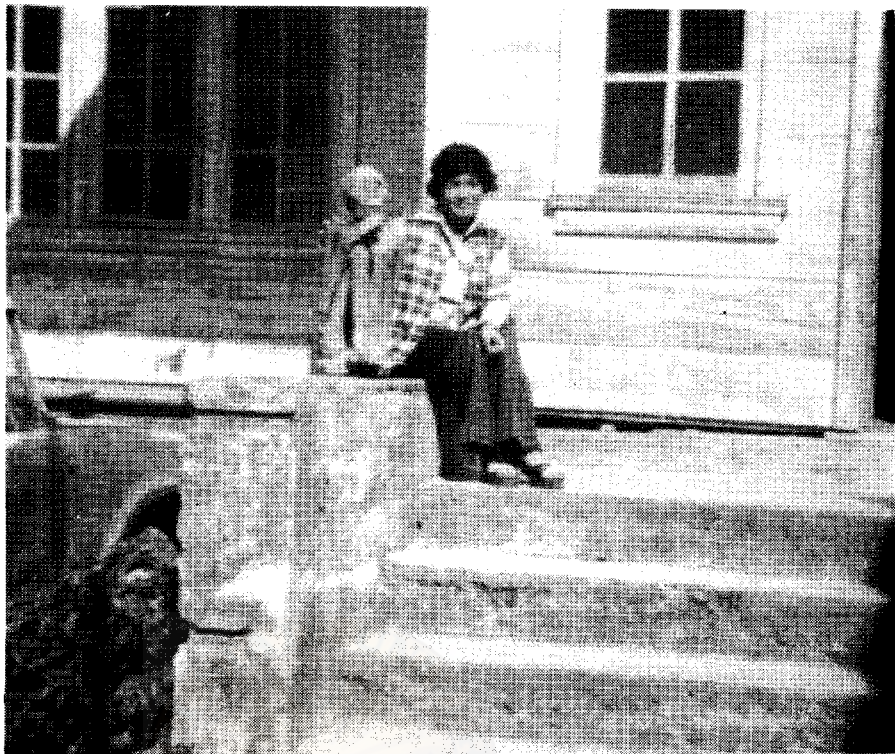
The common belief was that the bitumen from the mummies was a balm for cuts and bruises, so that much of this material was sold for this purpose.⁷

The mummification process among the Benguet Igorots was not as intricate and sophisticated as that of the Egyptians but like the latter, their mummies have withstood wear and tear from the elements all these years.

⁵ Purification O. Garcia, "Mystery Behind Local Mummification", a lecture given on July 11, 1978 at the Adamson University.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.



A MUMMY shares the company of Dr. Ursula Cariño Perez at the steps of the old Kabayan Municipal Hall.

In her dissertation, "The Social World of the Ibalays", Dr. Ursula Cariño Perez, herself a bona-fide native of Benguet, presents a detailed account of the traditional mummification process among the Ibalays of Kabayan. This was related to her by Baban Berong, a local oldtimer. The process:

A large quantity of salt is dissolved in water and poured into the mouth of the deceased to prevent the early decomposition of the internal organs. The corpse is stripped and bathed with cold water. With the kolebao (death blanket), the corpse in a sitting position is i-asal (tied to the death chair, that has high stilts and that is set in front of and beside the stairs of the house). Soon, the ends of a piece of cloth ban across the mouth is knotted at the back of the chair — further measure to keep the corpse stay on the

chair for at least a week or for until such time fluid oozes from the swollen body; in this condition, the corpse is brought down and placed on the floor in a lying position. Close relatives peel off the epidermis or the outer skin all over the body — the process is called *duduan*. After being peeled of its skin, the corpse is washed with cold water, covered with the same blanket, and then returned to the death chair. The process is followed by *begisan* (deworming), that is removing the worms that infest the skin. The peeled off skin is placed in an earthen jar which is afterwards buried in the yard — this is dug later and placed beside the coffin during the burial. Beginning to dry, the corpse is applied all over with the juice of pounded guava and patani leaves. The process is repeated everyday until the body is totally dry. Regulated heat from a fire built below the death chair smokes the dead. When the body begins to shrink, the position of the corpse is changed by tying the legs and hands up to the chest in a crouched position. The legs and hands are tied. The string is removed only when both hands and legs are in their desired position. When dried, the corpse is placed under the sun during the day and smoked during the night. The juice of patani and guava leaves is applied twice a day until the body is hardened, intact and smoothly dried.

For as long as two months or even one year, the body is alternately sun dried and smoked — interment time is decided by the nearest kin and after he has decided, carried to its final resting place in the cave of his ancestors or in another cave . . .⁹

Dr. Perez adds that the technique of mummification through salting of the internal organs and application of the juice of guava and patani leaves and smoking and sun-drying lasted up to the 1850's, although it is said to have continued to the end of the century. The practice of mummification was slowly relegated to the past during the last decade of the nineteenth century because the process of mummification was very expensive and time consuming. According to Dr. Perez, the process primarily depended on the social status of the dead, his wealth and most especially on his number of relatives in neighboring villages who could help shoulder the expenses during the rituals for months or years.

⁹Ursula Cariño Perez, "The Social World of the Ibalays", (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Baguio, 1979), pp. 252-254.

Dr. Perez writes further that the early ancestors of the Ibalays used an herb called *atab* to rub on the corpse's body. The leaves of said herb was pounded and extracted of its juice which was wiped on the body to harden it. Patani juice was likewise wiped all over the body to protect it from flies and other insects. Discoverers of the mummies found that the mummies had pieces of cloth plugged in their ears, mouths and nostrils to prevent flies from entering the body.

Informants of Dr. Perez said the practice of mummification among their ancestors during the seventeenth century has not been recorded but orally divulged from one generation to another. They claim that up to now, no scientific research has been made to determine the age of the mummies found in the caves of Kabayan, although most foreign anthropologists presume that the mummies are between 500 to 1000 years old.

Preliminary Report

The national government has displayed concern for the mummies' welfare on several occasions. For instance, when the first report of the existence of mummified remains in Benguet was officially transmitted the Museum responded by immediately sending a team consisting of Messrs. Avelino Legaspi and Jesus T. Peralta. In a span of one week — July 23 to July 29, 1968, the team surveyed the mummies at the Timbac Caves in Kabayan. Portions of their preliminary report:



MOUNT TIMBAC is the site of several burial caves.

The Site

The jump-off point was the provincial capitol in La Trinidad going north through the Halsema Highway. The team made a stop-over at Barrio Sayangan at kilometer 50 for provisions. A distance further was the highest elevation of the highway, 7,400 feet above sea level. At kilometer 54, the team turned off to the right to a feeder road that goes up Mt. Timbac, a narrow unpaved road maintained by the vegetable farmers on the mountain. Due to the continuous rain and wind from the backlash of the typhoon (Didang), the visibility was zero from the ensuing fog. The temperature was 60 degrees. The road continued for about eight kilometers until it reached the promontory of the mountain, where there was an area wide enough for vehicles to turn around. From this point the route was a foot trail that goes down the mountain side, along ridges for about twenty minutes, This was the most dangerous stretch of the trip due to the weather conditions, wind velocity and the slippery nature of the path.

The cave was reached at the end of the foot trail on the east side of the mountain. There were two caves, one below, the other separated by some 50 yards. Up the trail was a third, but could not be reached due to the weather conditions at the time. But both caves investigated were facing due east, on the windward side.

The site is known locally as the Timbac Caves being located on the upper levels of Mt. Timbac, and since it is situated in Sitio Timbac, the town of Pacso between Kabayan and Buguias, although the nearest barrio is Sayangan at kilometer 50. The sitio was established before the second world war. There were about 60 families with a total population of some 300 with hired workers in the gardens bringing the population to 500. The produce of the gardens are potatoes and cabbages. Meat was not available locally, this being obtained in Baguio. The estimated elevation is 8,000 feet.

The Caves

The first cave investigated was some 5½ meters deep and about 8 meters wide. The height at the opening was quite low, less than 91½ cm. But immediately near the mouth to the right was a spot where one can stand erect. The rest of the cave was quite low since

one has to crawl on top of the coffins to get to the rear of the cave. The coffins were laid on rocks on the cave floor filling the entire floor area, without even footspace in-between coffins. It was warm and dry inside the cave. Only the mouth was sprinkled with rain.

There were a total of thirteen coffins in the cave representing two types of manufacture and design. Eleven were large, generally rectangular, constructed coffins, the outermost one of which measured 1192 cm. x 49½ cm. x 46 cm. The remaining two were elliptical, dug-out coffins the outermost measured 100½ cm. x 39 cm. x 21 cm. x 10 cm. The rectangular coffins are multiple burial receptacles while the elliptical ones were single burials.

The cave, however, is very much disturbed since upon inspection the mummified remains were found to have been handled by previous visitors. Hairclips were found on the hair of some mummies and names of people written on the heads and back of others. The coffins were reported to have been brought out of the cave to be photographed.

Mr. Edward Magciano, a former barrio captain, reported that there are an estimated 80 caves in the area, a great number of which are undisturbed. Mr. John Kyle of the Summer Institute of Linguistics also reported that he and Mr. Lee Ballard of Baguio City have seen some of these caves, specially within the vicinity of Ambuklao.

The second cave is about 50 yards down the mountain side below the first one. The cave had a smaller opening which widens in the interior. There were eight coffins inside, seven of which are the rectangular type, and the remaining, a cylindrical one. One of the rectangular coffins had a cover that is well-decorated with geometric designs consisting of diamond patterns placed in lines toward both end portions of the cover as well as lizard-like etchings. Like the first cave, this too was well-disturbed.

The Coffins

The basic construction of the rectangular coffin is five pieces of lumber averaging 10 cms. in thickness forming a rectangular box slightly concaved in the interior and flat in the exterior. The head and foot boards are joined with the two sides by means of tongues through square holes on the side boards. The tongues are

then secured by pegs. The sizes of the peggings vary in accordance with the number of tongues used and whether the pegs run through two tongues or singly, usually the head and foot boards. The tongues are then pegged either singly or by large pegs running through two tongues from top to bottom. A sixth plank is then used as the cover of the coffin. The undersides of the cover is slightly concaved and grooved near the edges to fit on the rim of the coffin. The cover is further secured tightly on the coffin by the hooked ends of the pegs, when this is incorporated in the design of the peg. Otherwise, this is just placed on top of the coffin either unsecured or when grooved on the undersides, fits tightly on the rim of the coffin. The bottom of flooring of the coffin is secured by grooves on the interior sides of the head, foot and side boards along the lower edge.

There are two variations in this rectangular coffin design. Both of these are found in the first cave. In the first cave, instead of the usual rectangular sideboards, the sides are shaped into an elongated hexagon. The head and foot boards are secured to the sides by means of single tongues from each end, so that for the entire coffin there are only four tongue and pegging units instead of the usual eight. The second case is the usual rectangular form the only difference being that the tongues from the head and side boards do not protrude from the outer surface of the side boards but are kept flush on the surface. No peggings are employed to secure the joints but only the tightness of the fix doing this function.

The two elliptical coffins found in cave one are made from two pieces of wood, conceptually a tree trunk split in half, shaped like semi-cylindrical dug-out boats with both ends flattened. The two trough-like pieces are then pegged together at both flattened ends. The innermost coffin was obviously made from a single block of wood since the grain and the splitting of the edges for the two sections directly coincide. The two pieces are dug out to a thickness of 4 cms. on the sides and 10 cms. at the ends. The digging of the hollow appears to have been made by a sharp edged metallic tool, since the cuts are still very much in evidence.

The cylindrical coffin in the second cave is found in the innermost recess and because it was hemmed in by the other coffins making it difficult to approach measurement could not be taken. It was, however, made from a single cylindrical block of wood, approximately a meter length of trunk hollowed out in the circu-

lar, just enough to cover the opening of the coffin. The construction of the bottom could not be determined. The coffin is lying on its side with the opening toward the mouth of the cave. The side of the coffin in contact with the cave floor has greatly deteriorated.

Decorations

The principal mode of decoration of the coffins in the first cave are serrations on the upper edge on both ends of the covers on some coffins. Similar serrations appear on the outer edges at the ends of the side boards, as well as the sides of some pegs. In the second cave, the same serrations are found. The single coffin here previously mentioned that carried a more elaborate mode of decorations is really quite singular. The chevrons and diamond designs appear to be similar to the designs incorporated in the piece of cloth found inside the coffin itself. The patterns, however, are either raised or depressed. Both end portions on the upper surface of the cover is filled with the design in a series of lines, one on top of the other, running crosswise with a single line of one design running lengthwise down the center of the cover from one design area to the other. Above the geometrical design area on one end are etched what appears to be incision drawing of lizards.

There were no decorations observed on the elliptical coffins. On the cylindrical coffin in the second cave, however, is a raised trapezoidal design on one side near the mouth of the coffin.

Coffin Contents

The rectangular coffins are apparently multiple burial receptacles since there were several remains in each box, going up to five on the ones inspected. There appears to be no age or sex differentiations since a coffin was found to contain both male and female, including a juvenile. The elliptical coffins are single burials, while the cylindrical coffin contains two of what appear to be skeletal rather than mummified remains.

The ornately decorated coffin in the second cave contained pieces of cloth, the fiber, design, and colors of which are still intact.

Further inspection might reveal more, but due to the limits of the time allotted for the investigation, the contents of the coffins were not really scrutinized since it would involve the moving of the coffins out of the caves.

Conditions of the Mummies

The remains are flexed in position. The knees are drawn up to the chest, the arms raised with the hands either to both sides of the head or together on one side. The skin is drawn up right against the bones and skull, leathery in quality. The coloration is from beige to brown. Remains of the flesh on the one examined are not evident, the skin as it were the only thing holding the bones together. Bunches of hair are intact in the coffins on instances. Mature, juvenile and infant remains were observed evident and of both sexes. The clothing have disintegrated, except for the cloth previously mentioned in ornately decorated coffin.

Information on the Practice of Mummification

Mr. Edward Magciano gave the information that the practice of mummification has long been given up, but some still have a vague recollection of the process. The oldest resident of the area, a man of 94 years, remembers the practice, but does not have any knowledge as to who were the mummies in the caves or whose burials were those. The following general steps were taken in mummification of the dead. After the dead is tied to a sitting (flexed) position, and as the body fluids drain out, the skin is washed with water in which guava leaves have been boiled. The washing is continual until the body fluids no longer seep out. The body is dried, either directly in the sun or smoked inside houses. The process of smoking lasts from 40 to 60 days, although among well-to-do families this may last to two years. Tobacco smoke is also blown through the mouth of the dead since it is believed that tobacco preserves the body well. It is also reported that the "first skin" is peeled off the dead during the process of dehydration. The skin is also treated with continual rubbing of animal fat and the leaves of "bisodak" and "duming". The type of coffin to be used by the dead depends upon his wish when this is made. The date of burial is decided by the "mambunong", based on propitious signs. Burial usually takes place in the early evening. Only after the drying process are the remains brought to the cave to be interred in the coffins.

There are reported rituals during the curing and burial process. The "mambunong" or native priest officiate. There are special "mambunongs" for burials, curing, etc. and no general practitioner so to speak.

Observations

The peggings of the coffins are of varying designs which have been identified by Mr. William Beyer as of the "Sagada" style. The remains of the cloth by the design was identified to be of Benguet, while the aging of the mummies is possible, a longer study of the mummies is needed. Dating of the burials is not at present possible, unless tests could be made. Due to the disturbances of the caves no study of the orientation of the burials could be made.

If one were to take into consideration the fact that in a type of interment like this the innermost coffins would be the older interment and those in the outer relatively later, then it would appear that the cylindrical and elliptical coffins are older than the rectangular coffins since these have been found to be in the innermost recesses of the caves. The problem remains as to the relative sequence of the cylindrical and elliptical coffins, since these did not occur together in the same cave. In terms of the gradience of development of concept and design the cylindrical coffin appears to be of simpler construction since basically it is a trunk hollowed out with a flat board serving as a cover. The elliptical coffin's construction of a hollowed out split log with extended and flattened lips on both ends is more developed. The construction of the rectangular coffin is a more sophisticated affair, since it exhibits a more advanced knowledge of carpentry and more developed tool technology. The preparation of the flat boards, for instance, is more advance, more so the key assembly technique in the construction of the coffins, employing a system of tongues and pegs. Due to the inaccessability of the cave sites, it is not too far fetched to assume that the coffins were dismantled and brought to the caves in pieces and later assembled *in situ*.

The fact that multiple burials are observed in the rectangular coffins points to a possible kinship interment which could possibly be extended to the use of the caves. A discrepancy, however, could be seen in the second cave where the cylindrical coffin was found. Since this type of coffin has been identified as an Ifugao type of burial, while the rest are Benguet, it might be explained to be an intrusion due to intermarriage.¹¹

¹¹Benguet Province, *Benguet Profile*, (Baguio City: Baguio Printing & Publishing Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 96-103.



ROAD LEADING to the burial caves of Mount Timbac with the skull sign guarding the entrance from the Halsema National Road.

According to Mr. Alfredo E. Evangelista, officer-in-charge of the National Museum, the practice and presence of mummies is not restricted to Kabayan alone. The practice is widespread in the province of Benguet, and Mountain Province, and these include: Kabayan, Sagada, Besao, Bontoc and Alab. No exact inventory has been made as to the number of mummy caves existing in these areas. In Kabayan alone 21 have been mapped, although the residents in the area estimate some 200 caves existing. No inventory has been made of the number of mummies per cave. This is a gargantuan task that can only be done on a long-term basis. One cave that has a partial inventory yielded more than 186 human remains in the cave. Kabayan is a huge valley that is approximately 36 kilometers wide and longer in the north-south axis. The caves are distributed along the slopes on both sides of the river.

In terms of numbers, therefore, there is no one who can even begin to make an estimate as to just how many mummies there are in Kabayan, not even the Ibaloy themselves.¹²

¹²Report of Mr. Evangelista to Mr. Rogerio L. Luis, Executive Director of the Presidential Management Staff, dated September 26, 1980.

V. MANAGEMENT

Presidential Decree 260 declared the Kabayan caves among other areas as National Treasures. This, plus Presidential Decree No. 374, empowers the National Museum to administer Kabayan and those other areas covered by the decree which includes: the whole block Q Timberland of Quezon, Palawan; Sta. Ana, Manila; Fort Pilar, Angono, Rizal; Alab, Bontoc; Besao, Bontoc; Sagada, Bontoc; the Banaue rice terraces; the Mestizo section of Vigan; the whole of Cagayan Valley and Kalinga-Apayao; the caves of Bagulin, La Union; approximately 14,312 hectares of anthropological area in Bansang Quezon, Palawan.

These legislations are very clear on the protection of national cultural properties.

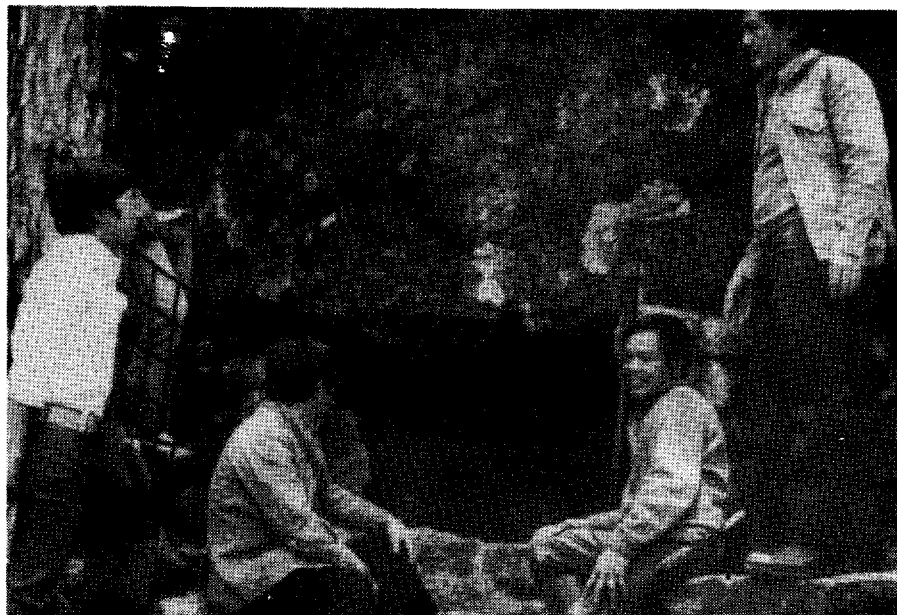
When Director Godofredo L. Alcasid retired from government service on July 14, 1980, Mr. Alfredo E. Evangelista became officer-in-charge. Among the first things that he did was to visit the Kabayan area to assess the situation personally in a trip last October, 1980. With him were Dr. Jesus T. Peralta, curator of anthropology; Mr. Cecilio Salcedo, archeologist; a physical anthropologist from Holland, Miss Hilde Uyaterachaut; Mrs. Amelia Rara, ethnographer, and other anthropology staff members.

The National Museum has assured Benguet officials that it has already earmarked a more vigorous program with regard to the study, preservation and improvement of the tourism potentials of the Kabayan mummy caves. This includes the determining of the actual age of the mummies.

VI. SIDELIGHTS

Baban Berong has a compilation of stories on the Opdas burial caves, the Bangao mummy cave, the Kangal burial caves, the Tinongchol man-made burial rock and Singakalsa mummy caves, which were amplified in Dr. Perez's dissertation. These are the caves visited by tourists, foreign and domestic.¹³

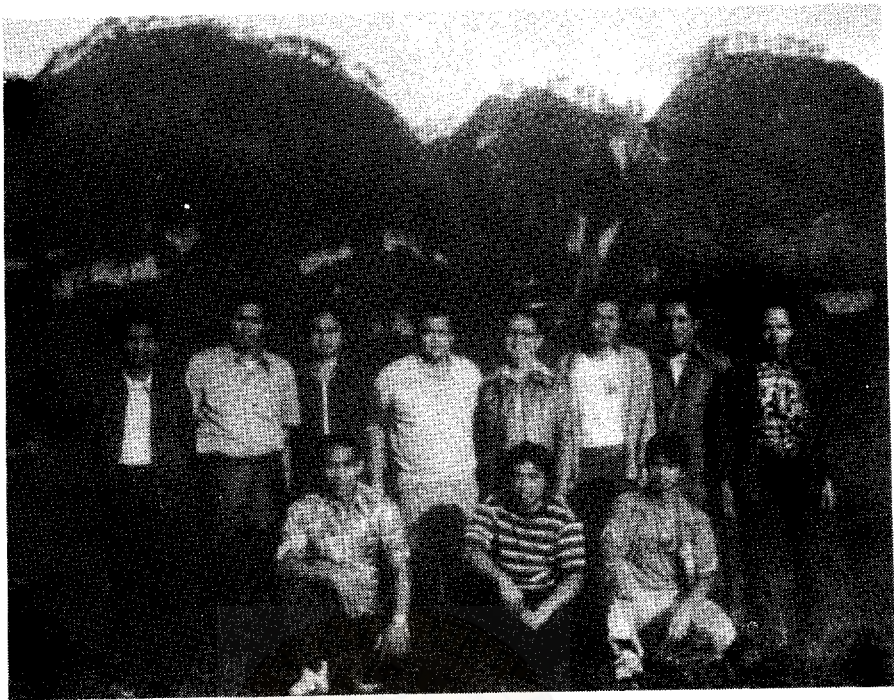
¹³Baban Berong, "A Narrative of the Early Ibaloy Tribe Gathered and Compiled from Old Men of Different Villages in Kabayan during the early Part of the 20th Century," (Edited by Lorma Albon).



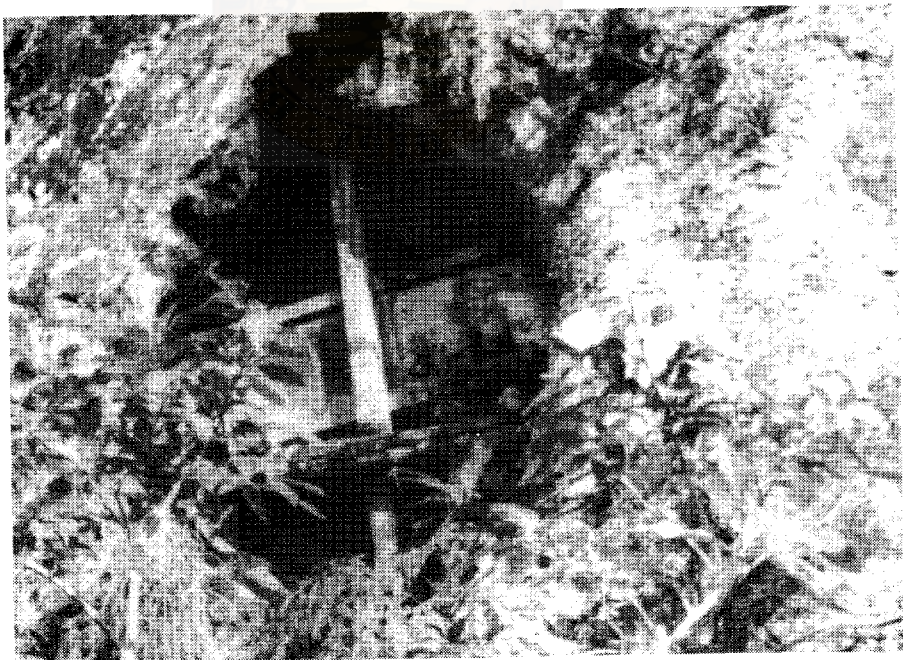
A BURIAL CAVE atop Mount Timbac showing iron gates to protect the mummies in wooden coffins inside.



OPDAS CAVE is also known as the Skull Cave because of the hundreds of skulls it shelters.



MOUNT KABUNYAN in Bakun acts as the background for this picture.



TINONGCHOL ROCK in Kabayan Barrio is another burial site. Shown is an opening with wooden coffins.

Bakun folks also speak of mummies high up on the shoulder of Mount Kabunyan, where an interesting rock formation showing the outline of a human being's body greets intrepid climbers. It is called Duligen's Rock after the mortal said to have been impaled against the rock by Kabunyan because of his cheating the pagan god.

Kibungan inhabitants still talk of a mummy at Saddle and ancient burial practices accorded very recently to Bolisli Fianza who died on January 1, 1981 and was made to sit on a chair exposed to smoke (sangadil) beside his house.

The *Gold Ore*, one of Baguio City's weekly, has this interesting story in its January 17-23, 1981 issue:

Kibungan, home of the Kankanaey tribe, last week paid tribute to a man very popular in the community, by observing age-old rites called "Sangadil". He was Bolisli Fianza, better known in the area as "Lakay" or "Apo Fianza".

"Baka mabuten da," (they might be scared) warned the community elders when representatives of NMPC and NEDA asked permission to pay respects, and possibly, photograph the "death ritual" for "Apo Fianza". Sister Lilia Canol, a Kibungan native, interceded for us.

We were permitted to see and take some pictures of the dead man, but only after Pedro Molitas, the postmaster, brought bottles of "sioktong" as presents, and after Vice Mayor A. Bay-an drank some of the wine and participated in the folks mourning through singing called "Day-eng".

"Apo Fianza" was a "baknang" (rich man) because he owned a good number of animals (pigs, cows or carabaos) and some parcels of land. He was also a former mayor of the town.

Sangadil, according to the elders, is done to drain the dead body of oils.

Old man Fianza, wearing only a g-string, was made to sit on an improvised wooden platform below his hut's wooden stairs for seven days. During this period, pine wood was burnt continuously

around the dead body. To a lowlander, the process was just like semi-roasting the body.

During the death ritual, pigs, carabaos or cows are butchered daily, signifying the affluence of old man Fianza, at the same time honoring him as one who had a high and respectable position in the community. The seven-day ritual also signified respect for him.

The *Sangadil* actually dries the skin of the dead man preventing decay and disintegration for 50 years or more. The community elders said the longer the "sangadil" is done, the longer the body will be preserved.

At nightfall of the seventh day is the burial day. Torches are carried from the dead man's hut to the tomb where his coffin, made from the oldest pine tree, awaits him. "Apo Fianza" was brought to his coffin, which was carved into a pagan's symbol with a carabao-like head, complete with real honors.

His smoked body was later covered with expensive blankets before it was finally placed inside the coffin. The beautifully embroidered blankets also signify his being an honorable man.

The death rituals do not end here. The cañao and butchering of animals will continue after the burial for several more days. The "day-eng" will still be sung which, according to Igorot elders, will ask the dead man's soul to go straight to his destination and to be peaceful there. —FERR*

How about in the municipality of Bokod? Mr. Erwin B. Padilla writes:

The natives of Benguet, especially those living in Karao not far from Bokod municipality, have strange ways of mourning and burying their dead.

When somebody dies, he is made to sit on a chair placed before the main door of the house for three to eight days, depend-

*"Apo Fianza' Honored in Age-Old Rites", *The Gold Ore* (Baguio City: Baguio Colleges Foundation, January 17-23, 1981), p. 8.

ing upon his wealth. He is blindfolded; his hands are tied to the arms of the chair while his feet are tied to the front legs of the chair.

Meanwhile, his family keeps butchering animals. A relative is also assigned to inspect the head of the deceased twice a night for lice.

On the eve of the burial, the old men and women gather together and go through a singing rite called "bangil", their songs narrating the life story of the dead. The good and the bad features of his life are told.

Before the burial, which takes place under the house, the dead is wrapped in a piece of cloth called "colibao" prepared exclusively for him. While the body is being placed in the grave, some people make noise with a bamboo stick to guide the spirit of the deceased to heaven. Once the grave is covered with earth, boiled rice is placed beside a post for the dead person's lunch in the other world.

The butchering of chickens starts on the eve of burial and lasts to the eighth day after the burial when all the animals of the deceased and those contributed by relatives are butchered. The eighth day is the last day of mourning. It is the time for the family to clean the house and to resume their usual work.

Twelve months later, the family of the deceased will hold the final celebration to welcome the spirit of the dead back.¹⁴

One of the writers was a witness to the ceremony in connection with the death and burial of the richest man in this community in Tuba, when he was a boy. Apo Parisas was buried on the eighth day, but the celebration continued for one month. The butchering of animals was daily. The animals came from the sons and daughters of the dead man and from his own. When Apo Parisas' wife died, the celebration was for fifteen days. This was to emphasize the fact that man was still the head of the family and the lord of the home.

¹⁴ Erwin B. Padilla, "In Benguet, The Dead Sits at the Door for 2 Days", *The Philippines Free Press*, October 27, 1962, p. 55.

A detailed account of the death ceremony of the average Benguet was recorded by Mr. Bacoling, thus:

Death ceremony among the natives is another expensive affair. The expenses surpass those in *batbat*, especially when the person who dies is wealthy. To illustrate this mode of celebration, let us say that a man who died is a pauper (average in his income), leaving a wife and children. The death ceremony proceeds in the following manner.

First Day of Death -- (a) Few hours after the death of the man, the deceased must be bathed. This is done after the relatives present at the point of death are through crying for the dead. Crying is an outward manifestation of mourning.

(b) After bathing the deceased, the clothes of his own usual wearing are put on. Thereafter, the deceased is placed inside the house near the door and with the head towards the north. The body lies with or without a coffin, depending upon the social standing of the deceased. While lying (frontal upward), the body is covered with a blanket excluding the face. Both hands are placed above the chest and with two legs bent downward to cause the knees to point upward while lying.

(c) Pounding rice starts, and a male pig is butchered. If the man dies before breakfast time, two pigs must be butchered. If he dies after twelve o'clock at noon, one pig must be butchered.

(d) The widow stays inside the same house where the deceased dies. By direction, she stays south of the deceased husband. She is not allowed to eat on the first day. On this day, crying may take place anytime.

During the bathing of the deceased, conversation may be allowed among the people participating in the bathing. Nevertheless, to mention one's name of the one talked to is by belief not permitted. Whomsoever one is talking to should be called *manodeng* by name. This is to coincide with the standing belief that the deceased should not get the life of anyone.

Prior to the eating and following the cooking of the pig butchered, there shall be performed what is called *sabosab*. In *sabosab*, ginger is mixed with the soup and meat of the pig. The belief behind this is that no one should get sick in the course of

the entire period of the death ceremony as food is served.

Second Day — This is called *bangon*. Neighbors are not allowed to go to work, except on minor chores. (a) Two pigs are butchered, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. (b) Pounding rice continues. (c) Mourning by crying is allowed. (d) The widow continues to fast.

Third Day — This day is called *catdo*. (a) Two pigs are butchered at the time like that of the second day. (b) In addition to the two pigs, one male carabao is butchered on or before noon time. (c) Putting of *garing* on the immediate children of the deceased is done. *Garing* is the tying of the string made out of the bark of the tree called *tino-to* around the wrists or hands of the children of the deceased. This is done to identify the children of the deceased, who are responsible for the expenses in the death ceremony.

(d) The putting of the stick on the roof of the house. This is called *tacdang*. The purpose is to drive away evil spirits from interfering and/or entering the house. (e) In the morning, a pig is butchered separately from the main house. This pig does not form a part of the death ceremony, but is used by the widow as her food together with the rice. It is called *sabosab* on the part of the widow. The fasting having ended on the second day, the widow can now begin to eat in the morning.

Fourth Day — This is called *ca-pat*. (a) Two pigs are butchered, morning and afternoon. On or before noon time, one female cow is butchered. (b) Among neighbors or *sitiomates*, contributions may be given in cash or in kind by neighbors. The contributions are called *opo*.

Fifth Day — This is termed as *calima*. (a) Pounding rice continues. (b) Two pigs are butchered. (c) One female horse is butchered. (d) There may be other pigs given as *opo* from other barrios to be butchered. (e) Crying continues.

Sixth Day. — This day is called *ca-nem*. (a) To be butchered are two pigs and one female cow. (b) Pounding rice and mourning continues. (c) If there are other *opo* (animals) given by other barrios, same will be butchered. If the *opo* is in terms of rice wine, same will be served on this day or reserve for some other days.

Seventh Day — This day is *capito*. (a) To be butchered are two pigs, one female carabao, and one male horse. The male horse in the best belief will be utilized by the spirit of the dead to ride considering that he is a man. (b) In addition to these animals butchered there will come *opo* from other people related or not to the deceased. It being the last day, the cash, rice, animals, and the like.

(c) *Sabosab* to pair with the first *sabosab* on the first day will be performed. (d) Another *sabosab* to pair with the *sabosab* for the widow on the third day will be performed.

(e) Then burial takes place. The term is called *ponpon*. As usual, burial takes place in the afternoon. (f) After the burial, the immediate children wearing *garing* go to the spring (which continues flowing even during dry seasons) to wash their feet and faces. After washing, each will detach one *garing* and leave it behind. The other *garing* will be kept in the roofing of the house upon arrival in the family house, right side facing the door. The purpose of this is for those who go to wash their faces to pass through with their legs (one in each) over the smoke as they pass by.

(g) On this day, the widow also washes her face. Customarily, when going out of the house, she passes through the other door (southward). The widow is not required to wear *garing*; she has no fire especially built for her. After washing, she enters the same south door of the house. Inside, she changes her native garments to new ones but with white color made out of cotton called *olebao*. After changing her clothes, her hair at the forehead will be cut horizontally about five to six inches in length and one-half inch above the eyebrows. (h) By tradition and belief, crying is not allowed.

Then the children of the deceased go to wash their faces in the spring and after washing, they form a single file and walk in mournful mood.

On this burial day, it could be imagined that the corpse is being decomposed. But the decomposition and odor of the corpse do not matter to the natives. To the natives, the more the decomposition and the more offensive the odor resisted, the greater are the chances that good luck will be theirs in the future. There is no danger, in the belief among the natives, of going over or hold-

ing the corpse already in the state of decomposition. The dead is a human being, and every respect, dignity and honor should be accorded him.

Today, however, embalming is applied whenever it is possible. And even if the corpse is embalmed, the usual death ceremony does not change.¹⁵

Legal provisions on funerals are found in Chapter XIX of the New Civil Code, Articles 305 to 310. These are supplemented by pertinent provisions of the Revised Administrative Code.

The deceased before death can legally dispose of his corpse to take effect after death in accordance with Rep. Act No. 349 as amended by Rep. Act No. 1056. Likewise, in accordance with said act, after the corpse can be disposed of by the nearest relatives of deceased or if there be none, by the head of the hospital or institution where the deceased died but only after making diligent search for relatives.¹⁶

The Civil Code provides:

Art. 306. The funeral shall be in keeping with the social position of the deceased.

Art. 307. The funeral shall be in accordance with the expressed wishes of the deceased. In the absence of such expression, his religious beliefs or affiliation shall determine the funeral rites. In case of doubt, the form of the funeral shall be decided upon by the person obliged to make arrangements for the same, after consulting the other members of the family.

These articles may be interpreted in conjunction with the provisions of the Revised Administrative Code regarding the manner of disposition of the body of the deceased. The provisions pertinent are: Sec. 1973 prohibition against burial in unauthorized places, Sec. 1982 cemetery permits, Sec. 1087 requirement of certificates of death, Sec. 1090 burial and transfer permits, Sec. 1092 time within which body shall

¹⁵ Angel Bacoling, "Benguet-Customs-Traditions-Beliefs," *The Mountain Breeze*, March-April, 1961, pp. 20-22.

¹⁶ Eduardo P. Caguioa, *Comments and Cases on Civil Law* (Manila: Central Book Supply, Inc., 1959), p. 362.

be buried, Sec. 1094 disposition of body and belongings of person dying of dangerous communicable diseases, Sec. 1104 right of custody of body, and Sec. 1105 restriction as to funeral ceremonies.

Regarding prohibition against burial in unauthorized places, the Administrative Code provides in Sec. 1073:

Except in cases of emergency, it shall be unlawful for any person to bury or inter, or cause to be buried or interred either temporarily or permanently, a dead or any human being or any human remains in any place other than such as may lawfully be used for such purpose in conformity with the provisions hereof.¹⁷

On time within which body shall be buried, Sec. 1093 provides:

Except when required for the purpose of legal investigation or when specially authorized by local health authorities, no unembalmed body shall remain unburied longer than forty eight hours after death; and after the lapse of such period the permit for burial, interment or cremation of any such body shall be void and a new permit must be obtained.

When it has been certified or is known that any person died of, or with a dangerous communicable disease, the body of such person shall be buried within twelve hours after death, unless otherwise directed by the local board of health, or other health authority.¹⁸

Sec. 1105 of the Administrative Code likewise provides:

In case of death due to dangerous communicable disease or due to any epidemic recognized by the Director of Health, the body of the deceased shall not be taken to any place of public assembly, nor shall any person to be permitted to attend the funeral of such deceased person, except the adult members of the immediate family of the deceased, his nearest friends, not exceeding four, and other persons whose attendance is absolutely

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 365.



MUMMIES awaiting visitors at the Kabayan Museum.

necessary. After the deceased shall have been buried for a period of one hour, a public funeral may be held at the grave or in a place of public assembly elsewhere.

In case of death due to other causes the right to hold public funerals in an orderly manner and to take remains of the deceased into churches or other places for this purposes shall not be interfered with.¹⁹

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 386.

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PINE-CLAD landscape harboring centuries-old secrets.