

The Mystery of The Rattan Strips

(For the second part: summary of the first.)

A certain Tuginay of northeastern Ifugaoland went to the forest to get a bundle of firewood and some rattan strips. He failed to return.—Bindadan, Tuginay's uncle, the brother of Oltagon, Tuginay's wife, and two neighbors went to see what happened, and found a beheaded body near the path. They searched the surroundings, found a bamboo spear, the double edged knife of the victim and a bundle of firewood. Traces of blood on the path toward the villages of the Ifugaos' hereditary enemies made them conclude that their enemies of Chupak killed Tuginay. While three of them tied the beheaded body to some kind of litter in order to bring it home, Bindadan walked back to the place where they had found the firewood and saw that it's lash was very loose. Just this puzzled him and made him think that the murderers were perhaps not those of Chupak.

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PHOTO C. AERTS

It was already deep into the night when they arrived in the valley. Before they went down to the rice fields and the villages, scattered here and there, Bindadan, in the silence of the night, shouted: "They killed Tuginay! Come ye hither! They killed Tuginay! We brought his body! They killed Tuginay! The people of Chupak took his head!"

Soon from a hundred places and more, little fires of pine torches appeared, sinuously advanced and converged toward the hill whence came the unhappy message. Then, when all were there a wild procession of lights hastily started downward, torches swung up and down, to and fro, torches, as it were, speaking, crying, shouting: "Cursed be the people of Chupak, cursed all of them! May you die, ye all who live in Chupak!"

The nearer they came to the house of the beheaded victim, the greater was the confusion and excitement. When they arrived with the corpse in the houseyard the wild noise suddenly subsided, and Oltagon, the Victim's wife, hurried down the ladder, with eyes of fire, with hair loose and in disorder. She jumped toward

that corpse without head and cried out, "Thou, Coward, thou purulent husband of mine, thou wretched father of my children! . . . Why didst thou go to the forest? Didn't I tell thee that the prey-bird had snatched one of our chicks? But thou didn't take

heed to my words, and now they killed thee, and now they cut off thy head, now they rejoice, yonder there in Chupak, and dance the dance of victory around thy head! Where then is another man, that I can call him Tuginay, for this one does not listen to the warning of his wife!"

When Oltagon had had her say, they placed the corpse in a sitting position with the back against on of the posts of the house and went to make a fire in one of the corners of the houseyard, leaving the place open in front of the beheaded so as to allow the wife and the other relatives to arouse by their curses and insults the anger of the beheaded, whose help they would need to take their revenge, when they would, later on, decide to start with their head-hunting expedition.



PHOTO A, D'HOOGHE



PHOTO C. AERTS

Meanwhile the crowd had gradually dispersed, and had gone home to sleep a few hours and so to be alert for the following day, for this day of burial would be a busy day.

It was indeed a busy day! A whole morning passed in invectives and insults of the beheaded, then a swinging and clattering dance with hundreds of "bangibangs" along the embankments of the terraces,

bangibang dance,
bang, bang, bang!
revengeful dance,
bang, bang, bang! . . .

up and down . . . and down to the burial place of the beheaded, a large hole in the slope of the hill.

And when the spearmen in front of the long, long line had, with a couple of men removed the stone that closed the hole, they rushed the corpse into the grave, made him sit upright against the wall, put a spear in his hand and threw on it a dirty blanket pierced everywhere and came out shouting: "Tuginay, purulence!



PHOTO C. AERTS

Tuginay, find those who killed thee!
 Tuginay, go to Chupak, we gave you
 spear! Tuginay, look at the blanket
 we threw on thy purulence, as the
 the blanket is pierced so be the bo-
 dies of those who killed thee.

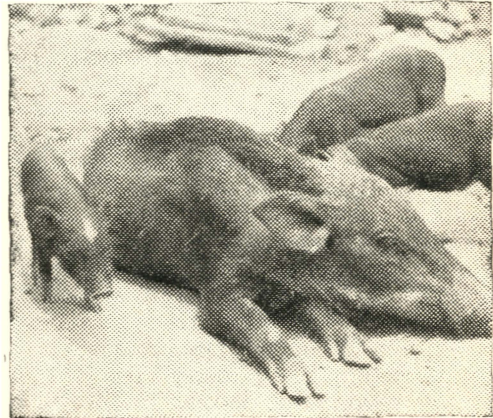
While most of those who took part in the funeral procession, which was performed wholly in accordance with the sacred customs of old, went home, the relatives and neighbors went back to Tuginay's houseyard. There, all the male relatives of the victim, his father, his brothers and cousins, squatted down in a circle around the pestle that lay in the middle of the yard. Bindadan, a double-edged knife in his right and a red feathered cock in his left, took his stand in the middle near the pestle. He invoked the Sun, Moon and Star gods, he called the De-

ceiver and prayed them to show and to appoint a leader for the future revenge expedition. He squatted down, swung the head of the cock on the pestle, with one blow of his knife cut off his head and let him loose. The beheaded cock jumped wildly, four, five, ten times and fell down, dead, at the feet of no other one than the very Bindadan, whom therefore the gods of life and death, the Deceiver, the Sun, the Moon, the Star gods appointed one day to go toward Chupak and there to lie in ambush and kill those who would come his way. "We shall all accompany you," said

the other relatives, "and we want two heads for one, yes, three and four if we can!"

The night and part of the following day was then passed in offering a huge sacrifice of four big pigs to win back the favor of the Deceiver, the gods of the Sun and Moon and Stars, that they would protect all who would take part in the expedition, and

PHOTO R. VERANNEMAN



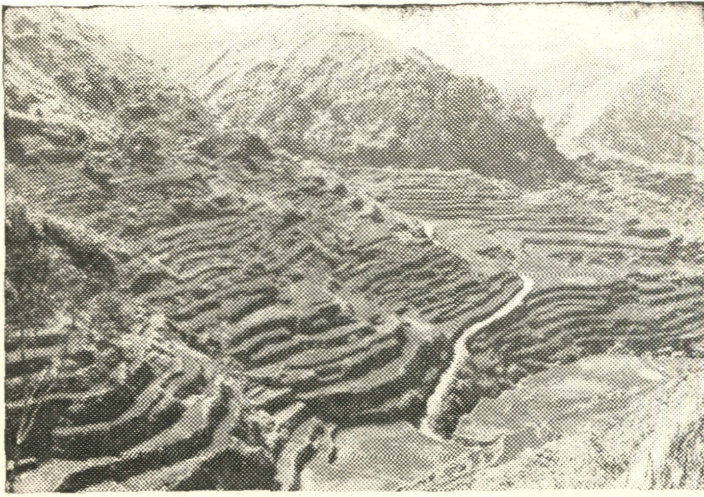


PHOTO
C. AERTS

would curse their enemies in the same way they had done copiously and eloquently, during the performance. Finally they invoked the 'Harassers', offered to them two chickens and sent them to Chupak, some to make the people, over there, forget what they had done, some to allure them out of their houses and villages, some to lead them on and make them take the path where they would hide with their spears and knives.

When they had killed and dissected all the pigs and chickens they had offered and had seen that the bile-sacs of all these victims foretold a happy and successful revenge expedition, they knew Bindadan would one day call on them and...they went home.

They thought so, yet Bindadan, who had all the time taken the lead of the customary performances, was not so sure, he would head an expedition toward Chupak, for in the

midst of cursing and dancing and invoking he had thought of that loose bundle of firewood and secretly he had added to his customary invocation of the Harassers: "You also, harassers of these villages, harass the man who killed Tuginay and lead him across my path". No one had noticed that. *(to be continued)*

THEORY INTO PRACTICE

The two youngsters were squaring off like a couple of gamecocks, but no blows were struck. The Sister-principal, standing at a window overlooking the play yard, heard the smaller say fiercely, "I'd knock the stuffing out of you if you weren't a temple of the Holy Ghost."

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