

Ifugao Folklore

The Anger of the Spirits of the River.

When some one gets seriously ill (at least apparently) all of a sudden, one or more sacrifices are offered and a special story is narrated which is believed to bring along the recovery as quickly as the illness itself has come. The magician tells this story in favor of sick men as well as women; in the latter case, however, he calls the woman Bugan, in the former case he speaks of Wigan, the name of a man, and furthermore inserts a few particularities of minor importance. I shall narrate the story assuming that it is a woman who got ill.

A long, long time ago there were in Mayaoyao a certain Bugan and her husband Wigan. They lived in joy and happiness, for they had big rice fields, they had many chickens and many pigs, and their children were growing up in full health.

One night Bugan had an awful dream: she saw the Spirits of the River coming from all sides, there up in the Upstream Region; they gathered at the river and said: "Look down, there at the house of Bugan and Wigan in Mayaoyao, they have many pigs and many chickens, and never they offer to us; let us kill Bugan!"

And when the night became morning, Bugan got up and ate; then she took her basket and her iron pin and came down on the houseyard. "Where are you going?" asked Wigan, her husband. — "I go down the mountain here in front of us and shall bring home a basket of sweet potatoes." So Bugan went away and told nothing of her dream to Wigan.

She walked on the embankments of the rice fields and descended the path toward the river. And

there in the river sat the Spirits; they hid behind the rocks and stones. When Bugan had reached the river they cried: "Hello! Hello! Bugan is there, Bugan the wife of Wigan who won't offer to us! Hello! Hello! let us kill Bugan!"

And from behind every stone an angry spirit came forth. They jumped upon Bugan, they tore her into pieces and scattering the body of Bugan along the bank they hurried to their abode in the Upstream Region, crying: "You are dead now, Bugan, we have killed you, Bugan, you won't offer to us, Bugan, you despised us, Bugan!"

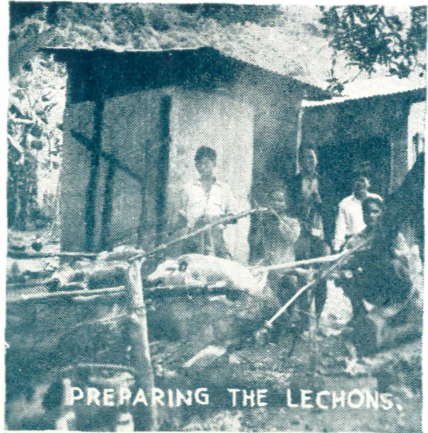
And that evening no Bugan came home. When the night had become morning again the Sun god looked down and saw at the bank of the river some legs and arms and a chest and a head. "Well, well!" exclaimed the Sun god, "it is Bugan, the wife of Wigan who has so many pigs and who offered to me so often! I can't stand this, I shall make her live again!"

The Sun god jumped down upon the earth, he ran towards Bugan, and in his way down to the river

he pulled off a betel nut. He took a seat in the river bed and chewed his betel nut, then he went to stand in front of Bagan's body and spat his red spittle upon the arms, upon the legs, upon the chest and upon the head of Bagan. And lo! the legs moved and stuck to the chest, the arms moved and stuck to the shoulders, the head moved and stuck to the chest, and Bagan was alive again and began to walk.

"What happened," asked the Sun god, "why did you come here?" — "I passed here yesterday and was on my way to our sweet potato field," replied Bagan. — "Who killed you?" asked the Sun god again. — "I don't know," answered Bagan, "only I heard voices crying: 'let us kill Bagan,' and then they tore me into pieces." — "Oh!" exclaimed the Sun god, "they were the Spirits of the River, who came from the Upstream Region who lay in ambush behind the stones until you would pass there." — "What shall I do now," said Bagan, "they will come back and they will kill me again." "Don't fear," said the Sun god, "I shall give you some good protectors."

And the Sun god took from his hip bag two earrings of fire and hung them at the ears of Bagan and said: "These will burn the Spirits." Then the Sun god caught a big wasp and placed it in the hand of Bagan saying: "This will sting the Spirits if they come." And he snatched a green snake and wound it around the neck of Bagan and told her: "This snake will bite the spirits and they will be



Enjoying a New Year Dinner.

poisoned, and they will die if they ever come to kill you!"

Bugan then felt reassured and the Sun god smiled and said: "Go home now, Bugan, but tell your husband that he should offer a chicken to the Spirits of the River, so that they may not kill you again after some months."

And when Bugan arrived at Ma-yaoya she saw her husband worrying and she exclaimed: "Here I am!" — "Where have you been?" asked Wigan. — "I was killed by the Spirits of the River, but the

Sun god made me live again and he told me we should offer a chicken to the Spirits of the Upstream Region."

And this they did. And on account of this the sudden illness vanished and released Bugan, she got up and walked to and fro on the houseyard. She was as healthy as ever, and Bugan and Wigan were happy again and never more were bothered by the Spirits of the River who live in the Upstream Region.

Rev. Francis Lambrecht



Come ye all to Me