

Ifugao culture: ethnographic research



**ASSIGN
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- Name of culture

What is the name of your chosen culture? What is the meaning of the name in English? Do the people in your culture call themselves this name – if not, what do they call themselves and what does it mean in English? Do neighboring groups call them something else? If so, what is that, and what does it say about relations between the two groups? Add your own ideas...

The name of the chosen culture is Ifugao. The origin of the Ifugao comes from the term Ipugo, which means “ from the hill”. According to their mythology, their name is derived from Ipugo which refers to the rice grain given to them by their God, Matungulan. Also, others say that the name comes from the word “ I-pugaw” which loosely translates to “ inhabitants of the earth.” Neighboring people refer to the Ifugao people as Kiangianl. Today, the people who inhabit this province refer to themselves as the Ifugao, although the area contains people who are not.

- Where is your culture located?

The Ifugao culture inhabits an area of roughly 750 to 970 square miles in northern Luzon, which is located in the Philippines. The culture resides in the most rugged and mountainous parts of the Philippines, which is high in the Gran Cordillera Central in northern Luzon. The Gran Cordillera Central of Northern Luzon is consumed with a wide variety of natural areas. According to Fowler, “ The Gran Cordillera Central of Northern Luzon is a jumbled mass of lofty peaks and plummeting ravines, of small fecund valleys cleaved by rainfed, boulder-strewn rivers, and of silent, mist-shrouded, moss-veiled forests wherein orchids in their deathlike beauty unfold like torpid

butterflies.” The mountainous peaks rise from 1, 000 to 5, 000 meters and are drained by the waters of the Magat River. According to Siangho, “ Their neighbors to the north are the Bontco; to the east Gaddang; to the west Kankanay and Ibaloy; and to the south the Ikalaham and Iwak.” It is believed the Ifugao were likely inhabitants of the nearby fertile plains, which is greatly opposite of their current dwelling. It is also believed that they were driven out of these plains by Malaysians because of their superior weapons. This is why they currently reside in the mountain side.

The Republic of the Philippines is an archipelago of approximately 7, 000 islands. The first people arrived about 100, 000 years ago. These individuals were hunters and gatherers who survived off of the land’s basic resources. Thousands of years later, people arrived from Asia and brought with them agricultural skills and social structure. From this cross-cultural intermingling, a culture was created and the Philippines was born.

- Language

What language do people in your culture speak? Provide some details about the language – specifically, the “ language family” it belongs to, and an interesting fact or two about its structure. (Example: in Sinhalese, at the end of an interrogative, you have to add a special “ question mark” word.) Add your own ideas...

The language name of the Ifugao people is Ifugao. The language family proceeds like this: Austronesian Malayo-Polynesian, Northern Luzon South-Central, Cordilleran Central, Cordilleran Nuclear, and then Cordilleran Ifugao. Therefore, the language family of the Ifugao language is Malayo-Polynesian.

There are Four divergent dialects of the Ifugao language: Amganad, Batad, Mayoyao, Tuwali, each with distinct varieties: Amganad: Burnay Ifugao, Banaue Ifugao; Batad: Ayangan Ifugao, Batad Ifugao, Ducligan Ifugao; Tuwali: Apao Ifugao, Hungduan Ifugao, Lagawe Ifugao.

As stated by “ The Ifugao – native people,” “ The Ifugao have a language that changes from village to village. Dialect and change of pronunciation can make it a real challenge to maintain a conversation between neighboring villagers. However, an official language dictionary has been produced.”

- Settlements

Population within Ifugao society in the twentieth century has varied anywhere from 60, 000 to over 100, 000. According to Malone, “ Population density in some areas approaches 400 per square mile.” The only architectural structures noted for this group of people are the houses in which they reside and their extensive rice patties that extend from halfway up the mountain side all the way down to the bottom of the valley.

The Ifugao people live in hamlets. These are like tiny communities that are located alongside the mountain near an owners rice patty. There are approximately 8 to 12 houses per hamlet. There are also building for the unmarried, which is discussed later in this assignment.

- Houses

Describe the houses in your culture (straw huts, mud walled thatched roof dwellings, etc.). Be as detailed as possible, including size, layout, materials,

colors, even prices if available. Who lives in a typical house? Women, men, children, elderly? Animals? Add your own ideas...

The houses of the Ifugao people are very small. The typical household consists of the nuclear family. A nuclear family is a family consisting of only a mother, father and their children. Once a child becomes a teenager and he or she is old enough to take care of his or herself, they go in live in either boy or girl homes. Typically the Ifugao house sits on four sturdy posts, with no windows. According to Fowler, “ Inside there is an open earth and stone fireplace for cooking and floor mats for sleeping and sitting. Family paraphernalia, such as baskets, bowls, clothing, skills (human and animal), and magic items, are hung from the walls or stacked on carved shelves. Although Ifugao houses vary little from this basic configuration, houses of nobility often feature differences, such as massive Hagabi lounging benches, decorated attic beams, kingposts and doorjambs carved with human effigies, and ornate exterior frezies portraying pigs, carabao and other animals.”

The adults and their smaller children (one’s who can not take care of themselves) live together while children who can maintain their own lifestyle live in different houses. When the teenagers reach the age where they become interested in the opposite sex, the male teenagers leave their house during the day to meet females in other houses. From this intermingling, couples eventually form. Soon after a girl becomes pregnant, the couple will wed. After marriage, the couple will either build their own home, live in a home of someone who has died without kids, or live in a home left by one of their parents. After they settle in to their house, it is the mom’s duty to take care of the child and the dad’s duty to provide for the family.

Student Response:

- Making a Living

How do the people in your culture make a living? Describe what anthropologists call their “ adaptive strategy.” (foragers, horticulturalists, pastoralists, agriculturalists, industrialists). Provide some details about their subsistence system (what game do they hunt, what crops do they grow, what animals do they herd, etc.). Add your own ideas...

People in the Ifugao culture live a very basic lifestyle to make a living. The usual lifestyle consists of agriculture and hunting, with anthropologists characterizing the adaptive strategy as agriculturists. According to Malone, “ Ifugao subsistence is derived principally from agriculture (84 percent) with an additional ten percent derived from the raising of aquatic fauna, such as minnows and snails, in flooded rice fields. The remaining six percent of subsistence involve fishing (fish, eels, frogs, snails and water clams); hunting (deer, wild buffalo, wild pigs, civet cats, wild cat, python, iguana, cobra, and fruitbat); and gathering of insects (locusts, crickets, and ants) as well as large variety of wild plants.” As we can see, the main duties are tending to the rice patties. The men are usually the ones that participate in the hunting and fishing. When the men hunt after wild deer and pig, they usually use hunting dogs to assist them. The dogs are not raised to eventually eat (like some nearby cultures); the Ifugao people respect and admire dogs.

- Political System

Describe your culture’s political system. Use the anthropological terms we have learned in class (band, tribe, chiefdom, state). Provide some details

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about the culture's power/authority system – how do individuals get into a position of power? What are traditional methods of social control and conflict management? Add your own ideas...

The Ifugao political system is better characterized as a sociopolitical organization. According to the article, Ifugao – Sociopolitical Organization, “Traditionally, social differentiation has been based on wealth, measured in terms of rice land, water buffalo and slaves. The wealthy aristocrats are known as kadangyan. The possession of hagabi, a large hardwood bench, occurs their status symbolically. The Ifugao have little by way of a formal political system; there are no chiefs or councils. There are, however, approximately 150 districts (himputona'an), each comprised of several hamlets; in the center of each district is a defining ritual rice field (putona'an), the owner (tomona') of which makes all agricultural decisions for the district.”

Government is poorly established among the Ifugao's. According to Malone, “The functions of government are (or were) accomplished by the operation of collective kinship obligations, including the threat of blood feud, together with common understanding of the adat or custom law given the people by ancestor heroes, in particular the inviolability of personal and property rights.”

Men earn respect according to their rice patty's. The bigger their patty is, the high status they have in the community. Also, within the Ifugao community, there is a “rice chief”. The rice chief is one of the leading priests and the people respect him for religious authority, but he does not have ultimate

authority over the Ifugao people. For the most part, people are “ on their own” when it comes to government control.

- Kinship System

Use anthropological terms to describe your culture’s kinship system (matrilineal, patrilineal, etc.). Provide a brief definition of that type of kinship, and then say why your culture fits that definition. Describe the kinship terminology, and provide examples. Add your own ideas...

According to Malone, “ Each sibling group is the center of an exogamous, bilateral kindred.: Essentially, this is descent traced and kinship groups assigned through both male and female lines with marriages being “ outbred” instead of “ inbred” relationships between families. Basically, people don’t marry within their family, but outside of it.

The adults and small children all live together. When the child comes “ of age”, which is basically a teenager, they move out of their parents house and live on their own in a second house with other kids their age of the same sex. When the men begin to search for wives, they leave their houses during the day and the women stay in their homes to greet and welcome men. They start in a very cool and calm atmosphere, such as jokes and casual talk, but eventually relationships form. After a girl becomes pregnant, they will wed. At this point the couple will either build their house or inhabit a house left by their parents or someone who has passed away without children. When they are settled in, the mother’s duty is to care for the child while the father hunts for food for the family.

- Marriage

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Describe your culture's marriage system. How do people choose a mate? Is there a particular category of person an individual is supposed to marry (example: in El Nahra, where Elizabeth Fernea lived, people were supposed to marry their cousins). Are marriages arranged, or do individuals get to pick their own spouses? Could you imagine yourself getting married the way people do in that culture? Add your own ideas...

Marriage within the Ifugao culture is quite simple. The normal form of marriage in the Ifugao society is monogamy. Monogamy is being married to only one person at a time. Although monogamy is widely practiced, polygyny is practiced occasionally by the wealthy. Even though the definition of polygyny is that either male or female may have multiple spouses, it is mainly the males that have multiple wives. In these situations, the first wife has higher authority and status than her co-wives.

According to Malone, "Marriages are alliances between kindreds. First cousin marriages are forbidden in practice and theory, but marriages to more distant cousins can take place." These marriages can take place with a payment of fines in livestock.

The men are able to choose their wives within this culture. There are no established or set marriages for the Ifugao people. When the men are interested in marriage, they begin meeting other women in their society. When they begin their relationship, it is a very casual environment. Eventually it becomes serious, and after the woman is pregnant, the man and wife get married. They will then move into their own place together to begin their family.

This seems pretty similar to the American marriage system on the fact that we look for and choose our own mate. Some people get married before they are pregnant while others get pregnant before they are married (although some people may never marry). I think this is definitely a culture I could be a part of, in the sake of their marriage system that is.

- Sex and Gender

How would you describe gender relations in your culture? Do men and women live completely separate lives, as in *Guests of the Sheik*, or do they mix it up? How much power do women have over their own lives and the lives of others? Do women have official political power? Is there a gender division of labor (there has to be – every culture has one!)? Given your own gender, would you like to live in that culture? Add your own ideas...

Student Response:

Ifugao society is much separated. Men and women live apart unless they are married and/or brother and sister, but even at a certain age of childhood; they go and live on their own, away from their parents. Men are the ones who hold political power, or lack thereof, in the Ifugao culture. Usually, the only “powerful” people in this society are men who are respected because of their wealth. The division of labor is set between the genders as well. Since this a very simplistic culture, the women tend to the children and house work while the men tend to the fields of rice and hunting food for the family. I would call it a classic, nomadic style of life.

Another note that women are not as “powerful” or highly touted as men is the fact that, in the case that polygyny does exist, it is with multiple wives

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and usually not multiple husbands. This form of marriage is very rare and only among the elite and rich people in the culture.

For me, I wouldn't like to live within this culture. I think it is good for men and women to mix and mingle within the workplace, home, and political power. Men and women bring different ideas and ways of life to the table, and I think a successful culture allows men and women to intermingle freely. Therefore, I would not want to live in the Ifugao society.

- Religion

Describe the religion (or religions) found in your culture. Do people believe in a god or gods? Do people in your culture practice magic? If so, what kind? How has missionary activity affected people in your culture (if it has) Add your own ideas...

Religion is an essential part of the Ifugao culture and is significant in every phase of life. Their religion provides a means by which the unknown can be approached and understood. Ifugao religion is a very complex structure based on ancestor worship, animism, and magical power. According to Fowler " The Ifugao pantheon consists of innumerable spiritual entities that represent natural elements, forces and phenomena in addition to ancestral and metaphysical beings. The trust and confidence that the Ifugao have in these beings allow them to face what is often a complex and frightening world with a great deal of confidence and understanding. They believe that the gods and other beings are approachable and can be influenced by the proper rites and behavior to intercede on behalf of an individual or the entire community. Generally the gods are viewed as generous and benign beings

who enjoy feasting, drinking wine and chewing betel nut, as do the Ifugao themselves. However, the gods are quick to anger and if ignored or treated badly can quickly become ill-tempered, demanding tyrants capable of causing misfortune and injury.”

The Ifugao people have created ceremonies to honor and respect their deities, although some are rarely acknowledged or called upon. Others, who control daily life, such as agriculture and health, are constantly worshipped and called upon. The greatest importance to the Ifugao are rice or agricultural deities which have the power to ensure bountiful crops and actually increase the amount of rice already in storage.

1. Interesting fact

Provide one additional interesting fact about your culture. Do they have a fascinating set of ideas about illness, disease and curing? Describe it. Do they have an elaborate art style? Describe it. Do they engage in sexual practices that strike you as very different from that of Western Society? Talk about it. Do they have a particular type of body modification (scarification for example) or style of body adornment? What is it? You don't have to answer all of these questions – pick one or one of your own choosing and provide as much information as you can find.

Although the Ifugao have no knowledge in writing, they were capable of creating a literature that matches with some of the country's finest in epic and folk tale. Their literature is passed orally. Their riddles serve to entertain the group as well as educate the young. One such example of an Ifugao riddle is, according to Siangio: “ Dapa-om ke nan balena ya mubuttikan nan

kumbale.” This translates to: “ Touch the house and the owner runs about.”
The answer is spider.

When the Ifugao gather together, they use proverbs to give advice to the young. These proverbs are used to stress a points. The ones who have gone to formal school begin their lectures before large meetings or gatherings with proverbs. Here are a few Ifugao proverbs according to Sianghio:

“ Hay mahlu ya adi maagangan :: The industrious will never go hungry. Hay “ uya-uy” di puntupong hi kinadangyan di ohan tago. :: The feast is the yardstick of a person’s wealth. Hay itanum mo, ya hidiyeh aniyom :: What you have planted is what you will reap.”

Ifugao myths usually are about hero ancestors, gods and other supernatural beings. They story lines usually have these heroes facing problems that they are currently facing. This allows the Ifugao people to provide hope and comfort to their homes. When these stories are recited, they are usually in barked-out, terse phrases followed by the tulus, which means “ pushing”. The tulus aims to bring the magical powers that stand behind the myth. At the end, the clincher kalidi is chanted and the narrator enumerates the benefits which should be obtained from the myth. The myths are usually concluded with the phrase, “ because thou art being mythed.” They have myths that cover common cultural stories such as: creation of the world, creation of man, great battles and epic struggles. They also have stories that cover other worldly known events, such as the “ great flood” or “ Noah’s Arc” to the Bible. According to Sianghio, “ Other Ifugao legends that have been recorded include, “ The Legend of the Ambuwaya Lake”; “ The Origin of the

Pitpit or The Bird of Omen”; “ Why the Dead Come Back no More”; and “ How Lagawe Got Its Name”.”

Other such important tales are the magical stories, called abuwab. These tales are believed to possess mystical powers. According to Siangho, “ Examples are the “ poho-phod” and “ chiloh tales”, which are usually told in death and sickness rituals. The abuwab is usually about the legendary husband and wife, Bagan and Wigan.”

Also, Siangho says, “ The Ifugao epics are chanted romances telling of the origins of the people, the life and adventure of the Ifugao heroes, the valor of men and the beauty of women, as well as ancient customs and traditions.”

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