

Opening and Closing Rituals and Others: A Show of Innovativeness in Integrating the Igorot culture to Christianity

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A. Opening Ritual:

Rituals were interspersed in the opening and closing ceremonies that reconciled culture and religion. In the opening ceremony, part of the ritual was the opening prayer for the 4th ICBE Consultation (Consultation) by the Rev. Katharine Poulton.

a. Prayer by the Rev. Katharine Poulton:

“In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. AMEN

Today is Ascension Day, the 40th Day after Easter and the day on which Christians remember that Jesus ascended into heaven to be with God, His heavenly Father. And so we have a reading from the Acts of the Apostles.”

The Epistle: Acts 1: 1-11

In this book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the Kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. ‘This’, he said, ‘is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the \holy \spirit not many days from now.’

So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the Kingdom of Israel?’ He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ When he had said this, as they were watching, he was filled up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.’

Let us pray.

The Collect for Ascension Day

Grant, we pray, Almighty God that as we believe your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; So we in heart and mind may also ascend and with him continually dwell; who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

A prayer for the Conference:

O God our Heavenly Father, we thank you for gathering us together for this meeting and for bringing each one of us safely to Ireland. We pray for those members of our families we may have left in other places at this time and ask for your care and protection of them. We pray for the people of the Igorot Communities of the Cordillera Region of Northern Philippines and for all the families and friends of the people represented here tonight. We give thanks that through this meeting, people who are living and working far from their homeland have the opportunity to share together and to talk about issues of mutual concern. We ask God that you will bless this gathering and each participant, praying that every individual may be listened to and given a chance to express their opinions. Above all, we ask that you will strengthen friendships across the group and that all those who have travelled for this meeting

will find it has been worthwhile. All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen and ascended Lord. Amen.

We pray the Lord's Prayer together.

b. Endorsement Ritual:

Part of the opening was the Endorsement of Leadership by Henry Foken as President of BIBAK Switzerland, which hosted the 3rd ICBE Consultation, and acceptance by Dave Aragones as President of BIBAK-Ireland, the host country of the 4th ICBE Consultation.

Henry Foken:

With the symbolic striking of the gongs by Henry Foken, clad in Igorot attire (G-string, topless with a head gear) and with his gestures of an Igorot chanter, it caught the attention of all participants to listen to his indigenous chant 'Uggayam' that started with the phrase ' Ay Uggayam, o gayamen'

In essence, Henry greeted all participants, guests and the dance performers from the Gains School of Irish Dancing. He further expressed the significance of the ICBE Consultation in terms of changes in one's outlook in life. Henry further wished the members of BIBAK Ireland represented by Dave Aragones that no matter how difficult it is to organize a conference, there is always a price for every sacrifice.

In closing, Henry thanked Kabunyan, the Almighty for the safe journey of every participant and called everyone to pray with him that Kabunyan will continue showering each one with His blessings.

Dave Aragones:

Wearing the G-String (*wanes*) for the first time, Dave proudly proclaimed that this day, he can truly call himself an Igorot. Dave accepted the 4th ICBE Consultation leadership with confidence because he was sure that everyone will cooperate and has a role to play. Dave then proceeded to the podium to deliver his brief but meaningful welcome remarks.

Peter Agnaonao:

The opening of the May 18 activity was with the 'Uggayam' of Peter. He adored Kabunyan for his guidance and thanked him for the safe travel of all participants. He wished that with the Consultation, others will share what they know about culture for others to learn. He also wished that BIBAK or Cordillera organizations, through the ICBE Consultation, will always maintain their solidarity.

B. Cultural Ritual:

Before the cultural presentations as part of the Gala Night, it was opened with the acknowledgment of the Almighty with a prayer led by the Rev. Ian Poulton.

Prayer by the Rev. Ian Poulton:

'Dear God, Creator of the earth, wind, fire and water;
Creator of all peoples, Help us to seek to be the church where we are – In our community, with its needs; in our country, at this time; and in this world, at this moment.
Through your passionate and justice seeking love, bind us to all peoples all over the world. We are part of a global community that is greater than ourselves.

Creator of all peoples, animals, insects, birds, and all the elements of life, we seek to imbibe what it means to be the church in other places so that by understanding your call better, we can act as brothers and sisters or partners around the world. We lift up their witness and costly discipleship, Are we ready? We listen to their stories of dispossession. Does this happen to our own communities?

You who are our Courage and Fire
You who are our Wisdom and Water
You who are our Comfort and Earth
You who are our Breath and Wind
You give us love and strength to defend life and dignity
You are with us, all of us around the world striving to make real your liberating love.
Amen,

Bogaw by Elder Patrick Bounggick.

Bogaw literally means to shout and proclaim. As part of the cultural ritual, Patrick who was the eldest of the male elders, assumed the responsibility for leading the cultural presentation. He symbolically opened the jar of rice wine (*tapey*) with his shout to acclaim the presence of Kabunyan, who is the director of all things done. He further shouted that may there be friendly relationship as each one sips the glass of rice wine (*tapey*.)

Cultural dances by all followed.

D. Closing Rituals:

As it is, the Igorots are ritualistic people. Rituals are performed in different ways in accordance to its appropriateness to the occasion. These rituals performed at the ICBE Consultation were:

a. Parting Ritual:

Before parting time, usually wishes in chants or songs are expressed in groups or by individuals. During the closing program at the Marino Conference Centre, Patrick Bounggick delivered his 'Uggayam' highlighted with his wish that in every ICBE gathering, may all the 'singles' find a partner, get married and start a family. He further wished them more children, prosperity and abundance.

At Tipperary with the Igorot miners, Dono (Cristabel Bounggick) called for a group closing prayer song, "Bond of Love," then singing of the Auld Lang Syne, followed by the goodbye song.

b. Turnover Ritual: Turnover of hosting responsibility by Dave Aragonas as President of BIBAK Ireland, host of the 4th ICBE Consultation to Rhino Oblas, from Germany as the host of 5th ICBE Consultation.

Dave passed the Irish art craft to Rhino Oblas, as a symbol of being the host. As a general expectation, Dave expressed the feeling of satisfaction of hosting and to be passed to others. Rhino willingly accepted the responsibility of leading the hosting with the cooperation of all others since there is no BIBAK organization formally organized in Germany.

c. Watwat Ritual. Literally, *watwat* means sharing of one's blessings during parting times after a wedding celebration. This is locally termed '*buka*.' Originally, what is shared by the celebrant or host is a piece of meat referred as *watwat*.

During the 4th ICBE Consultation, it is impractical and inappropriate to distribute a piece of meat. Or else, it will be confiscated at the airport. Hence, gift items symbolized what *watwat* was. Integrating prayers in Igorot chants, and the traditional practice of singing the Auld Lang Syne, and the giving of *watwat*, it was performed in the following sequence:

1. Prayer to the tune of the dance-chant, '*Digdigwi*.'
2. As a way of saying AMEN, the choral singing of the popular songs was sang:

'Sha mampay, owen mampay' and

'Surwei, surwei, ompeh (3x) om, pehpeh om, pehpeh om'

3. Singing of Auld Lang Syne and passing of wish signalled with the pressing of right thumb over the thumb of the next person at the left.
4. Proclamation of the wish by Claus Nabert. Claus expressed the wish in German and then in English:

Wir wünschen uns, dass die Freude und die Kameradschaft, die wir in diesen drei Tagen miteinander teilten auch weiterhin in der Zukunft bestehen wird. Wir hoffen ebenfalls, dass beim Wiedersehen, in 2009 in Deutschland, unsere Gemeinschaft und der Zusammenhalt erneuert werden kann, um uns gegenseitig und unsere jeweilige Kultur zu entdecken; Damit wir eine bessere Zukunft für uns selbst, unsere Kinder und unser Volk verwirklichen können.

We wish that the joy and camaraderie we have shared these three days will extend into the future and that we will once again come together in Germany in 2009 to renew our bonds, share again, and discover ever more about each other and our culture to create an ever better future for ourselves, our children, and our people.

5. Giving of *watwat*. With inner circle moving clockwise and the outer circle moving counter clockwise, the participants sang with action, the song,

*"Umisem ka, naimbag aramid mo,
Ikampay ti imam iti Apo,
Lamanuem kaabay mo, saka umisem"*

At the end of the song, whoever is in front of one, exchanged gift (*watwat*) then they continued to sing while hugging each other,

*~Ay shana, ay shana, ay shana nan kanan da en layad,
Nan watwat ay inted ko et layad ko, et layad ko!~*