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# RITUALS FOR ABUNDANCE: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF SUPERSTITIONS AMONG RICE FARMERS OF DULAG, LEYTE

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### Introduction

In this modern world, the government focuses more on technologies instead of developing agriculture. The government keeps on proposing new technologies to use in farming but still not all farmers can afford to buy or generate new technologies for farming especially farmers from the local area due to lack of capital and financial capabilities. As a result, they rely on traditional ways of farming.

Superstitions are a cultural aspect encompassing the beliefs, practices, and way of life of Filipinos. Over time, it has been regarded as a means to provide hope during unfavorable events and help ease fears or anxieties, particularly about certain matters. According to Bautista et al. (2020), these are beliefs that lack sufficient scientific basis, yet despite the modern era, they remain alive and prevalent in society (Lopez et al., 2015).

Furthermore, several laws have been enacted by the government to ensure the preservation of these traditions for future generations, such as the 1987 Constitution (Article XIV, Sections 15 and 16), which aims to protect the national heritage, culture, and traditions of the Philippines, recognizing them as part of the country's intangible cultural heritage. Additionally, Republic Act No. 10066 (National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009) seeks to safeguard and preserve cultural treasures and traditions, including beliefs and superstition.

However, Bañares (2007) stated that, indigenous knowledge is fading before our very eyes and now lies on the confines of the memories of old-age people who live in remote rural areas. This claim is supported by Magallanes (2020), though indigenous practices of people are important roots in the advancement of modern technology. The fast-growing achievements in technology that make the life of man easy, and his work fast had put the indigenous practices and beliefs in extinction.

In the study conducted by Lesmana (2022), entitled Hindu-Buddhist Influence on the Myths of Rice Gods in Southeast Asia and Its Role in Modern Agriculture Development that worshiping rice gods in Southeast Asia is carried out in a series of agricultural rituals and ceremonies that correspond to the rice growing cycle in both Thailand, Indonesia, and Philippines. Farmers follow the principle of observing the laws of nature and adopt the power of nature to carry out farming activities. The people of Southeast Asia worship the rice gods not only for a bountiful harvest, but also for avoiding bad luck and disease.

However, in the study conducted by Hollaus, (2022) generally, farmers stated that old taboos no longer had any power or influenced their rice cultivation practices. One sociocultural landscape element and natural ecosystem were related to taboos by two farmers in Long Banga: ancient graves and salt springs where rice fields should not be established. This related to the notion that spirits, or ghosts inhabit the old stone graves and salt springs, and if disturbed farmers could be afflicted by sickness. Farmers addressed this problem by avoiding spiritually significant areas.

Furthermore, IRRI Rice Knowledge Bank (2020) stated that, the typical outputs of rice vary with different rice mills. The milling yields are determined by the variety, the history of the crop and the type of milling equipment used. The potential yields can be determined using optimum quality paddy dried to 13% moisture content using laboratory milling equipment.

In a study conducted by Bas-ong (2019), it was found out that most of the respondents practice traditional harvesting method with produce intended for home consumption. In addition, the 40 Itawes rice farmers of Tuguegarao still use traditional tools and equipment in harvesting grains (Gallibu & Tindowen, 2015).

Considering to what has been said above from the different studies, there is a need to study further as to how superstitions help among farmers. Hence, this study was conducted to determine the different rice farming superstitions particularly in aiming abundance in rice production in Dulag, Leyte which was not being focused of past studies.

This study is a great help in promoting and showcasing the richness of Filipino traditions and culture in a way that fosters strong connections and unity, preserving the heritage passed down by our ancestors. It also provides farmers with an understanding of how these influences or values are relevant to the events around them, serving as a guide in their daily lives.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

This study aims to explore the role of superstitions among rice farmers of Dulag, Leyte. Specifically, this seeks to answer the following questions.

1. What are the superstitions that are experience among farmers of Dulag, Leyte?
2. What is the effectiveness of following these superstitions?

### ***Theoretical Framework***

This study is based on the theory of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) of Mawere (2015) and Symbolic Interactionism of George Herbert Mead and later expanded by Herbert Blumer (1969).

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## **Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Theory**

This theory also known as Local Knowledge Theory it emphasizes the value of traditional, community-based knowledge developed over time through experience, culture, and interaction with the environment. Mawere (2015) have advocated for the recognition of indigenous knowledge as valid and essential in understanding local realities, especially in areas such as farming, health, and natural resource management.

In the context of rice farming, this theory help explain how rituals and superstitions are not merely beliefs, but culturally rooted practices grounded in generations of farming experience. These include choosing specific days for planting, offering food or prayers to the land, and avoiding certain actions believed to cause crop failure. These practices are based on local observations, community wisdom, and a deep relationship with nature.

This theory views these beliefs not as outdated or unscientific, but as adaptive strategies developed by communities to manage their resources and uncertainties, such as climate, pests, and soil fertility. They serve both practical and spiritual purposes supporting farmers emotionally while also guiding seasonal farming decisions.

By using this framework, the study aims to recognize and respect the cultural value of superstitions and rituals in rice farming. It highlights the importance of preserving indigenous knowledge in agricultural practices and encourages researchers to engage with local wisdom as part of meaningful and respectful inquiry.

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## **Symbolic Interactionism Theory**

This study is guided by Symbolic Interactionism, a sociological theory developed by George Herbert Mead and later expanded by Herbert Blumer (1969). This theory focuses on how individuals create meaning through social interaction and how symbols—such as rituals, gestures, and traditions—shape human behavior.

In the context of rice farming, rituals and superstitions serve as meaningful symbols that influence farmers' planting practices. These may include specific planting dates believed to bring good luck, offerings to nature spirits, or abstaining from work on certain days to avoid bad fortune. According to Symbolic Interactionism, these actions are not arbitrary; they hold deep cultural and emotional significance because they are shaped by personal experiences and social teachings passed down through generations.

This perspective helps explain why many farmers in rural areas continue to follow superstitions even in the face of scientific advances in agriculture. These rituals are expressions of identity, tradition, and a sense of connection to the land and the community. They also serve as coping mechanisms, helping farmers feel more in control during times of uncertainty such as bad weather, pest attacks, or crop failure.

By applying Symbolic Interactionism, this study aims to understand how rice farmers assign meaning to their planting rituals and how these beliefs guide their farming behavior. This theory provides a lens to view superstitions not as outdated practices, but as meaningful social behaviors rooted in culture and experience.

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## **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is to explore the role of superstitions among rice farmers of Dulag, Leyte in getting abundance harvest. Also, this study will be deemed beneficial to the following persons and institutions:

**Local Farmers.** This study may help farmers better understand the significance of their own beliefs and how these shape their farming decisions. It can also provide a sense of pride in their cultural heritage and promote the value of traditional practices in modern agriculture.

**Local Government or Agricultural Agencies.** Understanding the cultural practices of farmers can help government units and agriculture-based organizations design more culturally sensitive programs and policies that respect and integrate traditional knowledge systems.

**Educators and Students.** This study can be a helpful learning material in understanding how local culture and beliefs influence daily life and work, especially in rural settings. It may also inspire further research on indigenous knowledge in other communities.

**Community Leaders and Cultural Advocates.** The results may encourage efforts to document, preserve, and pass on traditional knowledge to younger generations, helping to keep cultural practices alive in the face of modernization.

**Future researchers.** The study will add to the body of knowledge in the fields of agriculture, sociology, and anthropology by highlighting the role of indigenous beliefs in farming. It may also serve as a reference for future studies related to rural life, cultural traditions, and farming behaviors.

### ***Definition of terms***

**These are the following terms used operationally in the study:**

**Superstition.** In this study, superstition refers to the traditional beliefs or practices of rice farmers in Dulag, Leyte that are not based on scientific explanation but are believed to bring good or bad luck, particularly in rice farming activities.

**Rituals.** These are specific actions, ceremonies, or traditions that rice farmers perform during planting, growing, or harvesting seasons with the belief that these acts will result in a bountiful harvest.

**Abundance.** Refers to a plentiful or successful harvest outcome, which farmers attribute to following superstitious beliefs or traditional rituals.

**Rice Farmers.** Individuals or families in Dulag, Leyte engaged in cultivating rice as their primary source of livelihood.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES AND LITERATURE**

This chapter showcases studies and literature reviews relevant to the current research study. Also, this includes ideas from completed thesis, generalizations or conclusions, methodologies, and more. The contents of this study will help readers in relating to, understanding, and comparing various studies.

The role of superstitions in agriculture, especially rice farming, has long been a subject of cultural and academic interest. Historically, rice has been more than just a staple crop; it symbolizes life, sustenance, and spiritual connection. The Association for Asian Studies (n.d.) noted that in Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, rice is often at the center of community rituals. Offerings and prayers are made to rice deities or ancestral spirits as a plea for bountiful harvests and protection from natural disasters. This is echoed in the ethnographic work of Bellwood (2005), who described these practices as forms of adaptive strategies shaped by local environments and historical contexts.

In the Philippine setting, Aguilar (2015) explored how rice farming is interwoven with spiritual beliefs. He documented customs such as offering the first grains of harvest to spirits and avoiding certain activities believed to bring misfortune. These rituals reflect the Filipino farmer's relationship with nature and unseen forces, portraying superstition not as mere myth, but as lived wisdom that responds to the uncertainties of agricultural life.

These cultural beliefs are confirmed by recent empirical studies. In study conducted by Guzman et al. (2022) found that Agsurnon farmers in Bayugan City still perform rituals such as selecting auspicious planting days and conducting prayers before tilling the land. Despite the availability of agricultural technologies, many farmers hold firm to their traditions, believing these rituals ensure a more abundant harvest. Similarly, Tan (2019) documented the practices of Palawan rice farmers who offer food and wine to the spirits before plowing, viewing it as essential to the health of both the land and the farmer.

Studies conducted by Lopez and Mariano (2020) in Batangas and Saavedra and Abas (2015) in Mindanao also observed similar patterns. Farmers refrained from planting on certain days and performed rituals to call for rain or repel pests. These practices were found not only to affect farming decisions but also to foster a sense of identity, unity, and connection to ancestral traditions. This aligns with Garcia (2011) who emphasized that agricultural folklore, especially among the Ilocano people, continues to influence behavior even in modern farming communities.

Interestingly, even when modern agricultural solutions are introduced, these traditional practices persist. Fujisaka et al. (1989) revealed that although pest management techniques are available, farmers in parts of Asia, including the Philippines, still perform rituals to ward off infestations. This dual system of knowledge—scientific and indigenous—demonstrates that farmers do not necessarily reject modernity but integrate it into their long-standing cultural frameworks.

Adding to this is the work of Ramirez (2017), who highlighted that the seasonal farming practices of Northern Luzon are closely aligned with spiritual rituals. Planting and harvesting seasons are determined not just by climate but also by traditional calendars, dreams, and signs from nature. This is further supported by Garcia (2011), who mentioned that certain days are avoided due to beliefs that they may lead to crop failure or bad luck.

The consistent theme across all literature and studies is that these superstitions are not random or baseless. Instead, they represent a systematic body of indigenous knowledge grounded in long-term observation, experience, and spiritual reflection. They continue to influence rice farming practices in both rural and developing communities, including Dulag, Leyte—where this current study seeks to further explore the unique rituals and beliefs that farmers uphold.

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## CHAPTER III

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### METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design, research locale, research participants, research sampling, research instrument, data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

#### *Research Design*

This research utilized a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. The researchers believe this design is appropriate and effective since the focus of this study is to describe the perceptions and experiences of farmers who followed different superstitions to have an abundance harvest. The phenomenological research method was used to observe and express various conditions or aspects of a phenomenon. This method also emphasizes that researchers have no control over the variables.

According to Smith (2018), phenomenology is the study of experiences of consciousness as perceived from the first-person perspective. Typically, phenomenology examines the structure of various types of experiences, such as perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and voluntary action, as well as bodily awareness, movement, and social activity, including language activity. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews. By doing so, this could help get a deeper understanding of the roles of superstitions used among farmers to have an abundant harvest.

#### *Research Locale*

This study was conducted in the municipality of Dulag, which is located in the province of Leyte, Eastern Visayas, Philippines. Dulag is a 3rd class municipality known for its strong agricultural background, with rice farming as one of its primary sources of livelihood. The town is composed of 45 barangays, many of which are classified as rural and dependent on farming activities for daily sustenance. Dulag lies along the eastern coastal plain of Leyte and is bounded by the municipalities of Mayorga, Julita, and Tolosa. Its flat terrain and access to irrigation from nearby rivers make it suitable for rice cultivation. Despite the availability of some modern agricultural tools and government support, many farmers in Dulag still practice traditional farming methods and cultural beliefs, including superstitions passed down from older generations.

#### *Research Participants*

The participants of this study are selected rice farmers residing in Dulag, Leyte. These individuals were chosen based on their active involvement in rice farming and their knowledge or experience with traditional superstitions and rituals related to agricultural practices. To ensure that the participants can provide meaningful and relevant information, the following criteria were considered in their selection:

1. Must be a resident of Dulag, Leyte.
2. Must have at least five years of experience in rice farming.
3. Must be actively engaged in rice farming, either as a landowner or farm laborer.
4. Must have knowledge or awareness of farming superstitions, rituals, or traditional practices.
5. Willing to participate voluntarily in interviews or discussions.

#### *Research Sampling*

The researchers employed the Purposive Sampling Technique to identify the participants for this study. Purposive Sampling is a type of non-probability sampling, meaning not all members of the population have a chance to be included as participants in the research. To ensure that the study aligns with its objectives and provides an in-depth understanding, the following criteria were used in selecting participants: must be a resident of Dulag, Leyte, have at least five years of experience in rice farming, actively engaged in rice farming, either as a landowner or farm laborer, have knowledge or awareness of farming superstitions, rituals, or traditional practices, and willing to participate voluntarily in interviews or discussions. According to Bernard (2013), 10 to 20 key participants are sufficient to identify and understand significant issues related to people's experiences.

#### *Research Instrument*

In this study, the researcher will use semi-structured interview in collecting the data from the participants of the study. According to, (George, 2023), semi-structured interview consists of open-ended questions that which allows the researcher to pose follow up questions. Also, this gives the participants an opportunity to express freely their experiences about the superstitious. Thus, given the nature of descriptive research design, semi-structured interview is well-suited to obtain the desired data for the study.

The research interview guide is divided into three phases: before, during and after the interview. Before the interview, the researcher disseminates a consent form to the participants. Initial instructions are also given to keep the participants informed about the research and what to expect during the interview. During the interview, the researcher prepared five questions that the participants have to answer. The first question is given to set the mode of the interview. Next, the second, third and fourth questions answers the research problem. And lastly, is a general question that covers the two questions. After the interview, the researcher proceeds with data analysis and prepares the write-up of the results.

### Data Collection Procedure

The researcher will be conducting a face-to-face interview of the participants. The researcher also ensured to adhere to appropriate etiquette in conducting an interview to maintain smooth and effective conversation between the participants and the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher adheres to the data collection procedures outlined below, which greatly align with and support the study.

First, a letter of request for the approval of the conduct of the research study is given to the research adviser of the graduate school. Second, the researcher formulates an interview guide purposefully for the research participants of the study. Third, a research consent form is formulated and distributed to the participants of the study. Nonetheless, a consent form from parents is provided to minor participants. Upon the approval of the participants for the conduct of the interview, fifth, the semi-structured interview will be conducted face-to-face. Sixth, the researcher uses audio recorder to get a clear answer from the interview. Seventh, the gathered data are transcribed reviewed, interpreted, and analyzed by the researcher. Eight, the analyzed and interpreted data is sent back to the participants for validation and rechecking. Lastly, the data are stored to maintain confidentiality.

### Data Analysis

In this study, a thematic analysis method will be used in the analysis and interpretation of data. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis is theoretically flexible for identifying, describing, and interpreting patterns (themes) within a data set in detail. All in all, a rigorous thematic analysis approach can produce insightful and trustworthy findings (Nowell et. al., 2017).

This study adheres to the thematic analysis process, starting with becoming familiar with the data by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts. The next step is generating initial codes to organize the data systematically. Following this, the researcher will search for themes within the examined codes. Then, the themes are reviewed to ensure they make sense within the entire data set. After that, each theme is defined, identifying any connections or distinctions between them. Finally, the write-up stage involves encoding the data to present the study's findings.

### Ethical Consideration

This study addresses ethical issues, emphasizing the importance of obtaining informed consent from participants of the study. Additionally, the participants responses are treated confidential as one of the key rules of conducting research. According to Eide and Kahn (2008), it is essential that participants should be protected from harm and that vulnerable populations will not be exploited.

Aside from that, the researcher ensures to acknowledge the authors and other sources that might appear in the study to avoid plagiarism and copyright. All in all, the researcher assured that all the data gathered, and the participants responses are solely used for this study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the results of the data, followed by the discussion of the research findings pertaining to the experiences of student athletes towards managing their academic responsibilities and extra-curricular commitments.

#### The Superstitions that are Experience among Farmers

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Definition</i>
“bulanong” Do not chose the day (Full moon, New Moon)	Farmers do not plant rice if there is moon to avoid pest and other sickness to the plant. “Choosing the day is very important, I believe in the pattern of the moon; full moon is not good for planting as pest will eat the leaves and if you plant during the new moon, your plants will not grow. (P1)
“rice calendar” Do not plant in the date/day is “0”.	Farmers believe that planting rice in the date of zero like 10, 20, 30. As I experienced it will only get small harvest. (P6)
“hudimhudim” Talking to the Plants and to the Anitos	Talking with the plants and Anitos, “hudimhudim”, are very important as they ask protection against diseases and pestilence so that they will have bountiful harvests. (P2)
“paghipay”	Farmers selects a spot where there is plenty of rice which ready for harvesting. The rice will be used for the ceremonies as a way of thanking for the blessings.
“pagtuo ha santos” Belief in a Saint	Farmers believe that planting rice during the celebration of San Juan festival – where people splash water on each other, symbolizes blessings and fertility, which farmers associate with a prosperous harvest.
“halipot nga bulan” Do not plant on the Month of February	Farmers do not plant in February because they believe it is not good. This month has fewer days – symbolizing a lack or insufficiency. Just as February is short, they believe the harvest that follows may also be small or inadequate.
“pahoy”	Farmers place pieces of wood or scarecrows in the fields to drive away birds that might harm the rice plants.
“yatab”	This is a traditional practice among farmers when the rice plants start to ripen. They take a few stalks of ripened rice and hang them near the kitchen or sink area, believing

	that doing so will help the rest of the rice in the field ripen faster.
“salag” Nest of a maya bird	Farmers look for a maya bird’s nest and burn it slightly to create a smoke, believing that the smoke will drive away the birds and stop them from eating the grains in the rice fields.
“abuhan” Traditional stove	After harvesting, farmers take a few pieces of rice grains and place them in the abuhan. They believe this practice will ensure that their harvested rice will not be easily consumed or run out quickly.
“home before sell”	Before selling the harvested rice, farmers first bring it home, believing that doing so will invite more harvests to come in the future.

**Table 1. Superstitions that are Experience among Farmers of Dulag, Leyte**

Table shows the result of superstitions that are experience among farmers of Dulag, Leyte. Based on the data there are four following themes: (1) bulanon, (2) rice calendar, (3) hudimhudim, (4) paghipay, (5) pagtu ha santos, (6) halipot nga bulan, (7) pahoy, (8) yatab, (9) salag, (10) abuhan, (11) home before sell.

These superstitions reflect a profound connection between farmers, nature, and spiritually. Each practice embodies a mixture of cultural wisdom, experiential knowledge, and faith, all aimed at ensuring protection from pests, promoting healthy growth, and securing an abundant harvest. The findings highlight that these superstitions are not merely irrational customs but serve as cultural frameworks that guide farmers’ decision-making and agricultural rhythms. These superstitions promote discipline, respect for natural cycles, and a sense of community identity anchored in shared beliefs. Moreover, these practices illustrate how spiritually and practically intertwine in rural life, offering psychological assurance and fostering gratitude toward both nature and divine forces.

In conclusion, the superstitions of rice farmers in Dulag, Leyte continue to play a vital role in sustaining traditional agricultural values and cultural heritage. While modern farming technologies evolve, these beliefs persist as a symbol of harmony between human, nature, and spiritual world, reminding us that abundance is not only measured by yield, but also by the richness of tradition and faith that nourish it.

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