

THE CULTURE OF THE TINGGUIANS

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(Parts of this article were taken from the "Rituals of the Tingguians of Abra in the Philippines," written by Philian Louise C. Weygan and published by ICBE in "Cordillera Rituals as a Way of Life" 2009.)

Culture is defined as the ideas, customs and social behavior of a particular people or society. It influences their views, values, humor, their hope, worries, and fears. Though the Tingguians have different dialects and cultures because of its geographic locations. The Tingguians have an elaborate network of beliefs and practices as manifested in their songs, dances and ceremonies specifically during mourning, courtship, weddings and festivals. According to Philian Louise Weygan, "like most indigenous peoples, Tinguians live in a web of indigenous systems and lifestyle which makes it impossible to practice a ritual and isolate it from other aspects of the community life. Neither it is advisable to study or see the rituals responding only to material significance as the people put spiritual and material relevance for the present and the future of the individual or the tribe or ili."

SOCIO-CULTURAL IDENTITIES OF THE TINGGUIANS

Indigenous Governance

DAP-AY. Dap-ay is the Maeng's system of governance that dates back to the 16th century. The system manages and directs the "social-economic, cultural and spiritual life of the people in a community."

THE BODONG, the Peace Pact. To a Tinguian, life is greatly influenced by indigenous laws, which center on ancestral domain, peace pact (Bodong, Kalon, Peden etc), environment. Up to the present times the peace pact and the Pagta greatly influence the decisions of the Tinguians in terms of conflict resolution and ancestral land domains and land use. The Pagta list all the agreements reached by the communities or tribes forging the peace pact.

SIPAT. This ritual is where the two agreeing tribes or community exchange gifts to signify the peace pact agreement. Designated representatives from the agreeing parties are called the peace pact holders. They are the primary actors in the Sipat. This ritual comes after observing desirable signs through birds and natural signs. A pig or chicken is butchered and eaten by those present and the bile and liver are observed that signifies the future of the peace agreement.

SINGLIP. This is a festive sacred ritual for at least two days where the two agreeing tribes eat, dance and chant the Uggayam and Sallidumay. To the Maengs they dance the takik, the palook or balliwes, the sukliit, pinalaiyan. During this ritual, initial agreements in the Pagta are crafted which includes safe passage, peace maintenance, territorial boundaries, type of violations, fine provisions for violations of the facets of the agreement.

INUM. Inum is done after the Singlip to seal the peace pact. Basi (traditional alcoholic drink) is served to all the members of the community. Allatiw or Allasiw. This is feast hosted by the other tribe to reciprocate the Singlip done by the other contracting party. The terms of the Pagta are reviewed, promulgated and put into effect for all members of the tribe to adhere.

DEINAT This is a ritual of the peace pact known as warming and done after several years that the peace pact was in effect. Not that the peace pact grew cold but the relationship is celebrated in festivities to further strengthen the peace pact specially when broken for many years.

BUG-OY. Bug-oy means the pact is broken by a violation of any of the terms in the pagta by any of the contracting party but could easily be reconciled.

KEPAS. Kepas happens when peace pact is totally broken and the gifts given during the sipat is returned to the contracting party. The palakod (trap) and fines are given for the protection of the tribe. Also a payment called baugan is levied on the person who broke the pact and burdened the whole tribe.

GALIGAD. The ritual is a feast for transferring the bodong/peace pact holder. This happens in the event of death of the original peace pact holder, when the peace pact is broken, or at the decision of the peace pact holder and the

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Kabunian. The Tinguians believe in Kabunian, known as the creator, a friend and a helper of the poor. Traditionally believed to stay in the adog (a small house) built on top of the mountain. He is a good spirit who communicates through the traditional healer where he prescribes healing procedures, protects them from evil spirits, teaches right living and inspires them to do good and avoid sin.

Apadel or kalagang. Apadel or kalagang is the guardian god that lives in the Kabangaan/Pinaing/Pinat-ing. These are modular stones placed in the entrance of some communities (ili), sometimes kept under trees. They are believed to be the guardian of the ili. People believes the spirits defend the community from natural and man-made calamities. During social gatherings like buda or pa-siyam (nine day after burial) the apo baket (elder woman) rubs coconut oil on each of the kabangaan before the tadek (traditional dance) is danced. Sometimes yellow bands are placed as well. They believed that this will welcome them as part of the celebration and that the pinaing will continue to shield them from harm.

Pudayen. This is another spirit believed to inhabit the sangasang, which is a bamboo structure at the entrance of the village. They likewise are believed to be guardians and overseers.

Alpogan or mandadawak. These are the mediums where spirits make their wishes known. Some Alpogan are middle-aged female believed to possess the power to communicate directly with spirits.

Iboas. These are the spirits that lurk around and originally believed as good, helpful and generous spirits. They usually appear during wakes and a woman attending the wake usually calls them to join. However, more and more people no longer believe in the Iboas as they are now seen as being evil and feared.

Maglalawa. This is the Tinguian's concept of life after death.

CHILD REARING RITUALS

Gipas/Sikki/gippas. The gipas or Sikki is a birth rite performed for the bright future of the child. After delivery the fire is kept burning for 29 days in a shallow box beside the mother for warmth and protection from evil spirits. The mamaltot (traditional midwife) performs the rite to a newborn baby. Accordingly, the child is placed on an inverted winnowing basket while an old woman and man gives the name. The basket is then lifted and gently laid down several times while the name is uttered. A pig is butchered for the ritual.

Pinakiyulog. In some communities this rite is practiced on the fifth day or the second day of the newborn. A young girl is asked to carry the baby down the stairs and step on the stones placed at the base of the staircase. This is believed to make the baby strong and of good character. The rite introduces the newborn into the community or ili.

Apo. This is a practice of the Masadiit tribe where the parents bring the child to the grandparents for the first time. Gifts are exchanged by the parents or immediate relative bringing the child and the grandparents. Sometimes the grand parents give a chicken or butcher a piglet to welcome the child.

Longbos. This is a confirmation rite performed after a month for the child to gain strength while growing up. Food is served to the relatives of the family joining the ritual.

Sangasang. Some use the term dalaw for the first tooth. The sangasang is performed by the Apo Baket or a priestess who makes the necessary offerings during or before the teething of the child. Then the mother is to lay the baby under the rice granary. Another woman is assigned to pick up the baby and carry him/her until the mother gets and bring home the child. Gifts are given to the woman who took care of the child to insure successful teething process. Closing the ritual is for the mother to prepare food which is eaten by the children in the village. They eat everything, wash their hands in a basin and dry their hand on the hair of the baby. The mother will wash the baby on the water used for washing hands to signify cleansing of undesirable character. This part of the ritual is to ascertain a child of good character and positive traits.

Ibal. This is a healing ritual performed by a medium by praying the Diam or dimdimi to assure recovery. A pig or a rooster is butchered for this ritual.

Dawak. Among the Maengs, Dawak is a ceremony conducted by a couple after many years of being barren. This starts with a begnas (thanksgiving) then the dawak starts. Balliwes, tadek and denglala dancers take part in the dance and then an elder shout his paliwat (prayer) for the couples to bear children. Old women butcher a chicken and offer to the couple's departed ancestors and sought their intercession for a fruitful marriage. Aside from a meal, basi (sugar cane wine) is served.

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Kalon or child engagement. Among the Tinguians the kalon or child betrothal was practiced for a long time. Practices and societies have changed, however there are still some who continue to practice kalon even in these changing times. When a boy is about six to eight years old, he is matched with a girl. His parents or intermediary visits the parents of the girl and give engagement tree beads signifying the intentions. If the offer is accepted the beads are tied around the waist of the girl as a sign of engagement.

Singlip. Singlip is an engagement ritual for adults done when the man's family visit the woman's family. The agreements will include the sabong and the pamauso which is the gift to the bride's family. Tadek is the appropriate dance during this occasion and a pig is usually butchered for the meal during the planning of the marriage.

Pakalon/wolwac. This is the engagement ritual where a pig is butchered when dowry is settled. During the ceremony the man and woman sit with two bowls and two beads placed into the bowls which they are to drink to ensure lifetime

union. Next is the rice ceremony where the bride and the groom each hold rice formed into a ball. The groom tosses his ball up the air, if the ball remains whole when it falls on the floor then it is good omen, if it breaks or rolls, they will postpone the wedding. The bride lets her rice ball fall in between the bamboo slats of the floor as an offering to the spirits. Traditionally, on the wedding night the couple are to sleep in the bride's house with a pillow between them and a head ax under the pillow of the groom. The next night they are to sleep in the house of the groom. The girl is expected to bring beddings to sleep on.

Tugtugaw. In Boliney the courtship ritual is the tugtugaw. A mediator bulallo assists when the man's group goes through the forest and gathers wood and brings to the house of the woman. If the family receives them and butcher a pig for the man's group, then it is a sign that they respect the intention of the man and his friends. The bulallo then formally says the intention. The pidis (bile and liver) of the pig is studied and if acceptable then the both parties plans for the wedding, if signs are not favorable then it is postponed. Discussion includes how much money, ules (bankets) dingwa (native skirts) and batek (beads) are to be offered to the woman's parents. An imbentario is prepared. During the wedding the relatives of the woman check the completion of the imbentario as documented during the courtship period. In instances where the woman is unsure, the man will stay in the house of the woman and they are given the opportunity to know each other. Should the woman refuse the man a multa (fine) is levied. This goes to the council of elders who negotiated the match and another fine to man's family.

Tinipuy/kinaiw. The Maengs living in Luba, Villaviciosa and Tubo practice at least three indigenous methods of marriage. The easiest is the Tinipuy or kinaiw where the parents of the bride and groom negotiate and arrange for the wedding. The woman is asked to bring cooked rice to the man's home, the next day the parents and some elders of the woman go to the man's house. The family of the man prepare food and for older men from the village who join the tinipuy. The wedding is then followed with a meal and the dancing of the balliwes and the tadek. The next day the man goes to cut wood and serve the family of the woman. This is reciprocated the next day when the woman goes to the man's family and serves them. After this, then the couple can live as a couple.

Eyapdo. The eyapdo is another way of getting married among the Maengs. The villages of the contracting parties are invited, and two pigs are butchered, and the cost of the celebration is shared by the two parties. After the meal, balliwes and tadek are danced by all. The bile and the liver are studied for signs of good fortune and should the readings seem unsatisfactory, the wedding continues but another date of butchering another pig is scheduled hoping for a favorable reading. Feasting includes the dancing of the baliwes and tadek.



Danon. Considered the most expensive wedding ceremony among the Maengs is the danon. This is when the woman's family demand gifts (something like a dowry) like land, money, house, animals, fruit trees and others. At times bargaining of gifts is negotiated. The agreement is written in burador signed by the parents of the couple and witnesses from both parties. It is understood that the items in the burador are for the couples to start their married life together. When the auspicious date is scheduled everyone including guests from other communities join the celebration. The wedding feast is a one-day affair with eating, dancing and chanting of the oggayam and singing of the Salidumay. Many animals are butchered, young men and women act as servers and usually the kilawen, dinardaraan and lauya are served.

Supon (giving monetary support to the new couples) is practiced led by an appointed financial manager. Two or three people are assigned to manage the listing during the festivities. A chance for the couples to dance together is provided and people are encouraged to pin money on the garments of the couple while they dance. The financial manager counts all the funds received and announces to the public. Then the duayya follows by an old man and an old woman. They chant to bless the couple and prophesy to the couple and their future children. The day closes with the couples thanking everyone. All monies collected during the day are expected to be used by the couple to start their life.

DEATH AND BURIAL RITES

Pagpagada/Palpalubos/pakpakada/. Death is accepted with a belief in the afterlife.

Palpalubos is performed the eve of the burial.

Everyone gathers around the deceased and enact the rite of the palpalubos or farewell.

Members of the immediate family chant their farewell words. Someone is asked to isaop (representative) of the dead person who bids the living goodbye.

Kelyas. This is a ritual performed immediately after the interment where the ceremony includes dancing and chanting to assuage the pain of the bereaved. This signifies the releasing the dead to the great beyond.

Pabalon. This is the rite done the day after interment where the favorite food and things valued by the dead are placed on top of the tomb. A bonfire is lit to signify warming the dead.

INDIGENOUS TRADE AND CRAFTS

The Bamboo Split Weavers. The Tingguians, also called Itneg, are engaged in various crafts. The most important of which is bamboo crafts production. It is for this reason that Abra is aggressively positioning itself as the “Bamboo Capital of the Philippines.”

The Natural Dye Makers. Tingguian has the most number of colors in their traditional clothes. The dyes are gathered from natural materials found around them, mostly plants.

SOCIO_CULTURAL CHANGES

Abra is not exempted from the fast pace of development and from other influences brought about by modernization, looking for greener pastures and wanting to experience the better way of living and in return bringing back new practices, styles, and fashion that are copied and adopted. And with these changes, the native dialect culture and beliefs are slowly forgotten.

“WHAT AGGRAVATES THE POSSIBILITIES OF DIMINISHING THE MEMORIES OF THE PAST IS THE SHIFTING OF INTERESTS IN THE MINDS OF THE YOUNG IS DUE TO THE TEMPTING OFFERS OF THE ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY.”

~ Francesco T. Cayasen, Author of 'The Maeng Tribe History'

Another one that brings about cultural change is aptly described by Maria Teresa G. Bisquera-Benas, Ph. D, "While culture is dynamic and may evolve, the present generations must strive hard to preserve their culture, lest they suffer the pains of acculturation brought about by advance studies and technologies as well as social mobility to the point of losing their distinct cultural character and integrity." 📖



ABOUT THE SPEAKER

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