

TINGGUIAN ABRA RITUALS

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A. THE TINGUIANS/TINGGUIAN

The Tinguians/Tinguians are indigenous people groups of the province of Abra, located in the Cordillera region of northern Philippines. As of 2003, they were found in all of the 27 municipalities comprising 40% of the total population and occupying almost 70% of the total land area.

The lowland Tinguian inhabit lowland Abra and the mountain area is where the “Upland Tinguian” originally habited. As of the present times Bangued, the capital town, is inhabited by a representation of all the tribes of Abra as well as migrants.

The word “Tinguian” is traced to the Malay root word “tinggi” meaning high, mountains, elevated, upper. However, the people refer to themselves as “Itneg, Gimpong or Idaya-as” or based on their 12 sub-people group. The 12 ethno linguistic groups are the Inlaud, Binongan, Masadiit, Banao, Gubang, Mabaka, Adasen, Balatok, Belwang, Mayudan, Maengs and the Agta or Negrito.

In this presentation, some terms (like sangasang, singlip) are used to mean different things in a different context. It would be prudent to say that the terms used could have same or similar essence and significance but are practiced in different aspects of community (*ili*) or individual’s life. Likewise, some Tinguian terms are similar with those of other tribes of Mountain Province and Kalinga, but may not mean exactly the same thing. Therefore caution should be practiced in generalizing the meaning and a generic practice of rituals mentioned. This paper is particular to the Tinguian.

Like most indigenous peoples, the Tinguian live in a web of indigenous systems and lifestyles which makes it impossible to practice a ritual and isolate it from the other aspects of community life. Neither is it advisable to study or see the rituals as 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*.

B. SOME BASIC BELIEFS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

1. 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.

1. 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 believe the spirits defend the

community from natural and man-made calamities. During social gatherings like buda or pa-siyam the apo baket (old woman) rubs coconut oil on each of the kabangaan before the tadek 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.

1. Podayen

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.

1. 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.

1. 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.

1. Maglalawa

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

C. RITUALS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

CHILDHOOD RITUALS

1. 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. On a research of Divine Word College they found out that the most important significance of the Sikki is the naming of the child. The name is after an ancestor, a relative who possess exceptional traits or acts that they wish the child will inherit. The mamaltot (traditional midwife) performs the rite to a newborn baby. According to Cole and DWC 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.

1. 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.

1. 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.

1. 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.

1. 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.

1. 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.

1. Oloy

When the child reaches two years old, the Oloy is performed and the diam or dimdimi is prayed while a pig or rooster is offered. A thread from the mandadawak's dress is touched to the child while the heart of the animal butchered is passed against the chest of the members of the family of the child. They believe this contra excessive crying and leads to a happy childhood.

1. 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 shouts 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

1. 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 practiced 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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 butchers a pig for the man's group then it is a sign that they respect the intention of the man and his friends. The acceptance starts a dialogue where they ask the *bulallo* which man in the group has intentions. The pides (bile and liver) of the pig is studied and if acceptable then the wedding plans are made, 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 lives 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.

1. 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 serve them. After this, then the couple can live as a couple.

6. 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.

7. 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 are 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. Competition among the relatives of the man and woman sometimes become a practice to see who receives the greater amount.

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.

As the influence of the church, education, government and media the wedding ceremonies have centered on church and civil marriages. However, still the culture of the Tinguian remain intact and new ways are integrated into these rituals.

THE BODONG, THE PEACE PACT

To a Tinguian, life is greatly influenced by indigenous laws which center around 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. To the Maengs the rituals are listed below, and is greatly similar to other Tinguian peace pacts.

1. 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.

1. 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 *suklit*, *pinalaiyan*. 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.

1. *Inum*

Inum is done after the *Singlip* to seal the peace pact, and *basi* is drunk (*inum*) by all the members of the community .

4. *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. If *Sadanga* and *Tubo* had a peace pact and *Singlip* is done in *Tubo*, the *Allasiw* is expected to be done in *Sadanga*.

1. *Delnat*

Delnat 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.

1. *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 and could easily be reconciled. *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.

1. *Sipat*

This is the next cycle after the *bug-oy* and only commences when the *baugan* is paid by the perpetrator. Because of the *bodong*, it becomes easier for communities to settle differences in terms of territorial conflict, stealing, killing, environmental abuse and other violations.

1. *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 community as well as reasons.

DEATH AND BURIAL RITES

1. *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.

1. Kelyas

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

1. Pabalon

This is the rite done the day after internment 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.

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