

# Documentation of Folk Culture of Selected Indigenous Communities in the Philippines: An initial assessment

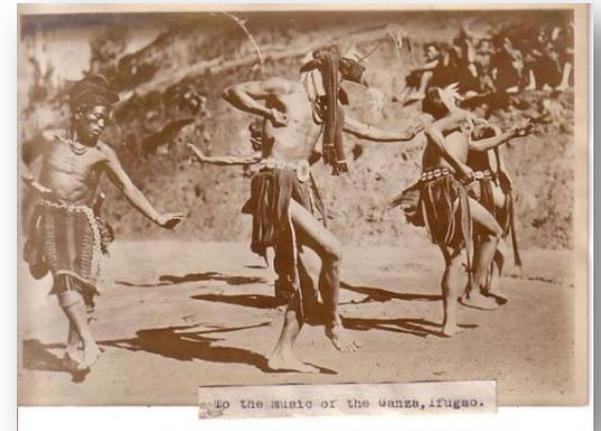
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# Introduction

## *Traditional knowledge*

- passed-on from one generation to another
- preserves the national identity and cultural diversity of the indigenous communities
- are expressed through language, oral traditions, spirituality which are displayed in broad complex of beliefs, ceremonies and practices (UNESCO, 2007)



# Introduction



## *Philippine indigenous communities*

- found in the upland and isolated communities in Luzon and Mindanao and some islands in Visayas
- encompass collection of distinct languages and cultures
- continue to live in isolation from lowlanders and are self-sufficient in their communities
- their culture and traditions are reflected in their views on land, rituals, songs and folklores
- they regard the land as their heritage that must be properly cared and protected for future generations

# Methodology

Gathering and review of previous documentation studies on traditional forest knowledge folk culture in the Philippines was conducted through library research and collation of research report.

Tribal communities selected for the initial assessment: **i-Agawa** of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR);  
**Talaandig tribe** of Lantapan, Bukidnon

## *Talaandigs*

- ◆ considered Mt. Kitanglad as their "remaining marker" from which their history emanates
- ◆ their cultural relationship with nature and forests is defined through the myth of their creation
  - ◆ the physical and spiritual composition of the Talaandig being is derived from the different elements that composed the world - the soil, water, forest, air, sun, sounds and spirits
    - ◆ Mt. Kitanglad is the fountain of their culture, traditions and knowledge that shaped and sustained them and their ancestors for centuries

## *Talaandigs - Cultural beliefs*

- 🌸 Their ancestors told them not to sell their lands, for losing their ancestral home is like burying the tribe beneath the ground
- 🌸 Rituals done to ask guidance for their daily activities and economic survival



## *Talaandigs - Rituals*

🌸 Pangampo

🌸 Pamamahandi - asking God for good health and wealth  
(done every January)

🌸 Igbabasok - done before planting for good harvest

🌸 Lagon - ritual during harvest

🌸 Talabugta - farming ritual (for fertile soil)

🌸 Dugso - a sacred dance and ritual that awakens and invites caretaker spirits of the environment by stomping their feet

## *Talaandigs - Rituals*



*Talaandig Natives Performing a Solemn Ritual*



## *Talaandigs - Rituals*

- ❁ Ritual to ask guidance from *Tibulon* and *Balaog* (God and Goddess of farming spirits) and *Bulalakaw* (water spirit) for their daily activities and economic survival
- ❁ After a *binaki* (frog dance), the whole family will do a ritual for Man Doceno, Man Panglaw and Man Ulinay - the first farmers of the tribe.
- ❁ According to one respondent, they perform this to ask signs when is the appropriate time/season of the year for planting.
- ❁ Based from the interviews, every living creatures in the forest give signs for every activity to be conducted by the community.

## *Talaandigs - Cultural beliefs*

- 🌸 their ancestors taught them to get things inside the forest that are enough for their needs
- 🌸 according to the respondents, rituals are performed every year as sign of gratitude or tax for the services provided by the forest to the community



## *Talaandigs - Protocols*

✿ established community protocol to ensure visitors and outsiders comply with customary laws and are sensitive to their local culture



✿ *through this protocol, visitors are assured of their safety and health while inside the tribe's territory*

## *Talaandigs - Protocols*

### **Sala**

- ✿ way of penalizing those who trespass their territory
- ✿ customary way of resolving conflicts and disagreements among the community
- ✿ outcome may be in the form of penalty (excluding execution and imprisonment); admonition or agreement depending on the crime of conflict being resolved
- ✿ all forms of agreements and penalties are treated as sacred and binding
- ✿ failure to comply will make the mediator sick, curse the offender for life and bring misfortune to the tribe



## *i-Agawa tribe*

- ◆ considered the forest as the heart of the tribe's survival - source of wood that can be used for timber and farm tools and source of medicinal plants.
- ◆ there are two types of forest - pine forest (*batangan*) and mossy forest (*kallasan/pagpag*). *Kallasan* serves as the hunting ground for several wild animals
- ◆ they consider *binang-owaw* mountain sacred because it is the main source of water. It should be protected from fire and any kind of disturbances that might endanger the water source
- ◆ they continue to practice *sinan-adum ay pamati* to protect the forests

## *i-Agawa tribe - Cultural practices*

### Linapet



- ◆ annual gathering done every 30th of September (or the 29th of the leap year)
- ◆ signals the planting of taro or sowing of seeds
- ◆ the time of the year when the sun's rays pass through the center of two huge rocks called Ambaon Bato in Mt. Langsayan. This is called the Calendar Bato.

*this can no longer be witnessed at present because the location of Calendar Bato has sunk and pine trees have grown near the Ambaon Bato. Despite this, the community still marks the occasion*

## *i-Agawa tribe - Cultural practices*

### old Agawa agricultural cycle

- **Kiling (October) – sowing of rice grains on seedbeds**
- Tikang (November) – plowing of rice fields. Signals the start of dry season
- Ladew (December) – planting season
- Opok (January) – peak of planting season. The season of forest fires (opog)
- Bakakew (February) start of hunting season. The best time when the plant bakakew and other wild trees in the forest bore fruits, which the wild animals fed on

## *i-Agawa tribe - Cultural practices*

### old Agawa agricultural cycle

- Kitkiti (March) – ricefield watering. The peak of the dry season and time to make clearings for swidden farming
- Kiang (April) – cleaning of ricefields, pathways and preparation of rice wine; “kiang” means “to rise from the water” (which referred to tadpoles developing strong legs to enable them to rise from the water) ; also time for lebek, the milling of the sugar cane
- Pannaba (May) – season for Begnas (a community feast where animal sacrifices and prayers are offered to the ancestral and nature spirits); time when the pannaba trees start bearing fruit

## *i-Agawa* tribe - *Cultural practices*

### old Agawa agricultural cycle

- Adawey (June) – early rains, time to take buffalos and cows to the mountains for grazing; season to observe Obayan di Kilkilaw (feast of the scarecrow) to protect the grains that are starting to form from the biding, birds feast on young rice grains; this is the time when the adawey tree starts bearing its fruit
- Luya (July) – peak of the harvest season; luya also means aani (harvest time)
- Tiway (August) – peak of rainy season; time for planting taro or lakat; Obayan di Lakat (Feast of the Taro) is observed
- Adog (September) – testing of seeds; time to watch over the stone at Awaw Dap-ay; adog means “to watch” signals the start of a new agricultural cycle for the *i-Agawa*

## *i-Agawa tribe - Cultural practices*

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the community. Their farm activities depend on the different phases of the moon, movement of the sun and stars, the onset of the rainy season and the arrival of migratory birds.

Their dependence in the aforementioned occurrences encourage them to search for the right time to farm, to fish, and hunt which is associated with the celebration of their cultural and spiritual practises.



## *i-Agawa tribe - Cultural beliefs*

- ◆ though Christians, they continue to follow traditional religion - *sinan-adum ay pamati*
- ◆ Tauli-Corpuz (2001) and Scott (1974) provided information about the observance of obaya and the ritual begnas:
  - ✓ living things are attributed with souls and spirits
  - ✓ placation of spirits of the dead (*anito*) through animal sacrifices in communal ceremonies
  - ✓ rocks, land formations, water bodies, etc. are believed to host spirits who protect them from pollution or destruction
  - ✓ specific religious rituals for each stage of the agricultural cycle in which specific roles are played by men, women and young men and women

## *i-Agawa tribe - Cultural beliefs*

- ◆ the community believes that a spirit is guarding the river
- ◆ they imposed to themselves to keep the river clean and not pollute it so that the spirits guarding it will not be angered
- ◇ the community have sacred places or things that led them to modest gestures of preservation and conservation
- ◇ *Patpatayan*, a tree where the elders offer prayers to Kabunyan, is considered a sacred place. Thus, it is a taboo to cut the branches of the tree, urinate or defecate under it (Fiar-od, 2001)
- ◇ the forest serves as burial grounds of their ancestors. Anyone who disturbs the area will experience misfortunes

# Conclusion



A rich environment is able to develop and promote a rich culture. When the resources in the forest are preserved and developed, the cultures of the local people attached to it are also developed. Likewise, when the resources of the forest deteriorate, the cultures of the people attached to it also deteriorate. In order to promote an effective forest management, the resources of nature must be sustained for the survival and development of local cultures.

Maraming Salamat  
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