

Lay- og: A Tinguian Family Tradition

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative-descriptive research identified the Tinguian municipalities in Abra that are still practicing the lay-og utilizing the personal interview coupled with ethnography. Of the 27 municipalities, only four municipalities are practicing the lay-og namely: Alimudong, La Paz, Peñarrubia, San Juan, Lagayan, Languiden (Inla-od tribe), and San Ramon East, Manabo (Mayodan tribe). However, as of the time this study was conducted, only Peñarrubia and Alimudong, La Paz had this occasion.

The billite is delivered to all the tribes, relatives, friends, and guests.

The palanos is done headed by the portador and a pair of panglakayen (who are also in-charge of the panung-awan) to check if the liver is good. If not, another pig is butchered until a good liver is seen. The liver is placed in a Kalapaw as an offer to the an-anitos. The representatives of the different tribes start to arrive. The different committees perform their assignments. The tadek, uggayam, and drinking of the basi start. Food is also served.

On the day of the event, the apayag is placed at the center with the offerings. Beside it is the pika (spear), guarded by a man who stays throughout the lay-og. The tugtugaw are placed in a designated part of the yard in front of the agto with the pictures and pair of clothing of the maila-og are placed.

The tadek, uggayam, and drinking of the basi start accompanied by the gansa. Women are dressed with their piningitan and kinindusan and their Tinguian jewelries. The mantenedor directs the lay-og. All the nagulila danced the tadek joined by the agto. The bisita ta unawa ends the activity. The rineddek is distributed to all those who danced the tadek and sang the uggayam.

Keywords: lay-og, Tinguian family, uggayam, billite, palanos, apayag, agto, mantenedor

INTRODUCTION

Tinguians are known for the appreciation and preservation of their precious legacy. This is manifested in the *lay-og*. For the Tinguians, *lay-og*, is a family reunion that is primarily held to remember all their dead. This activity is also a way of renewing and strengthening their close family ties, trace their roots, getting to know each other, meeting new relatives and in-laws, and identify relatives who need assistance or help.

The *lay-og* is a planned activity by a family who wishes to hold the affair. The Bayanihan is very much displayed. The members and relatives gather together to plan the said activity. Assignments like program and invitation, food preparation, peace and order are distributed and since the *lay-og* lasts for several days, the assigned group has to look for houses where the visitors will stay for the whole affair. The program and invitation committee lists those who will be invited in the *lay-og* through the *billite*. The *billite* is a letter delivered by a trusted person of the family a month before the *lay-og*. This gives the *nabillitean* time to prepare. For the food committee, they start to select the best food and *basi* to be served during the affair. The accommodation committee also starts to identify houses that will serve as lodging for the guests, visitors and relatives who come from other places. It is in this occasion where they could wear and display their *piningitan*/*kinindusan*, and *batek*. It is also during this occasion that they show their prowess in the *tadek* and *uggayam*. It is quite disgusting to note that this legacy is now gradually being forgotten due to modernization and foreign influences through intermarriages. Old people miss the *lay-og*. They are always invited whenever this occasion is held. The last *lay-og* that was held was a decade ago. Others express their fear that someday this legacy will be totally being set aside or even forgotten. Another observation is that, the young generation today cannot explain or describe how this is being done. It is on this premise that this research was conducted.

Although the *lay-og* is rarely practiced or observed today, the documentation of this family tradition will serve as a reminder to the Abrenjos about this precious heritage. This would also entice the provincial and local government, the DepEd-Abra and the National Center for Indigenous People (NCIP) to include this precious tradition in their program of activities. Another is that, this venture serves as a reminder to the present generation that this tradition is really worth preserving.

Since *lay-og* is one of the vital manifestations of the rich culture of the Abrenjos, the study was set to identify the Tinguian municipalities/communities/

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barrios/sitios that are still practicing *lay-og*; to record the stages done during the *lay-og*, to document the rituals observed during *lay-og*; and to identify the Tinguian concerns regarding the practice of *the lay-og*.

A study conducted by Rosal and Somera (2003) on the cultural confluences in Asilang, San Juan and Cabugao, Ilocos Sur found out that the *lay-og* is a family reunion that was held every ten years. This is an activity which everyone looks forward to.

The book published by the Divine Word College Bangued (DWCB) Research Center (2003) found out that *lay-og* is done after several years and serves as a family reunion and a time to remember their dead.

Abaya, et al. (2011) found out that the *lay-og* was observed and was done by the Tinguians of Abra in remembering their dead and at the same time their reunion.

METHODOLOGY

The ethnographic profile on the Tinguian municipalities/barrios/sitios was considered in the study. The researchers went to the National Center for Indigenous People of Abra to seek initial information about the municipalities/ barrios/sitios that still hold the *lay-og*.

Immersion was done by the researchers in places where *lay-og* was held and witnessed first-hand said activity. Personal interview and documentation were also conducted.



Figure 1. The Abra Ethno-Linguistic Map.

The map shows the different municipalities of Abra and the tribe/s living in each area. This also shows the dialect being spoken by the residents.

Table 1. Location per municipality and barrio/sitio of the tribes/dialect.

Tribe/Dialect	Municipality	Barrio/ Sitio
Adasen	Lagayan Lagangilang Tineg	Ba-I Bacooc
Banao	Malibcong Daguioan	
Binongan	L icuan-Ba-ay/Ba-ay-Licuan	
Gobang	Malibcong	Bangilo
Inlaud	Bucay Danglas Dolores Lagayan Lapaz Langiden Lagangilang Penarrubia Pilar San Isidro San Juan San Quintin Tayum Villaviciosa	Abang Malaylay Alimudong Palpalitpit Bolbolo Tangbao Gaddani Lumaba
Maeng	Luba Tuba Villaviciosa	
Mabaka	Lacub Malibcong	Bacag, Buneg, Talampak Mataragan
Moyadan	Manabo	San Ramon Catacdegan
Nasadiit	Boliney Bucloc Sallapadan	

The municipality Ba-ay-Licuan or Licuan-Ba-ay is the same municipality. If the elected municipal mayor comes from **Ba-ay**, the municipality becomes Ba-ay-Licuan; if the elected municipal mayor comes from Licuan, the municipality becomes Licuan-Ba-ay.



Figure 2. Map of Abra Showing the 27 Municipalities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Tinguian Municipalities/Barrios/Sitios that are Still Practicing *the lay-og*

Table 2 shows the municipalities/barrios/sitios that are still practicing *lay-og*. According to Mr. Serafin Alzate, the Provincial Information Office Administrator of Bangued, Abra, there are only six municipalities that are still practicing the *lay-og*.

Table 2. Municipalities/barrios/sitios that are still practicing the *lay-og*.

Municipalities	Tribe	Barrio/ sitio
La Paz	Inla-ud	Alimudong
Penarrubia	Inla-ud	Poblacion
San Juan	Inla-ud	Poblacion
Lagayan	Inla-ud	Poblacion
Languiden	Inla-ud	Poblacion
Manabo	Moyadan	San Ramon East

However, as of the time this study was conducted, only Penarrubia and Alimudong, La Paz had this occasion. Both municipalities belong to the Inla-ud tribe. San Ramon East had its *lay-og* in 2009, San Juan in 2005, Languiden in 2003 while Lagayan was in 1979.

The festivity lasted for three to four days depending on the agreement of the *agpa lay-og* as contained in the *bilite*. All the Tinguian tribes are well- represented.

B. Stages and Ceremonies of the *Lay-og*

The Preparation

A day before the festivity, the *palanos* is done. The *palanos* is the initial activity wherein a black native pig is butchered and the head of the *portador* and a pair of *panglakayen* (respected elders of the place) check if the liver is good. If not, another pig is butchered until a good liver is seen. This is a belief of the Tinguians that it will bring good luck to the family and the visitors as well. The liver is then placed in a *kalapaw* (hut) as an offer to the *an-anitos* (spirits) because the Tinguians believe that the souls of the dead are within their midst to participate also in the occasion.

The ceremonial ground must be prepared and furnished with the requirements according to the customs and tradition. The *apayag* (an elevated table or a small altar) is placed at the center of the ground and beside it is the *pika* (spear) tied with a *takyad* (a red cloth). On the *apayag* are the liver/livers of the pig, *bosi* placed in an *ungot* (bowl made from polished coconut shell), and *duyog* (a saucer made from polished coconut shell) containing *bu* (betel nut), *gawed* (anise leaves), and *apog* (lime). The *apayag* is guarded by a man who stays there until the *lay-og* is done.

Tugtugaw (bamboo chairs) or bamboo tables are placed in a line in a designated part of the yard in front of the *agto* (visitors). The chairs are furnished with the pictures and pair of clothing of the deceased. The number of chairs placed corresponds to the number of deceased members of the family and relatives.

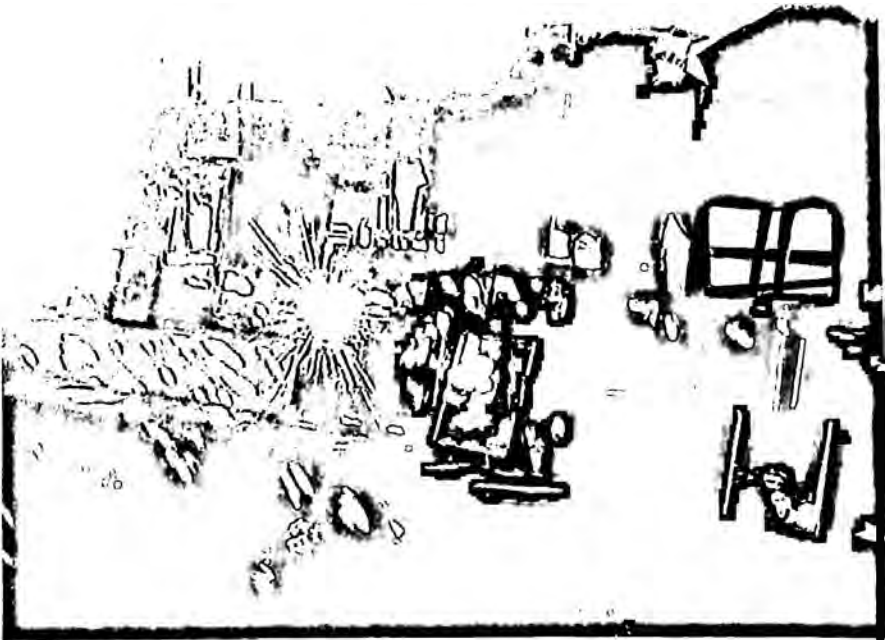


Figure 3. The Pictures of the Dead who are *Mailay-og*.

Each member of the family who is *mailay-og* is provided with tables to display the pictures, donations, and food. The *mailayog* are the dead family members and the relatives of the *agpalay-og*. Each delegation, visitor and special guest have designated places. A designated place is also accorded to the *gansa* players and also the persons who are in-charge of the *basi* and the *mantinedor* with his members.

A day before the occasion, visitors already arrive especially those who are far. The *tadek*, *uggayam*, and drinking of *basi* start. Food is also served.

The occasion starts very early. This is the time for the women to wear and display their *piningitan*, *kinindusan*, *batek*, *ambusaw*, *apungot*, *galang*, *tamborin*, *batek*, and other precious Tinguian jewelries.

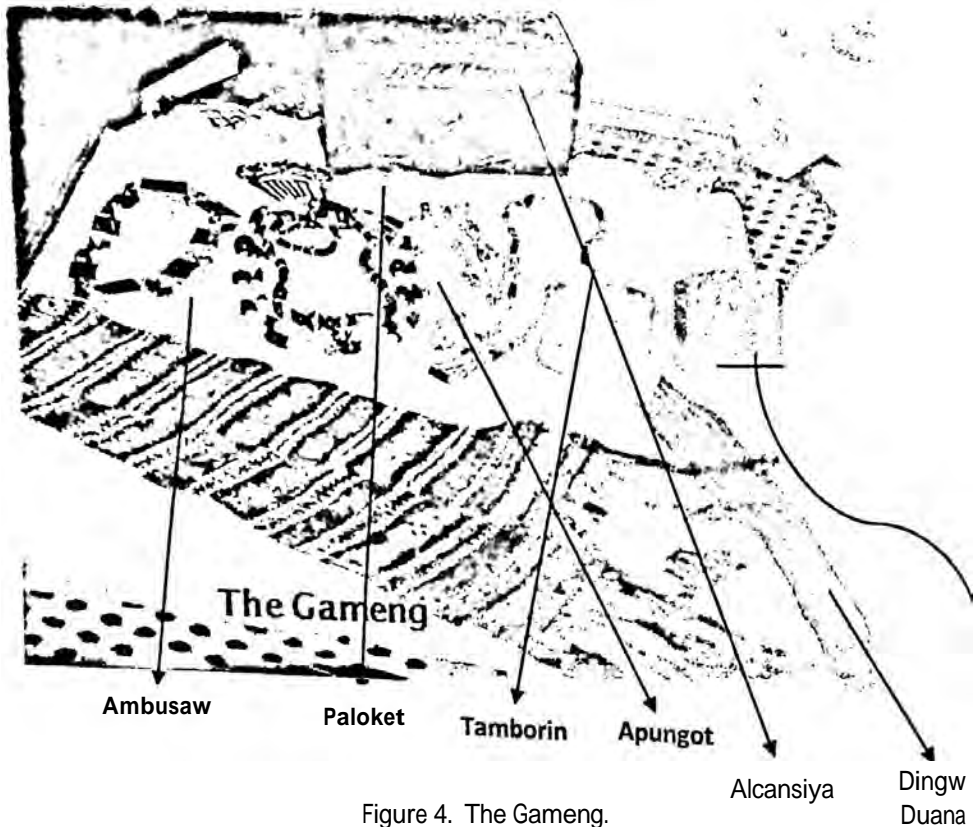


Figure 4. The Gameng.

The *alcansya* is a small box that can be locked. The Tinguians keep their *gameng* (jewelries) inside the *alcansya* for safekeeping. The *galang* (bangle for today) is the bracelet of the Tinguian Women. The *pa/oket* is a comb used as a hair decoration. The *ambusaw* is placed on the head similar to a head dress. The *apungot* is used as a necklace like the *tamborin*. The *dingwa or duanaig/duwanaig* is a skirt for the women.



Figure 5. The Batek.

The *batek* is made up of different bright color beads that are put together using a special thread made by the Tinguians. These are worn on both hands by a Tinguian woman.

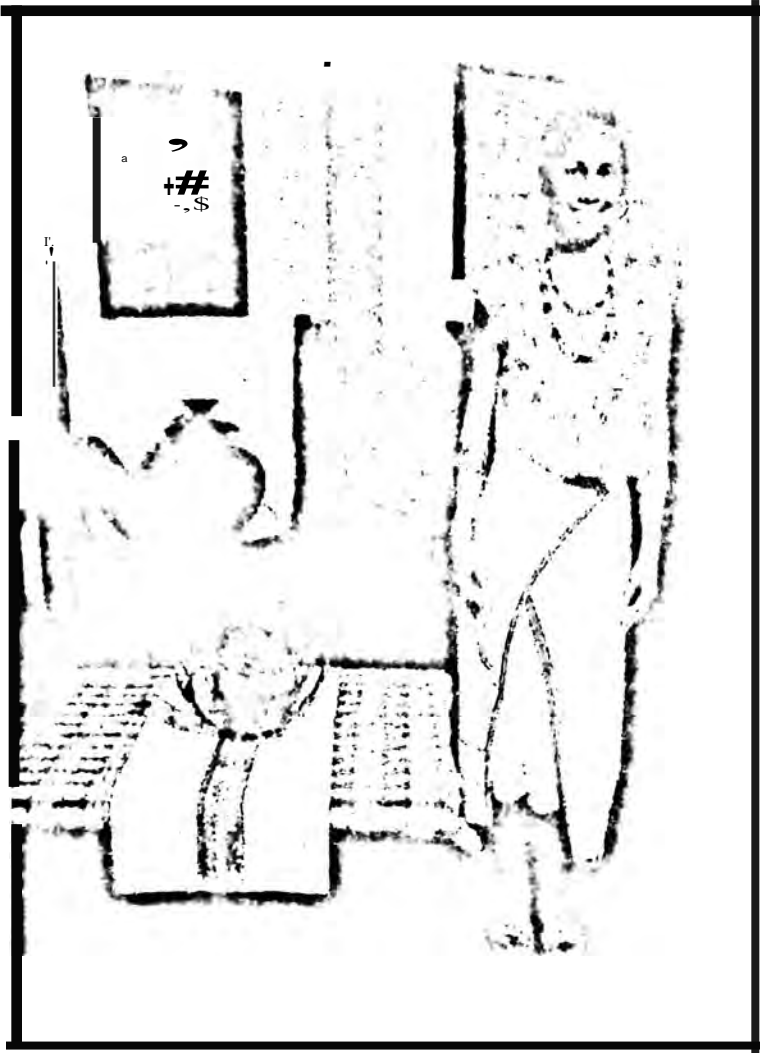


Figure 6. A Tinguian Lady in her *Piningitan* and *Tinguian* Jewelries.



Figure 7. A Tinguian Lady in her *kinindusan* and Tinguian Jewelries.



Figure 8. A Tinguian Man.



Figure 8. A Tinguian Woman

(from: Cooper P. Cole, Ebook No. 12849)

These are the attires of a typical Tinguian man and woman during the days when life was so simple. Both are barefooted. The man wears his *ba-ag* (G-string) with necklace of white beads and anklets around his feet. These are charms against bad spirits. The woman wears the *batek*, *apungot*, and the casual *piningitan* and *kimono*.

The *Lay-og* Proper

As the day breaks, the playing of the *gansa* announces the start of the event as all the *nabillitean* start to arrive. They bring native foods and place them on the designated places.

When all the visitors have arrived, each panglakayen of the different Tinguian municipalities gather together to assign the *mantinedor* (master of ceremonies) and at the same time in-charge of the *Panung-awan*. The *panung-awan* is the selection and butchering of animals to be used as food for the duration of the event. The *mantinedor* selects and assigns his companions during the event namely: *burdador* (Sheriff), *para-allap* and the *portador* or *paralista* (secretary). The *burdador* acts as the judge to those who could deliver the *uggayam* excellently. The *para-Allap* holds the *dingwa* or *duanaig* and responsible to match dancers in dancing the *tadek*. The *dingwa* or *duanaig* is a Native Tinguian cloth which Tinguian women use as skirts. The *portador* (secretary) is usually a teacher and lists those who are not able to perform well the *uggayam*.

While the *mantinedor* assigns his companions, the *tadek* and playing of the *gansa* continue where everybody participates. When the *mantinedor* has finished, he now starts the affair. The program starts by acknowledging all the different tribes. When the acknowledgment is done, the *mantinedor* asks all the delegates to wait and later welcome the *nagulila* (the family member who are *mailay-og*) and the *agto* (visitors).

A group of old men and women go to the house of the *nagulila* and accompany them to the *agto*. On their way to the venue, the *salidummay* is sung. Upon arrival, the *nagulila* go around and shake hands with all the visitors after which they sit at the center.



Figure 9. The Nagulila Shaking Hands with the Agto. The woman (right foreground) who is holding the Dingwa is the *para-Allap*

The arrival of the *naguli/a* in the *agto's* place signals the *lay-og* proper. The *binatbataan*, *kinaw-kawwesan* and the *dinuldulawan* are the names given as respect to the *naguli/a*. The *nagulila* are *dinuldulawan* (respected), therefore, they are clothed (*kinaw-kawwesan*) with bathrobe (*binatbataan*). The visitors sit on the designated places accorded to them.



Figure 10. The *Nagulila* at their Designated Seats.

When the *nagulila* have shaken hands with all the guests and visitors, they proceed to their designated seats. When they have settled, the *lay-og* starts. All the *nagulila* dance the *tadek* joined by the guests and visitors.



Figure 11. The *Nagulila* Dancing the *Tadek*.

The *nagulila* are clothed with *tinguian* robe and feathers are placed on their heads before each pair dance the *tadek* joined by guests and visitors. Each partner shake hands facing the *apayag*. The last to shake hands are the *nagulila* and partner. After each dance is the *uggayam* done by the visitors and are being judged by the members of the *panung-awan* to whom are given the *rineddek* (meat of the butchered pig) during the *unawa*. After the *uggayam*, they drink the *basi*. The *tadek* continues until all the *nagulila* have done their turn. The merriment continues even during meal time.

The serving of food is very systematic. The visitors do not need to hurry to get food because everyone has food to eat.



Figure 12. A *Nagulila* and Partner Shaking Hands Showing that the *Tadek* is Finished.



Figure 13. The *Agto* Dancing the *Tadek*

Bisita ta Unawa

This is the last part of the *lay-og*. The *bisita ta unawa* is the inspection of the gifts brought by the in-laws of the *naguli/a*. This *is* to determine what *unawa* **will** be given to all the tribes, guests, and visitors.

The *unawa* are the gifts brought by the in-laws of the *nagulila*. These are native foods, rice, wine, clothes, and others. These are given to all those who attended the *lay-og*.

Before the *unawa* is done, the *mantinedor* asks the opinion of the *agto* for permission to start it. The *bisita ta unawa* is led by the *mantinedor* and representatives of each tribe.

When all are accounted for, each municipality who attended the *lay-og* are given the *unawa*. The *panglakayen* of each municipality receives the *unawa* and the *mantinedor* reads the name of the family who gives the gift. While the gift is received, the *uggayam* is sung and the *gansa* is played. The givers sing: "Ay sya man pay" and the receivers sing in return "Wen man pay." Those who danced and sang the *uggayam* during the occasion only are given the *rineddek*.

All the food that are intended during the *Lay-og* are distributed to all those who attended the *lay-og*. It is the belief of the Tinguians that more blessings will be received by the family.

C. Concerns on the Practice of Lay-og

The following personal interviews are evidences that *lay-og* is a family tradition that needs to be practiced, preserved, and documented.

In an interview with Mr. Guinaban (2010), he expressed his disappointment that *lay-og* is no longer witnessed and observed. He further wished that this inheritance left by their ancestors should be preserved by the younger generations. It is only through this that relatives get together and renew their family ties. Guinaban further said that although this is a long, planned activity especially for the family who holds the *lay-og*, people still look forward to holding the occasion. Committees are assigned like food, accommodation, invitation, transportation, reception, program, and others.

Mrs. Juanita Campol (April 2010) also wished to attend the same activity to meet her relatives whom she has not seen for almost a decade. According to her, even if the *lay-og* happens for some time, it is something to be looked forward to and it makes the relatives renew their closeness.

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The then Manabo Mayor Masayo Dumasing (2011) longed for the holding of a *lay-og*. According to him, he misses the *tadek*, *uggayam* and most of all exchange of views and experiences with relatives, visitors and friends. He participates mostly during the *uggayam*. It is in this activity that a participant proves his expertise in oral argument. During the *tadek*, a dancer shows his talent through the steps and body movement while dancing. The ex-mayor added that *tadek* can be done with the *balliwes*, *guinaldingan* and *lab-labbaan*. He further said that the *lay-og* is Tinguian family tradition that is not supposed to be forgotten. It is a very expensive Tinguian affair because of the long preparation and the number of days that is spent. Usually, a well – to – do family can afford to hold the *lay-og*.

Mrs. Ruby Mamsaang Bersamin (June 2012), the wife of Governor Eustaquio "Takit" Paredes Bersamin, also commented that the *lay-og* even if it is already seldom practiced should be remembered and treasured because it reminds the Abrenos of its rich culture. The couple are saddened that the *lay-og* is slowly going on extinction. The new generations are ignorant about the said family tradition.

Dionisio "Edao" Dugayen of Lamao, Bucloc, Abra as interpreted by Hon. Alvin "Sad-ang" Jefferson, Ex-SB member, Bucloc and Jordan "Kutig" G. Rivas, Executive Assistant, LGU Bucloc (2010) said that the *lay-og* is the affair that everyone looks forward to. The observance of close family ties and the display of their prowess in dancing and singing is also amusedly said by Jefferson, Rivas and Dugayen (March 2010). They further remarked that this tradition should not be set aside or gradually forgotten because it is this occasion that shows the culture, beliefs, and practices of the Tinguians. They further said that all the heads of the Tinguian tribes are invited. It is in the dress that a Tinguian is identified as to which tribe he belongs and social status.

Mssrs. Rodrigo "Digo" Parinas, Sr., Benigno "Loting" Aquino, and Erasmo "Rasmo" Taverner (2010), all from Lagayan, Abra expressed their regrets and concerns that the *lay-og* will soon be buried and forgotten by the new generation. They fear that when old people like them are all gone, this precious legacy will then be forgotten and buried. They amusedly remembered the enjoyment they had during the *uggayam*.

Remarks from old people express their hopes that somebody will remember to call for a *lay-og* and they will go whether they will be invited or not. It is during this occasion that they will meet again those whom they have not seen for many years.

Arsenio Bagay, Jr. (2012) from San Ramon East, Manabo, Abra expressed his sadness because only the old people know the tradition.

Rolando Bisquera (2012), expressed also his regrets that the young Tinguians are ignorant when ask about this occasion. They cannot even tell how *lay-og* is done. If ever one is held, they do not even participate or observe.

CONCLUSIONS

The researchers concluded that *lay-og* is a family tradition worth preserving for it serves as a reminder of the rich cultural heritage left by their ancestors; although the festivity needs to be preserved, it is very expensive and at the same time very tedious due to the number of days to prepare and to spend it, and the *lay-og* is only for the affluent families; the *pinigitan* and the *kinindusan* are dresses that are worn by the Tinguian women during special occasions like *lay-og*, marriage, *kalkolimusta* and burial; the *pa/anos* is unrealistic, too expensive nowadays, and a waste of time for the reason that pigs are butchered in cases where there is no qualified liver; and the *bisita ta unawa* is the last stage of the *lay-og* that acknowledges the participation of the *agto*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers recommended that since *lay-og* speaks of a rich family tradition, it should be documented and preserved; and that the Provincial government in cooperation with the DepEd, National Center for Indigenous People (NCIP), and LGUs should make a study to incorporate this family tradition in the Social Studies (Araling Panlipunan) subjects. Further, the researchers recommend that *lay-og* should be one of the highlights during the celebration of Abra's foundation day; results of the study should be presented and discussed to the leaders of the Province and make them realize of the vitality of this family tradition; the *lay-og* should be presented to international fora like the NAKEM to inform them of the rich existing legacy of the Tinguians of Abra; and lastly, another study should be made particularly on the songs and dances of the Tinguians.

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