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Beliefs and Practices in the Life Cycle of the Agtas of Lupigue, Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines: Its Implications to Social Development

ABSTRACT: *The Philippines is a nation blessed with several ethnic groups. This condition makes the Filipinos socially and culturally different. The Filipino character is actually a combination of the Eastern and Western cultures. The study attempted to find out the beliefs and practices in the life cycle of the Agta of Lupigue, Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines and their social implications. The ethnographic research method was used to attain the purposes of this study. Structured and unstructured interview and participant observation were conducted to confirm and validate the data gathered through field study. Documentary analysis was employed to draw vital information on the origin of the Agta and the community where they live. Findings of the study revealed that among the Agta of Lupigue, there are beliefs that are consistently practiced and observed. This study poses a great challenge to social scientist, especially in their role as agent of social transformation. The study recommends that social scientists and educators should commit to the religious implementation of the regeneration of the IPs (Indigenous Peoples) beliefs and practices that are considered beneficial and practical.*

KEY WORDS: *Beliefs and Practices; Life Cycle; Agtas of Lupigue; Social Scientists and Educators; Social Implications.*

IKHTISAR: *“Keyakinan dan Praktek dalam Siklus Kehidupan Suku Agtas dari Lupigue, Ilagan, Isabela, Filipina: Implikasinya untuk Pembangunan Sosial”. Filipina adalah negara yang diberkati dengan beberapa kelompok etnis. Kondisi ini membuat bangsa Filipina secara sosial dan budaya berbeda. Karakter bangsa Filipina sebenarnya merupakan kombinasi antara budaya Timur dan Barat. Penelitian ini berusaha mengetahui keyakinan dan praktek dalam siklus kehidupan suku Agta dari Lupigue, Ilagan, Isabela, Filipina dan implikasi sosialnya. Metode penelitian etnografi digunakan untuk mencapai tujuan penelitian. Wawancara terstruktur dan tidak terstruktur serta observasi partisipatif dilakukan untuk mengkonfirmasi dan memvalidasi data yang dikumpulkan melalui studi lapangan. Analisis dokumenter dikerjakan untuk menarik informasi penting tentang asal-usul suku Agta dan masyarakatnya di mana mereka tinggal. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa diantara suku Agta dari Lupigue, ada keyakinan yang konsisten dipraktekkan dan dihayati. Penelitian ini merupakan tantangan besar untuk ilmuwan sosial, terutama dalam peran mereka sebagai agen transformasi sosial. Penelitian merekomendasikan bahwa ilmuwan sosial dan pendidik harus berkomitmen dalam pelaksanaan keagamaan suku asli secara regenerasi tentang keyakinan dan praktek yang dianggap menguntungkan dan bersifat praktis.*

KATA KUNCI: *Keyakinan dan Praktek; Siklus Kehidupan; Suku Agtas dari Lupigue; Ilmuwan Sosial dan Pendidik; Implikasi Sosial.*

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INTRODUCTION

People all throughout the world, regardless of their origin and geographical set up, possess their own peculiar way of living. The people of the West are different from the people of the East. What distinguishes them is not by their biological-genetic force alone, but by their culture. Each nation holds its own socio-cultural identity (Nakashima, Prott & Bridgewater, 2000; Neumannova, 2007; and UNPFII, 2014).

The Philippines is a nation blessed with several ethnic groups. It was colonized by Eastern and Western countries with varied culture. This condition makes the Filipinos socially and culturally different (Steinberg, 2009; Funtecha & Padilla, 2010; and de Viana, 2011). The Filipino character is actually a combination of the Eastern and Western culture.

The *camaraderie* and *bayanihan* spirit of kinship that Filipinos are famous for is said to be inherited from Malay forefathers. The Chinese has influenced and contributed much to the close family relation of the Filipinos. The piousness of the Filipinos is a trace of the Spaniards' introduction of Christianity in the 16th century. Hospitality is common denominator in the Filipino character and this is what distinguishes the Filipino from the others (Halili, 2010; and de Viana, 2011).

As described by T.M. Coloma (2012), culture and society are inseparable; one does not exist without the other (Coloma, 2012). A society is composed of interacting individuals and interacting groups sharing a common culture. A society is a geographical aggregate consisting of individual, who live a common life and of groups interrelated with one another. The members are dependent on one another for survival, and they developed a sense of group identity or unity. Holding the society together is a social organization, which gives order and meaning to the

social relationship between individuals or groups (Baliao & Parcon, 2011; and UNPFII, 2014).

Beliefs embody man's perception and conviction about reality and include the primitive man's concept, idea of the universe as well as the scientist's empirical view of the world – the result from his experiences about the physical, biological, and social world in which he lives. The world where man lives provides avenues for improving himself through socialization.

Socialization is a process where people learn the attitudes, values, and actions appropriate to individuals as members of a particular culture (Nakashima, Prott & Bridgewater, 2000; and Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013). It occurs through human interactions and observations. This socialization processes affects the overall practices of a society and shapes the image that they hold in themselves. This is also accompanied by the development of the human society and/or social development.

Social development is a commitment to develop the processes needs to benefit people in the society regardless of who they are (Rees, 1999; and Armstrong, 2008). The government has always shown the concern and interest to uplift the quality of life of the Filipino irrespective of their ethnic origin. The government's desire to improve the existence of ethnic tribes is embodied in Article II, Section 22 of the 1987 Constitution, which provides as follows:

It is the policy of the state to recognize and promote the rights of indigenous cultural communities within the framework of national unity and development. The aim of the Constitution is to involve these communities in the development of the nation (cited in de Leon, 2014).

The Agta group is one of the indigenous cultural communities. Part of this cultural community group settled in Lupigue, Ilagan, Isabela,

Philippines; and were clothed with several beliefs and practice, which served as social standards of the community (Nakashima & Roue, 2002; Bengwayan, 2007; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b).

Statements of the Problem. The statements of the problem for this research are as follows:

(1) What are beliefs and practices of the Agta of Lupigue, Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines, in the different life stages: Courtship, Marriage, Pregnancy, Childbirth, Childrearing, Adolescence, Adulthood, Death, and Burial?; and (2) What are the implications of the identified beliefs and practices to social development, in terms of the following: Social Behavior, Social Relations, and Social Interaction?

Research Paradigm. Each stage of life has its own unique characteristics. So, there is a need to do something to nurture and safeguard each stage from destruction to the human life cycle. Proper development for each stage of the human life cycle will help guarantee to the fullest growth and maturity of the individual (Rees, 1999; and Tuyor *et al.*, 2007).

According to Erik H. Erikson (1979), the socialization process consists of eight phases: the “eight stages of man”. His eight stages of man were formulated, not through experimental work, but through wide-ranging experience in psychotherapy, including extensive experience with children and adolescents from low, as well as upper and middle, social classes (*cf* Erikson, 1979; and Friedman, 2000).

Each stage is regarded by Erik H. Erikson (1979) as a “psychosocial

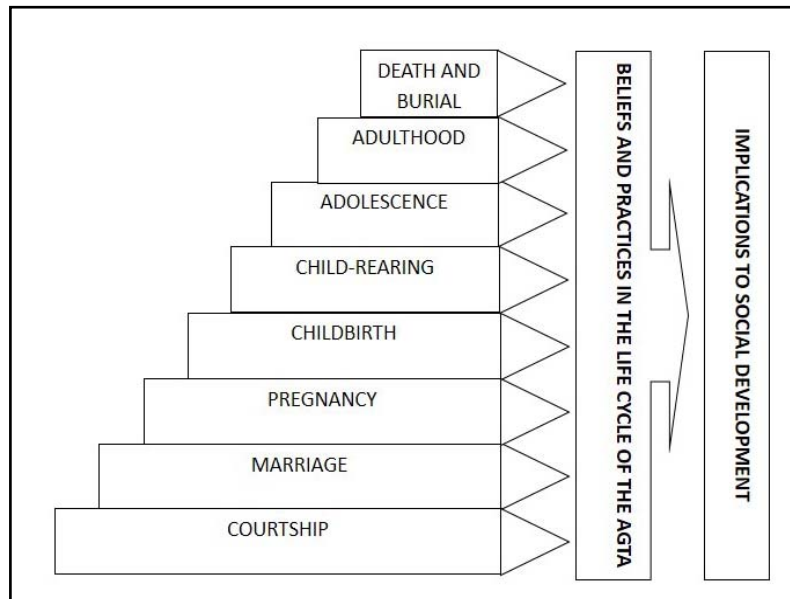


Figure 1:
 Research Paradigm

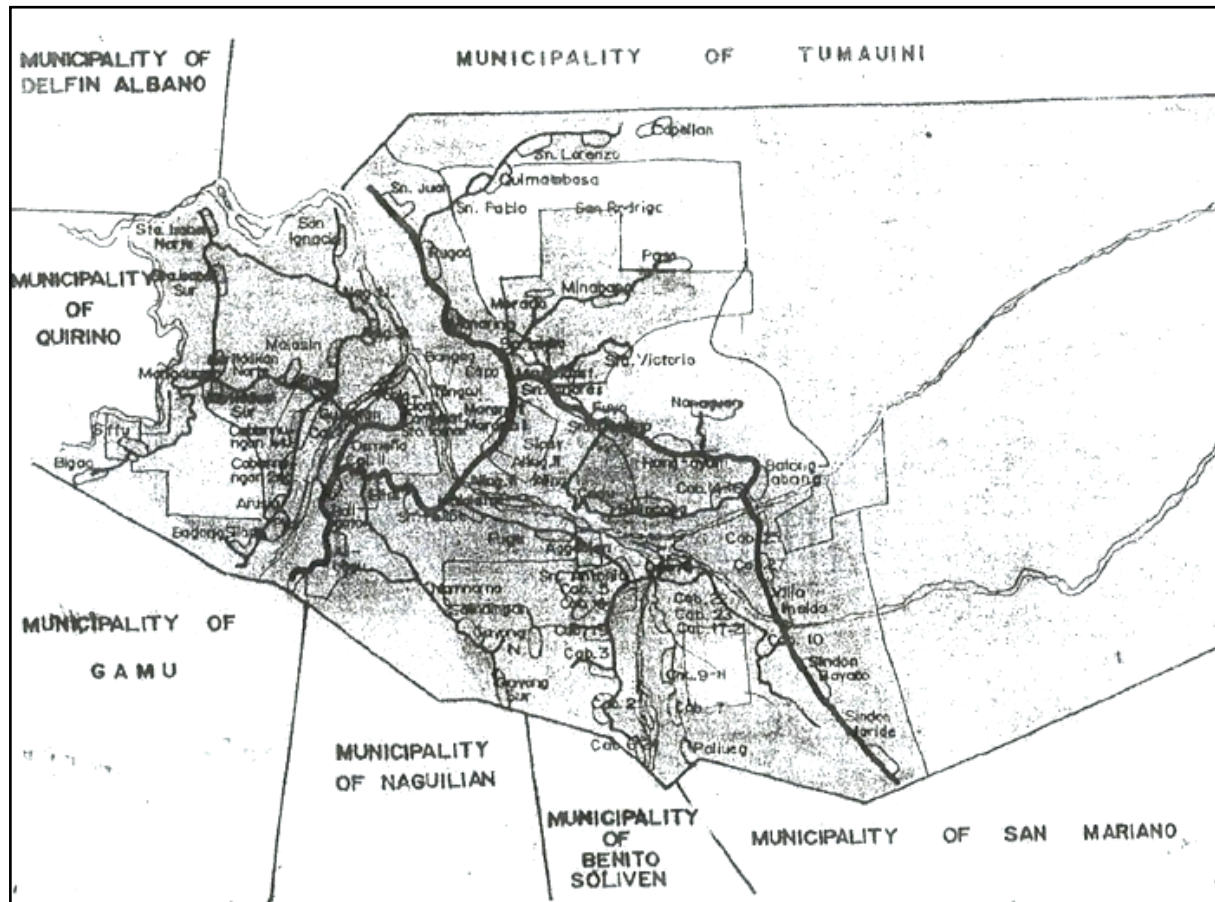
crisis”, which arises and demands resolution before the next stage can be satisfactorily negotiated. These stages are conceived in an almost architectural sense: satisfactory learning and resolution of each crisis is necessary, if the child is to manage the next and subsequent ones satisfactorily (Erikson, 1979; and Friedman, 2000).¹

The beliefs and practices in the life cycle of the Agta of Lupigue, Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines were documented, described, and analyzed to come up with implications to social development. About research paradigm, see figure 1.

METHODS

Research Design. This study is ethnographic (Sevilla *et al.*, 1992). Immersion and interview and observation were used in gathering the needed data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). According to E.M. Sampa (2012), ethnography describes a detailed picture of the inside from the perspective of natives of a given culture or context, so that the insider’s point

¹See also, for example, http://www.institute4learning.com/stages_of_life.php [accessed in Manila, Philippines: January 15, 2016].



Map 1:
The City of Ilagan

of view or emic perspective of reality is elicited, which will allow outsiders to understand it properly (Sampa, 2012).

Respondents. All the Agta of Lupigue, Ilagan City, Isabela, Philippines are the respondents of this study. Since they are semi-nomadic, they stay along the Sierra Madre Mountains in an area they call Sulimanan; and at some point in time move down the lowland through the Abuan River (Bengwayan, 2007; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b).

Locale of the Study. Data-gathering was done in the small village at Lupigue, Ilagan City, Isabela, Philippines where the Agta families stay, when they are in the lowland. Lupigue is one of the *cabiceras* of Hacienda San Antonio in Ilagan City, Isabela, Philippines. Map 1 shows the

city of Ilagan.

Instruments. There are three instruments to gather the data, namely: documentary analysis; interview guide; and observation and immersion (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; and Zulueta & Perez, 2010). Describing about the instruments is following here:

Documentary Analysis. An intensive review of documentary materials and readings about the Agta was done to enrich the researchers' knowledge of the respondents and their life ways.

Interview Guide. The researchers used an interview guide to investigate the beliefs and practices of the Agta in the different life stages. The interview was conducted during the day, when the respondents were available. The interview guide included varied questions relevant to the study.

Unstructured interview was used to elicit responses from the respondents.

Questions were asked in Ilocano, since this dialect is spoken with ease by both the researchers and the respondents. The interviews were done in the most informal and unobstructed manner so as to keep the respondents at ease and composed.

Observation and Immersion.

As respondents of the study, the Agta of Lupigue, Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines were the focus of intense observation. The researchers were intent participant-observers. The personal contacts enabled them to elicit the first hand information and genuine observations on how the Agta observed their beliefs and practices from birth to death.

Data Gathering Procedure.

Initially, an application to conduct the research and payment of fees was done at the NCIP (National Commission on Indigenous People) Regional Office; after which the application cum proposal was reviewed and evaluated. The IKSP (Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices) team was formed to facilitate the proceedings provided in the guidelines. This was followed by the formulation of WFP (Work and Financial Plan) by the researchers and the IKSP team (NCIP, 2012).

Upon approval of the WFP, the IKSP team scheduled the conference and disclosure between the community members and the researcher-applicants. Then, the report was submitted to the NCIP Regional Office for the issuance of the CP (Certification Precondition).

Before the study was conducted, a well-planned *ocular* inspection of the research locale was done by the researchers. Series of interviews with immersion were conducted to document the beliefs and practices of the Agta. Part of the immersion was the 8-hour travel by wooden *bancas* to Sulimanan, a place along the Sierra Madre

Mountains, the Agta's ancestral domain (Bengwayan, 2007; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b).

The researchers also took photographs of the Agta's activities. After completing the write up of the study, the researchers presented their output to the community for validation. The certificate of validation was issued before the submission of output to the NCIP offices.

Data Analysis. The data gathered were presented and analyzed in a descriptive-narrative form (Sevilla *et al.*, 1992; and Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

FINDINGS

First question: "What are beliefs and practices of the Agta of Lupigue, Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines in the different life stages?". The answer in describing manners related to: courtship, marriage, pregnancy, child birth, child rearing, adolescence, adulthood, and death and burial.

Courtship. Traditional courtship among the Agta of Lupigue, Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines is possible only between and among the members of the tribe. Agta women did not entertain suitors from other tribe, because they believed that a non-Agta does not possess the characteristics or skills, like fishing, hunting, and farming in the mountain, which are basic for Agta survival. Hence, Agta man in that manner did not court a non-Agta woman (Nakashima & Roue, 2002; Bengwayan, 2007; Headland, 2010; and Pinoy, 2014).

But today, Agta women are allowed to accept suitors from other tribe or ethnicity, and even Agta men are also allowed to court non-Agta women, due to their wider exposure in the neighboring communities. Courting is done in the house of the woman. Permission from the woman's parents is a pre requisite before courting (Bengwayan, 2007; Headland, 2010; and Pinoy, 2014).

In courting, the man should bring with him gifts for the family of the woman, like *manik*, *subang*, *proselas*, meat, fish etc.² This practice is a manifestation that the Agta man is now ready to support a family of his own. In case an Agta woman loves the man, she, for a short time, accepts the love offered, but if not, she will immediately inform the man. Generally courtship will take for a month or two. Agta's social norm on courting is that the man should initiate the courting process (Bengwayan, 2007; Reyes, 2012; and Pinoy, 2014).

Dating among the Agta is permitted by parents of the woman provided that the lovers be accompanied by friends to preserve her chastity. Chastity among the Agta is a virtue to be secured, whoever violates this virtue will be put to shame. Sometimes the community excommunicates the violators. Strolling in the riverbank is the most common form of dating among the Agta (interview with Respondent A, 15/1/2015).

Marriage. One of the traditional practices of the Agta on marriage is parental agreement. This practice, however, after resulted to break family ties. This was a reality that Agta community came to accept hence today. Agta allow their children to choose their partner in life to lessen family problems, especially if relationship between husband and wife is affected (Bengwayan, 2007; Headland, 2010; Pinoy, 2014; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a).

When Agta lovers decide to be married, the man, together with his parents and elders of the community, goes to the house of the woman and talk to her parents. The group discusses and decides the details and other matters for the wedding. If both parties agreed, the wedding date is decided (Bengwayan, 2007; Headland,

2010; CSO, 2014; Pinoy, 2014; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a).

Before the wedding, some Agta men hunt animals, others catch fish; while the women, together with the bride, prepare and cook the food for the wedding. The wedding ceremony is officiated by an elder of the community. This is done by letting the bride and groom exchange betel nuts and other ingredients for chewing. After chewing, the officiating elder proclaims the man and woman as husband and wife (Engels, 2004; Bengwayan, 2007; Headland, 2010; Pinoy, 2014; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a).

Agta of Lupigue, generally, resides in the mountain or near the Abuan river. They are not used to clothe themselves, especially the upper portion of their body, so to protect themselves from colds, they chewed betel nut, an indigenous body heater among the Agta (Bengwayan, 2007; Headland, 2010; Pinoy, 2014; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b). The whole year round, Agta chewed betel nut, and this becomes a basic need among them. That is why during significant occasion/s, they used betel nut as a symbolic representation of the event.

The wedding ceremony is usually done in Solimanan, a place in the Sierra Madre Mountain, where the Agta stayed for a longer time than in Lupigue, in a year. After which, the food prepared is served for everybody in the community. After the celebration, the newlywed couple builds their own house. An Agta house is so simple that can be constructed in an hour or two. Nowadays, wedding among the Agta is sometimes celebrated and solemnized by a pastor or a government official in Lupigue, Ilagan, Isabela (interview with Respondent B, 20/1/2015).

Pregnancy. An Agta woman believes that she is pregnant if on the expected date of her menstrual cycle she misses menstruation. She is advised to consult a *magenak*, a local midwife of the Agta

²Glossary of local term: *Manik* is an indigenous bracelet made by the Agta in the Philippines.

community. A pregnant Agta craves for sour fruits, special foods and extra attention from her husband. If her desires are not given or not satisfied, she becomes moody. She shuns herself from fishy smells to avoid nauseating. The pregnant escapes doing hard work, lifting, jumping, and carrying heavy materials, for fear of abortion (Bengwayan, 2007; Headland, 2010; Pinoy, 2014; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a).

Another belief of miscarriage is eating bitter foods, and drinking herbal medicines without the permission of the *magenak*, especially water of boiled *calamansi* and *bain-bain* roots. Pregnants are prohibited to roam around the house or community during the night, because they believe that the unseen spirits are being displeased. In an instance that this cannot be avoided, the pregnant should carry with her a garlic or charcoal. It is their belief that unseen spirits are afraid of garlic and charcoal. If the unseen spirits were displeased by a pregnant, she will suffer sleepless night (cf Bengwayan, 2007; Colin, 2010; Pinoy, 2014; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b).

To avoid this, the pregnant should offer betel nut and other ingredients for chewing, tobacco, and egg to appease the unseen spirit, if not the pregnant will continue suffer from sleepless night or will give birth to a snake. Pregnant clothes should not be hanged outside the house at night, because this might attract unseen spirits that may harm the pregnant. A pregnant is also advised to sleep in sideward position and that she should keep moving every now and then while sleeping so that the *aswang* cannot easily catch the unborn child (Bengwayan, 2007; Hays, 2008; Headland, 2010; and Pinoy, 2014).

While a pregnant is lying or sleeping, no one should pass over her and no family member or visitor should stand or sit on the door to prevent problems that might occur during delivery. A

pregnant is also prohibited to stay long in the river, because it is their belief that the child becomes watery. She is also advised to wear *barikis* binder regularly to properly position the fetus in the womb (Bengwayan, 2007; Pinoy, 2014; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a).

During the first trimester, she has to consult the *magenak* regularly; and if she feels pain in the stomach, she has to put *ilelus* leaves on the stomach to ease the pain. To prevent the pregnant from colds, she has to drink water from boiled *labtang* (Bengwayan, 2007; Headland, 2010; Pinoy, 2014; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b).

Today, some pregnant Agta consult a registered midwife or a medical doctor for both pre-natal and post natal care. Other forms of medical services and medicines were already extended to the tribe by the LGU (Local Government Unit) of Ilagan (interview with Respondent C, 25/1/2015).

Child Birth. A pregnant Agta knows that she is about to give birth, when she feels extra-ordinary pain on her womb. During delivery, a *magenak* is called to assist the mother. The mother is asked to lean on the wall or keep walking to facilitate delivery. Only the *magenak* and husband are allowed to be in the delivery area. Children are not allowed, because if their mother experienced problems while giving birth, this similar experience might be transferred to the laboring mother. While laboring she drinks the lukewarm water from boiled *uya* prepared by the husband to sustain her strength (cf Bengwayan, 2007; Headland, 2010; UR of Tanzania, 2013; Pinoy, 2014; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a).

After delivery, a lukewarm water from a boiled *sahagubit* is immediately applied to the whole body of the newly born baby to prevent him from colds. The *magenak* cuts the umbilical cord through a polished outer skin of a bamboo or rattan. After which a clothe

is wrapped around the abdomen to support, ease the pain and, to facilitate the drying of the wound. The umbilical cord is thrown in the river through a bow and arrow (Estioko-Griffin & Griffin, 1985; Bengwayan, 2007; and Pinoy, 2014). It is their belief that this will make the child a good swimmer and fish catcher when he/she grows. The placenta is buried in a place, where drops of water fall to prevent the child from colds.

The mother is advised to wear long skirt for comfort purposes. She should not sleep an hour or two after delivery, to avoid dizziness. Eating sour fruits and drinking cold water is strictly prohibited, because this will cause sickness to both mother and the child. Eating sardines makes the mother weaker and it prolongs her recovery (Bengwayan, 2007; Headland, 2010; UR of Tanzania, 2013; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a).

The mother is only allowed to do light work three days after delivery. To protect the mother and child from harm brought about by the unseen spirit that is roaming around, the family burns paper, sack, or old clothes. It is their belief that the smoke drives away evil spirits. According to the Agta, this will also make the baby calm and facilitate health recovery on the part of the mother, a does wearing of vines as bracelet or necklace (interview with Respondent D, 30/1/2015).

Child Rearing. Generally a day or two after birth, an Agta child is exposed to morning sunlight to make her healthy and strong. To develop the baby's bones, the parents heat their palms on a fire and gently rub to the child's limbs to enable the child to walk at an early age (Bengwayan, 2007; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a).

By tradition, there is no baptism among the Agta. But, when their social life was extended to other communities, they were influenced by the Ilocano in regard to baptism.

During baptism, the child is usually given a surname patterned from her/his godparent, because the Agta do not have surname, only their first name (Bengwayan, 2007; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a). A simple social gathering is done after baptism, where there are dances to entertain the group and food that are contributed by the community for everyone.

When a child is sick, the Agta believed that the child is harmed by an unseen spirit; hence, the parents consult an *albolaryo*, a local term for a quack doctor (Floro, Jr., 2010; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b). Most of the time, an *albolaryo* suggests to have food offerings to the unseen spirit and the soul of their dead relatives to appease them. The child wears *manik* in the form of bracelet or necklace to protect him/her from any harm that might come again. At the same time, he drinks water from a boiled herbal leaves until the illness is cured.

Most of the Agta in Lupigue are still illiterate, but they have ways of determining birthdays. Seasons like when mangoes are in bloom are the counting years of birthdays. They celebrated birthdays by offering food, as a sign of gratitude to the unseen spirits and soul of their relatives, who they believed protected them (*cf* Gbenda, 2007; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b).

When children are likely to be physically ready to do simple washing, fishing, farming, and hunting, they train them to do the work. Agta children are strictly trained to be polite, courteous, and not to intervene in the conversation of elders; and also respect others especially the elders (interview with Respondent E, 5/2/2015).

Adolescence. At the very start of an Agta's menstruation, she is already considered adolescent. During the menstrual period, the woman is prohibited to eat sour fruits with vinegar and to carry heavy materials

to avoid dysmenorrhea or menstrual irregularities. If dysmenorrhea is experienced, the woman is advised to drink the water of boiled pineapple leaves. Adolescents are reminded to be extra careful during menstruation, because they believed that irregularities of menstruation can cause craziness and even death (Ocampo & Ocampo, 2014; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b).

When an Agta knew that she is already adolescent, she starts wearing indigenous jewelries and avoid mingling with the opposite sex. They are also restricted to get out from home during the night to avoid early marriage. They are no longer allowed to sleep with their father or brothers. This time, they are already obliged to help their mother to do household chores (Ocampo & Ocampo, 2014; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b).

On the other hand, an Agta man is considered adolescent if he is already circumcised. Like the woman, he so already obliged to help his father in farming, fishing, hunting etc. Among the Agta, the unusual itching of the man's nipple is a sign of manhood and a signal for courting. If he admires a woman, he has to learn and start whistling. For them, whistling is an accepted way of expressing love to a woman.

Men are not allowed to pass by in front of the girl's house because to them, this is a sign of disrespect. When a man visits a woman in her house, he has to ask permission from the parents of the woman and he has to bring with him fish, meat, or any gift from nature as a manifestation that he is now ready to support and have a family of his own. During occasion/s they are allowed to dance with the opposite sex, but no holding hands. Courting to them is one man woman at a time (interview with Respondent F, 10/2/2015).

Adulthood. Adult Agta are considered community leaders and

accorded full respect. They served as consultant on community affairs, as a peacemaker and an oversee in the implementation of laws and social norms. In case of conflict or disagreement adults resolved the matter and decide punishment for the offender (Nakashima, Prott & Bridgewater, 2000; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a).

During social celebrations, elders lead in the performance of rituals, like burial, wedding, etc. Despite of old age, they still lead the community in hunting, fishing, and even farming. They do not like to be a burden of their family. So, even work which is no longer advisable to their age, they still want to perform despite the warning given to them by their children. For them, fishing, farming, hunting, and domesticating animals are just leisure activities. They usually keep on working, helping, and supporting one another (interview with Respondent G, 15/2/2015).

Death and Burial. Traditionally, Agtas do not practice embalmment, the vigil lasts for one day and night only. But nowadays, embalmment is already introduced to them. Upon death, the corpse is immediately bathe, and dressed with his/her favorite white cloth. The dead is laid in the center of the house facing the east or where the sun rises, because they believed that the soul will go back to the place, where they used to stay and continue their usual work on earth, like fishing, hunting, food gathering etc. (cf Eyong, 2003; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b).

During the wake one or two members of the immediate family of the dead stay beside the corpse as a sign of their love and respect. The adult Agtas also gather together and pray for the soul of the dead, because they believed that there is life after death. Praying together for the soul of the dead brings him/her to salvation (Gbenda, 2007; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a).

As a sign of mourning, Agtas wrap their neck or upper part of their arm with black cloth. The mourning cloth lasts until it will naturally fall on the ground. To show respect and sympathy to the bereaved family, neighbors do not work. Visitors of the bereaved family wear black or white clothes only. Wearing colored dress during the wake is taboo among the Agta of Lupigue. Quarrelling and creating noise in the house, where the dead is laid, is strictly prohibited because to them this might disturb the spirit of the dead on his/her peaceful travel to his/her destiny. But children are allowed to play, but with minimize noise. To keep the people awake, they serve coffee and/or chewed betel nut (Bengwayan, 2007; Headland, 2010; IFAD, 2014; Pinoy, 2014; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a).

On the day of interment, a pastor gives the final blessing to the dead. The family members also give their final message and request. At this time, they remind the dead of not to scare them, specially the children. All belongings of the dead are brought to his/her grave, because they believed he/she will still use them on the other world. The men gathered food, fish, and hunt animals to be served after the interment (Bengwayan, 2007; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b).

After the burial rites, before going home, the family members and attendees are required to wash their hands with lukewarm water from the boiled *pomelo* leaves mix with liquor to relieve pain and dizziness. On the ninth day after death, they offer food, light candle, and say prayer on the graveyard every Agta is expected to be in the gathering. They eat together upon arrival at home from the graveyard. Commemorating the soul of the dead is usually celebrated during birthday of any member of his/her family (interview with Respondent H, 20/2/2015).

Second question: “*What are the*

implications of the identified beliefs and practices to social development in terms of social behavior, social relations, and social interaction?”. Based from the data gathered, there are noteworthy beliefs and practices of the Agta that are unique. When these are carefully identified and analyzed, one can say that they are inspiring and sustainable. There are implications of those beliefs and practices to social development. Since, every Filipino should maximize his contribution to the growth of his community, social scientists should, therefore, engage themselves seriously in the task of nation building (cf UNCED, 1992; CP, 1997; and Thotse, 2014). It is here, too, that social scientists are expected to come in.

Social Behavior. Social scientists are expected to uphold the Agta’s good attendance during the wake and burial, wedding ceremonies, and other occasions in the community. Social scientists are also expected to initiate regular team building activities and socialization during *barangay* meetings or special celebrations to help the Agta adjust themselves to the other members of the community (Peoples & Bailey, 1997; Armstrong, 2008; and Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013).

Social Relations. Social scientists have a role in providing avenues to improve human relations among and between the members of the community. This can be done through encouraging community members, specially the Agta, to participate actively to civic organization activities and to help lessen or eradicate insecurities from other ethnicity (Nanda & Warms, 2002; Coloma, 2012; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016a).

Social Interaction. Social scientists are challenged to encourage the Agta to extend their practice of generalized reciprocity and widen their social life to the non-Agta, but not to forget their inspiring and sustainable beliefs and practices (Ember & Ember, 1992;

Baliao & Parcon, 2011; and Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016b).

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the Agta of Lupigue, Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines still cling to some traditional beliefs and practices, but modified some practices like dealing with the opposite sex and the older ones in the community. They maximize the utilization of the available resources in their ancestral domain and are diehard in the observation of their customs and traditions but sustainable lifestyle.

The study recommends that social scientists should uphold to their traditions; and educators should teach religiously IPs (Indigenous Peoples) beliefs and practices that are considered sustainable, so that these will be transmitted and shall pass on the succeeding generations.³

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³**Statement:** Herewith, we have declared that this paper is our original work; so, it is not product of plagiarism and not yet be reviewed as well as be published by other scholarly journals.

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The Agta Children in Isabela, Philippines
(Source: <http://jacobimages.photoshelter.com>, 15/12/2015)

During social celebrations, the Agta's elders lead in the performance of rituals, like burial, wedding, etc. Despite of old age, they still lead the community in hunting, fishing, and even farming. They do not like to be a burden of their family. So, even work which is no longer advisable to their age, they still want to perform despite the warning given to them by their children. For them, fishing, farming, hunting, and domesticating animals are just leisure activities. They usually keep on working, helping, and supporting one another.