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# **Uggayam as Indigenous Oral Heritage: Functions, Symbolism and Intergenerational Transmission in Villaviciosa, Abra**

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Uggayam, a traditional oral poetry of the Tingguian people in Villaviciosa, Abra, serves as a vital cultural practice that extends beyond artistic expression to encompass economic, political, and social functions. This study explores the role of Uggayam in contemporary society, particularly its contributions to local governance, economic development, and cultural preservation. This study utilized a qualitative research method with an ethnographic thematic approach, incorporating

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participant observation, structured interviews, and thematic analysis. Ten expert Uggayam practitioners from various barangays in Villaviciosa, including Poblacion, Tamac, Cal-lao, Calcalumatsi, and Ol-lingen, participated, sharing their knowledge of its significance and preservation. With the help of interviews with community members and local leaders, the study examines how Uggayam remains relevant in modern settings despite the challenges posed by globalization, digitalization, and cultural assimilation. Findings reveal that Uggayam significantly contributes to economic activities, particularly tourism and festivals, by generating income and fostering community engagement. Politically, Uggayam serves as a medium for civic participation, enabling citizens to voice concerns and communicate with local officials. However, the study also identifies key challenges in its preservation, including declining interest among the youth and the dominance of mainstream cultural influences. Moreover, indigenous knowledge systems are at risk due to modernization and shifting social preferences. To address these challenges, the research highlights the importance of integrating Uggayam into educational curricula and digital platforms to sustain its relevance. The study contributes to the growing discourse on indigenous knowledge systems and underscores the need for community-driven efforts for cultural preservation. Uggayam in itself remains a vital cultural heritage of the Tingguian people, reinforcing identity, economic growth, and political engagement in Villaviciosa. However, its sustainability requires collective efforts from local leaders, educators, and cultural practitioners. Future research could explore more extensive methods of digital preservation and policy support for Indigenous oral traditions, securing Uggayam's place in both contemporary society and future generations.

**Keywords:** *Uggayam; indigenous oral traditions; cultural heritage; Tingguian people.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Heritage is a fundamental dimension of all human societies, whether framed in terms of history, ontology, materiality, or identity (Nicholas, 2022). Indigenous oral traditions serve as vital instruments in preserving the cultural heritage and collective memory of indigenous communities. Among the Tingguian people of Villaviciosa, Abra, Uggayam stands out as a significant form of oral expression, traditionally used for storytelling, conveying emotions, and transmitting societal messages. It is defined as a social gathering practice which is delivered and is intended to comfort the people and to inform them as well. It is also a kind of song classified as a multi-purpose song, together with the Adings, Ballogoyas, and many Salidummays. They do not have fixed lyrics, but they could be supplied or extemporaneously composed by the singer/chanter according to the occasion (Pablo et al., 2022).

Indigenous oral traditions like Uggayam fulfill multiple social, economic, and political roles within a community. Scholars suggest that such traditions are deeply embedded in local events, governance, and economic activities (Smith, 2017; Holliday, 2019). For instance, cultural festivals that feature Uggayam performances contribute to the local economy by attracting tourists and creating livelihood opportunities for artisans and performers (Refae, 2024). Similarly, indigenous oral traditions provide a space for

civic engagement, enabling community members to express concerns and interact with local leaders in structured, culturally relevant ways (Nunn, 2012).

The economic value of Uggayam is evident in its inclusion in municipal and barangay festivities, where competitions and performances not only foster cultural pride but also offer financial opportunities for local artists. However, scholars argue that the commercialization of indigenous oral traditions, particularly in tourism and digital media, plays a key role in maintaining their relevance in the modern era (Navarro, 2023; Benedito, 2023). Additionally, digital platforms such as vlogs and social media present new avenues for expanding the reach of Uggayam beyond traditional settings (Dacuycuy, 2023; Suarez, 2022).

Beyond economic benefits, Uggayam also plays an important role in governance. Indigenous leaders and political representatives utilize Uggayam as a medium for advocacy, community engagement, and policy discussions. The appointment of Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs) in barangays has strengthened the integration of Uggayam into governance structures, ensuring that indigenous voices are heard in policymaking (Battiste, 2016). This aligns with broader research on how indigenous oral traditions continue to function as tools for political participation and empowerment (Smith, 2012; Grenier, 1998).

Despite its significance, the preservation of Uggayam faces challenges, particularly due to declining youth interest in traditional practices. The increasing appeal of digital entertainment and mainstream cultural influences has contributed to this shift (Battiste, 2016). Additionally, cultural assimilation due to intermarriage has led to the gradual erosion of Tingguian oral traditions (Holliday, 2019). These concerns highlight the importance of proactive measures, such as integrating Uggayam into the formal education system, organizing community-driven initiatives, and utilizing digital platforms for cultural promotion (Grenier, 1998; Smith, 2012).

Given these factors, this study seeks to examine the role of Uggayam in the economic, political, and cultural framework of Villaviciosa, Abra. Specifically, it aims to explore its contributions to local governance, tourism, and community identity formation while also identifying obstacles and strategies for its preservation. By providing a comprehensive analysis of Uggayam, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on indigenous knowledge systems and their relevance in contemporary society.

This study explores the evolution, functions, and transmission of Uggayam as an indigenous oral heritage. In particular, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How did the Uggayam evolve as a part of Villaviciosa's oral heritage?
2. What are the primary socio-cultural, economic, and political functions of Uggayam in the indigenous communities of Villaviciosa, Abra, along various domains?

- 2.1 Socio-cultural;
- 2.2 Economic; and
- 2.3 Political

3. What are the challenges in the preservation and transmission of Uggayam as an indigenous oral heritage in Villaviciosa, Abra?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed an ethnographic thematic approach wherein the researcher systematically conducted an observation of the Tingguians, particularly the Maeng tribe in Villaviciosa, Abra. To gain a deeper understanding, the researcher is immersed in the data collection through participant observation, audio-visual recordings, field notes, and documentation. The researcher also used thematic analysis in interpreting the

data, wherein similar and shared meanings across interviews are treated and identified to answer the different themes of this study (Bernard et al., 2016). The snowball method was applied in this research where participants recommended other participants who could be interviewed. A total of eight (8) Tingguians who were from Villaviciosa, Abra, and knowledgeable about the Uggayam, were the participants of this study. These participants came from the various barangays, including Poblacion, Ol-olingen, Cal-lao, Calalumatsi, Tamac and Tuquib, to further provide a comprehensive understanding of this tradition. Data collection was conducted through structured interviews using an interview guide designed to gather relevant information on the Uggayam as indigenous oral heritage. To facilitate communication, the questionnaire was translated into Ilokano for the actual interviews. When data was collected, recorded interviews and written responses were transcribed and translated from Ilokano to English for wider dissemination. Additionally, the participant observation method was utilized, allowing the researcher to directly observe the performance of the Uggayam performed by the participants.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and provides meaning to the data collected, grouped into three themes: (1) evolution of Uggayam as part of Villaviciosa's oral heritage, (2) functions of Uggayam in the community, and (3) challenges in the preservation and transmission of Uggayam. The first theme explains the origin of Uggayam, answers the questions of what, who, where and how Uggayam evolved as a part of Villaviciosa's oral heritage. The second theme discusses the primary functions of Uggayam in the lives of the indigenous communities of Villaviciosa, Abra, along three domains, including socio-cultural, economic and political functions. The third theme discusses the challenges and strategies of the transmission of Uggayam across generations in Villaviciosa, Abra and the community and government actions to preserve the tradition.

### 3.1 Evolution of Uggayam as Part of Villaviciosa's Oral Heritage

Uggayam plays a crucial role in preserving the historical narratives and cultural identity of the indigenous communities of Abra. Among the Maeng Tingguians of Villaviciosa, Abra, and Uggayam, it functions as an integral part of their oral heritage. It originated among the different

tribes of indigenous communities in Abra and has been passed down through generations. Uggayam is an extemporaneous chant or poetic recital performed in diverse social and cultural contexts, encapsulating the shared wisdom and creative expression of the community.

Oral storytelling is an effective method of maintaining historical connections because cultural narratives are transmitted across generations (Smith, 2006). When asked about the history of Uggayam, respondents stated that it has existed since time immemorial, evolving alongside indigenous communities in Abra. Certain individuals within the community take on the responsibility of teaching younger generations to preserve Uggayam. However, not all indigenous people can perform Uggayam; only those with the talent for singing and composing poetic messages engage in its practice. This is commonly performed during occasions such as weddings, birthday celebrations, political gatherings, festivals, harvest celebrations, and burials.

A respondent expressed this sentiment in Ilokano:

"Idi addan dagiti naduma-duma nga tribu ti Tingguians ti Abra, addan ti Uggayam. Adda latta inggana atta, haan napukaw, gapwen ta adda dagidiay Tingguians nga mangipasasa iti hen-henerasyon ken adda wagas da tapno maaklon dagiti pangipasaan da nga mabalin nga miembro ti pamilya wennu komunidad babaen iti panagobserbar, panagdeng denggeg da nu makankanta ti Uggayam nu adda okasyon, mabalin pay nga lektyuran kasano ag Uggayam, ken kangrunaan ti amin, masursuro babaen iti panangpadas wennu practice inggana maadal tu nga nasyaat." (A long time ago, there were various tribes of Tingguians in Abra, and there was the Uggayam. It still exists today; it has not been lost because the Tingguians continue to pass it down from generation to generation. They have ways to ensure that those to whom they pass it on—whether family members or members of the community—can learn it. This is done through observing and listening when Uggayam is sung during occasions. They may also receive lectures on how to perform Uggayam, but most importantly, it is best learned through experience and practice until it is fully mastered).

As a result, Uggayam has endured due to its reliance on oral transmission from elders to

younger generations. Observation, attentive listening, and hands-on practice are essential in mastering this art form. The live performances of Uggayam breathe life into intangible cultural treasures (Refae, 2024).

Although traditionally performed during specific cultural rituals, Uggayam has also been adapted for contemporary gatherings such as Christmas celebrations and religious events. Thus, Uggayam has cultural adaptation and resilience, expanded into contemporary settings, illustrating its capacity to remain relevant across generations.

In the past, only elderly members of the tribe performed the chant. However, in recent times, each barangay has designated an Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representative (IPMR) who actively promotes and preserves Uggayam by teaching younger generations and exploring modern means of dissemination, including technology and educational integration. Anyone with the ability to compose messages orally and perform in a chant or song is encouraged to participate.

Recent studies by Benedito, (2023), Dacuycuy, (2023), Navarro, (2023), Suarez, (2022), Ancheta, (2022), and Rabago, (2021) highlight that the preservation of cultural traditions is facilitated through written documentation. This can be achieved through the development of educational materials such as learning activity packets (LAPs), mobile-based learning apps, contextualized learning materials (CLMs), supplemental aids, and other instructional resources. Thus, it needs institutional and technological support. Similarly, an integration of Uggayam into educational and technological platforms suggests a proactive approach to cultural preservation in the modern era.

A respondent further reinforced this idea:

"Napateg ti Uggayam gapwen ta ti isimsimbolo na ket haan lang nga identidad mi nga Tingguian, nu di ket isu ti agserserbi nga wagas tapno maikkan solusyon ti maysa nga problema ti komunidad. Babaen daytuy nga Uggayam, mapagmaymaysa kami. Ken daytuy nga simbolo ken pateg ti Uggayam sipud pay idi inggana atta haan nga nagbaliw ken hantu pulos agbaliw." (The value of our tradition is important because its symbolism is not just our identity as Tingguians, but also a way of life, unity, and a means to address community problems. And this symbol and

the value of our culture have remained the same since before and will never change).

Nunn, (2012) emphasized that cultural beliefs and symbols persist over time because they shape decision-making and adapt to historical contexts, ensuring long-term continuity. The findings of this study affirm that Uggayam is not only a preserved tradition but also an evolving cultural expression that bridges the past and the present. Respondents strongly emphasize that Uggayam is not merely an art form but a representation of Tingguian identity, unity and a tool for addressing community issues.

#### **Functions of Uggayam in the community:**

Uggayam is more than just a cultural practice—it is an integral part of the Tingguian way of life in Abra, deeply woven into their identity and traditions. It serves as a means of emotional expression, storytelling, and preserving ancestral knowledge. Beyond its artistic and performative aspects, Uggayam plays a crucial role in shaping the community's social structure and shared values. Its function extends across multiple domains, including socio-cultural, economic, and political spheres, influencing ceremonies, community decisions, and conflict resolutions.

**Socio-cultural functions:** The Uggayam holds a crucial socio-cultural role within the Maeng Tingguian community, promoting unity, preserving traditions, and encouraging active community engagement. It serves as a unifying force, bringing people together during important gatherings and ceremonies.

A respondent shared the following perspective: "Ti Uggayam ket maiay-ayog iti aniya man nga okasyon, ken ti okasyon isu iti panagkakadwa ti tattao. Mapatibker iti panagkakadwa wennu panagkaykaysa mi babaen ti Uggayam. Dituy maiyebkas ti karirikna wennu mensahe para iti tattao nga isu mangpatibker iti relasyon ti tunggal maysa." (Uggayam can be performed on any occasion, and these gatherings bring people together. It strengthens our unity and solidarity through its chants. It is through Uggayam that emotions and messages are expressed, reinforcing relationships among individuals).

Furthermore, Uggayam is an avenue for imparting wisdom and moral guidance. A respondent highlighted how it serves as a medium for sharing advice and encouragement:

"Ti simbolo ti Uggayam ket panagkaykaysa ken panagtulong. Kasla kuma Uggayam

panggep ti okasyon nga kasar nga inUggayam ko di nagkasar diay karrubak, nangted nak mensahe a kas maysa nga naasawaan wennu pammagbaga kasano agballaigi iti relasyon da nga agassawa. Diay pammagbagak kaniada babaen ti Uggayam, panangpakitak iti panangisakit wennu tulong kadakwada tapno agballaigi iti panagdinna da. Han lang nga isapuso iti mismo nga nagkasar, nu di ket pati dagidiay kabataan. Panagkaykaysa nga iturong ti ka-tribu mi iti nasya-at nga biag da. Ken isu ti mangpatibker ti relasyon iti tunggal miyembro ti komunidad babaen ti panangisakit ti tunggal maysa. Agballaigi ti Uggayam nu tungpalen dagidiay nakangeg." (The symbol of Uggayam is unity and cooperation. For example, when I performed an Uggayam during my neighbor's wedding, I delivered a message as someone who is also married, offering advice on how they can have a successful relationship. Through Uggayam, I expressed my guidance and support to help them strengthen their marriage. This message is not only for the couple but also for the younger generation, reminding them of the importance of unity, which our tribe upholds for a better life. It reinforces relationships among community members by fostering mutual care and support. Uggayam is truly meaningful when those who hear it take its lessons to heart and put them into practice).

As an oral heritage, Uggayam also serves as an educational tool that instills cultural values and strengthens identity (Ong, 2018). A respondent emphasized its importance:

"Ti Uggayam han mi lang nga kultura, isu ti identidad mi kas maysa nga Tingguian. Nu iay-ayog mi Uggayam babaen iti naduma-duma nga okasyon, isu ti mangbiabiag iti kultura ken kinatao mi." (Uggayam is not just a part of our culture; it represents our identity as Tingguians. Through the performance of Uggayam in various occasions, we keep our cultural heritage alive and express our way of life).

Uggayam is a versatile oral tradition performed in a variety of social and ceremonial contexts. Respondents stated that it is commonly recited during weddings, birthdays, barangay meetings, fiestas, graduations, planting and harvest seasons, political campaigns, and other community and school programs- even during funerals (Reyes, 2015). However, six respondents indicated that they do not practice

Uggayam during burials, showing that its use may vary within the community.

A respondent noted:

"Dagiti okasyon nga mabalin i-Uggayam ket kasar, birthday, meeting ti barangay, fiesta, graduation, panagmula ken panag-apit, panagkampanya, wenna uray ania nga okasyon wenna programa ti eskwela, barangay, wenna komunidad, ken pati natayan." (Uggayam can be performed during a wide range of events, including weddings, birthdays, barangay meetings, fiestas, graduations, planting and harvesting seasons, political campaigns, and other gatherings or programs organized by schools, the barangay, or the community—even during funerals).

As a vibrant oral tradition, Uggayam remains essential in fostering social unity and preserving cultural identity in Villaviciosa, Abra. It reflects the enduring strength of indigenous heritage, safeguarding the wisdom and values of the Tingguian people for future generations.

**Economic functions:** Uggayam extends beyond its cultural and social significance; it also plays a crucial role in the local economy of Villaviciosa, Abra. The practice of Uggayam is deeply embedded in various economic activities, contributing to tourism, community events, and even local governance. Through competitions, performances, and its evolving role in digital platforms, Uggayam serves as a means of livelihood and economic empowerment while simultaneously reinforcing Tingguian identity and values.

One of the major economic roles of Uggayam is its integration into municipal and barangay festivals. During these events, contests are organized where participants, often community leaders, compete in performing Uggayam. Winners receive prizes, and even those who do not win receive consolation rewards. These competitions encourage the Tingguian youth to learn and master Uggayam while also showcasing the tradition to a wider audience. A respondent thus expressed:

"Maysa nga okasyon nga maiyaramid ti Uggayam ket fiesta ti munisipyo kada barangay ditoy Villaviciosa, Abra. Adda pay contest iti Uggayam nga gapwen nga maay-ayyo dagiti Tingguians nga mangadal ti Uggayam. Diay mangabak ket adda premyo

na, ken consolation prize met kadagidiay awan gasat na. Diay premyo ti contest, han lang makatulong kadakami, nu di ket maiparammag iti kinabaknang iti ili ti Villaviciosa kas maysa nga munisipyo ti Tingguian tribes." (One occasion where Uggayam is performed is during the municipal and barangay fiestas of Villaviciosa, Abra. There are also Uggayam contests that encourage Tingguian people to learn the tradition. The winner receives a prize, and even those who do not win get a consolation reward. These contests not only help us financially but also promote the prosperity of Villaviciosa as a municipality of the Tingguian tribes).

This aligns with previous studies highlighting how cultural festivals boost local economies by attracting visitors and creating opportunities for local businesses (Smith, 2017). The economic benefits of Uggayam extend beyond direct monetary gains, as it reinforces community participation and cultural pride, which in turn support tourism development.

The role of Uggayam in the tourism sector is also being explored as local leaders recognize its potential for attracting visitors. A respondent noted that Villaviciosa's tourist spots, such as the scenic *Palayan*, could incorporate Uggayam performances to enhance cultural tourism. The integration of Uggayam into digital platforms such as vlogging and social media further expands its reach, making it accessible to a global audience.

"Adda met tourist spot iti Villaviciosa idia Palayan, nga maplan-planon nga aramaten ti Uggayam nga wagas nga panangpromote daytoy nga tourist spot ken panangpakita payen iti kultura mi nga Tingguian. Mabalin nga usaren ti cellphone vlogging tapno han lang dagidiay turista ti makakita ti panag-Uggayam mi, nu di ket pati amin nga tattao." (Villaviciosa has a tourist spot called Palayan, where Uggayam is being planned as a means to promote tourism and showcase our Tingguian culture. We can also use mobile vlogging so that not only tourists but people from all over can witness our Uggayam performances).

Research indicates that digital platforms play a crucial role in preserving and disseminating indigenous traditions, helping them remain relevant in the modern age (Navarro, 2023; Benedito, 2023). By incorporating Uggayam into

tourism strategies, Villaviciosa can boost local economic activities while preserving its cultural identity.

Beyond tourism and events, Uggayam also serves its economic functions in community governance. While it is not directly used for profit-making, it acts as a platform for voicing concerns that affect local economic conditions. During barangay meetings, community members use Uggayam to communicate issues and propose solutions to their local leaders, ensuring that concerns related to livelihood and resources are addressed. With this, a respondent explained:

“Haan nga direkta nga maar-aramat ti Uggayam tapno pagkwartaan. Kasla kuma idiy meeting mi nga kasango mi barangay captain, ibaga mi nu ania ti problema ti komunidad mi nga dapat nga solusyonan. Babaen ti Uggayam, ti nilaon ti mensahe mi ti opisiales ket diay problema wennu concern mi, aksyonan wennu mangted tu met ti tulongen iti lid-lider.” (Uggayam is not directly used for profit. For example, during our meetings with the barangay captain, we express the community’s concerns through Uggayam. Through this, we communicate our message to local officials regarding issues that need solutions, prompting them to take action or extend assistance).

This reflects the findings of Nunn, (2012), who emphasized that indigenous traditions are not static but evolve to serve contemporary needs, including economic and political functions. The ability of Uggayam to facilitate dialogue between the people and their leaders demonstrates its role in sustainable development and community welfare.

The economic functions of Uggayam highlight its adaptability and relevance in modern society. Whether through festivals, tourism, or governance, Uggayam continues to contribute to Villaviciosa’s economic landscape while preserving the cultural integrity of the Tingguian people. As scholars suggest, integrating indigenous traditions into economic initiatives promotes both cultural sustainability and local economic resilience (Dacuycuy, 2023; Suarez, 2022). The ongoing efforts to utilize Uggayam for tourism, education, and governance reflect its enduring significance, ensuring that it remains a living tradition that benefits both the community and its economy.

**Political functions:** Uggayam serves as a platform for political discourse, allowing community members to express their political concerns and seek solutions through traditional oral heritage. It has evolved into a medium for communication between citizens and leaders, ensuring that indigenous perspectives are represented in governance. Uggayam enables individuals to voice their concerns about political issues, fostering dialogue and encouraging action from leaders. With this, a respondent shared:

“Maususar ti Uggayam tapno maiyebkas ti maysa nga miembro ti komunidad ti concern na ti politika tapno masolusyonan wennu matulongan. Kasta met kanyak kas maysa nga tumaray nga politician, us-usarek ti Uggayam nga wagas tapno maiyebkas iti platapormak iti munisipyo nga Villaviciosa kas tumaray nga mayor.” (Uggayam is used to express a community member’s political concerns, ensuring they are addressed or supported. Similarly, as a political candidate, I use Uggayam as a means to present my platform in Villaviciosa as I run for mayor).

This demonstrates how Uggayam is not merely a form of cultural expression but also a mechanism for political participation and awareness. Political leaders in Villaviciosa recognize the importance of Uggayam in preserving cultural identity. Efforts have been made to integrate it into governance structures, such as appointing Indigenous Peoples’ Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs) in every barangay. These representatives serve as role models and cultural bearers within their communities. A respondent emphasised:

“Wen, makitak nga dagiti politicians ket adda ub-ubraen da tapno agtultuloy tuy Uggayam. Nangituding da ti tunggal barangay iti IPMR, tapno isu agbalin nga role model kadagiti tattao ti barangay da. Ti IPMR ket dapat ammo na ti naduma-duma nga kultura, maysa iti Uggayam. Suda nagipatupad nga nu adda fiesta, adda contest ti Uggayam. Ken isursuro ti memestra ayanti subject ti ubbing nga Sibika at Kultura diay Uggayam.” (Yes, I see that politicians have initiatives to ensure the continuity of Uggayam. They have appointed an IPMR in every barangay to serve as a role model in their communities. The IPMR must be knowledgeable about various cultural traditions, including Uggayam. They have also implemented Uggayam contests during fiestas, and teachers have started



incorporating Uggayam in civic and cultural education for children).

This institutional effort reflects the role of political structures in preserving indigenous traditions and ensuring their relevance to modern governance and education.

Uggayam also functions as a form of civic participation, allowing communities to communicate their needs and concerns to local officials. A respondent highlighted:

“Kasla kuma diay meeting mi nga kasango mi ni barangay captain, ibaga mi nu ania ti problema ti komunidad mi nga dapat nga solusyonan. Babaen ti Uggayam, ti nilaon ti mensahe mi ti oopisyales ket diay problema wennu diay concern mi, makipagmaymaysa kaniami ti lilider, mangegan na problema, mabalin mi mangisuggest ti mabalin nga aramiden, aksyonan wennu mangted tu met ti tulongen iti lilider.” (During our meetings with the barangay captain, we express our community’s concerns that require solutions. Through Uggayam, we deliver messages to officials about our issues, engaging them in discussions and suggesting possible actions. The leaders then take steps to address our concerns or provide assistance).

The political function of Uggayam highlights its adaptability in addressing modern governance issues while maintaining its traditional essence. It fosters political awareness, facilitates communication between leaders and citizens, and strengthens the role of indigenous leaders in cultural preservation. As it continues to be integrated into governance structures and education, Uggayam remains a vital tool for ensuring the active participation of the Maeng Tingguian community in political and civic affairs.

**Challenges in the preservation and transmission of Uggayam:** One of the primary obstacles is the declining interest in Uggayam, attributed to the increasing influence of modern technology, particularly gadgets and social media. Battiste, (2016) highlighted that younger individuals prefer digital entertainment over traditional cultural expressions, resulting in the gradual erosion of indigenous oral traditions. Moreover, Sokk, (2024) stated that while modernization may bring about certain benefits, such as improved access to education and healthcare, it also carries with it inherent risks and trade-offs, including the erosion of traditional knowledge systems, loss of cultural heritage, and

dispossession of land rights. One of the primary cultural impacts of modernization on indigenous cultures is the erosion of traditional knowledge systems and languages. As respondents stated:

“Ti pannubok ti kultura Uggayam ket kinaawan interest dagiti kabataan gapwen ta gadgets ub-ubraen da. Ibain da ti kultura nga Uggayam.” (The challenge in preserving Uggayam is the lack of interest among the youth because they are preoccupied with gadgets. They feel embarrassed about practicing Uggayam).

Furthermore, intermarriage between Ilocanos and Tingguians has contributed to cultural dilution, as individuals assimilate into dominant Ilocano cultural norms, often at the expense of indigenous practices. This phenomenon aligns with previous studies on cultural integration, which suggest that intermarriage can lead to the gradual loss of authentic linguistic and artistic traditions (Holliday, 2019).

However, some respondents emphasized that rekindling interest in Uggayam is possible through collective community efforts. They suggested that community leaders and educators play a pivotal role in revitalizing the tradition by integrating Uggayam into school curricula and community programs. This approach is supported by indigenous knowledge preservation frameworks as outlined in Grenier, (1998), which stresses the importance of institutional involvement in sustaining cultural heritage.

“Agbalin nga interesado dagiti kabataan panggep ti Uggayam nu adda ti kooperasyon ti tunggal tao ti komunidad ti Villaviciosa. Mabalin nga mangaramid ti programa para iti kabataan dagiti opisyal.” (The youth can become interested in Uggayam if there is cooperation among all members of the community. Officials should also create programs aimed at youth engagement).

Moreover, educational institutions in Villaviciosa have started incorporating Uggayam into civic and cultural education. Some teachers have introduced lectures and exercises on composing Uggayam, providing students with hands-on experience. Respondents have shared:

“Napadasak napan naglecture ti Uggayam diay eskwela. Sinurwak dagiti estudyante kasano ag-compose ti advice wenno mensahe ti partikular nga okasyon.” (I had the opportunity to lecture about Uggayam in

school and guide students on how to compose pieces for specific occasions).

These efforts demonstrate that Uggayam remains a viable cultural tradition if actively nurtured. However, sustaining interest requires consistency and long-term strategies, as cultural revitalization is not achieved overnight but rather through continuous engagement and reinforcement (Smith, 2012).

While the preservation of Uggayam faces many challenges, interventions, specifically through education and community support, can ensure its continuity. The findings highlight the necessity of collective action to preserve this oral heritage, ensuring that it remains because it is a precious gem which symbolizes Tingguian identity and unity in Villaviciosa.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the multifaceted role of Uggayam in the economic, political, and cultural landscape of Villaviciosa, Abra. As a form of oral tradition, Uggayam extends beyond its artistic and ceremonial functions, serving as an economic driver through festivals, tourism, and digital media. Like previous studies on the economic contributions of indigenous traditions, this research highlights how Uggayam fosters financial opportunities for performers and strengthens local cultural tourism. The integration of Uggayam into municipal and barangay festivities, alongside its promotion through digital platforms, demonstrates its adaptability and potential for economic sustainability.

Politically, Uggayam facilitates civic engagement and governance by providing a platform for community discourse. With the evolving role of indigenous traditions in governance, this study found that Uggayam also serves as a medium for political participation. Community members utilize Uggayam to voice their concerns, propose solutions, and communicate with local leaders, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and political representation. The appointment of Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs) further reinforces the institutionalization of indigenous traditions within governance structures.

Despite its enduring relevance, the preservation and transmission of Uggayam face significant challenges, such as the increasing influence of digital entertainment, coupled with cultural assimilation due to intermarriage, has led to a

decline in youth participation. Indigenous knowledge systems are at risk due to modernization and shifting social preferences. However, findings suggest that educational interventions and community-driven initiatives can revitalize Uggayam. The integration of Uggayam into school curricula and community programs represents a strategic approach to ensuring its continuity.

Uggayam in itself remains a vital cultural heritage of the Tingguian people, reinforcing identity, economic growth, and political engagement in Villaviciosa. However, its sustainability requires collective efforts from local leaders, educators, and cultural practitioners. Integrating indigenous traditions into modern economic and educational frameworks ensures their survival. Future research could explore more extensive methods of digital preservation and policy support for Indigenous oral traditions, securing Uggayam's place in both contemporary society and future generations.

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This paper is an extended version of a Thesis document of the same author.

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Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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