

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study was conducted in Benguet Provincial Jail, La Trinidad, Benguet to characterize the profile of the respondents, to describe the designs of the tattoo, to determine the meanings or implication of design of the tattoo, and to identify the reasons for having tattoo.

Twenty five respondents and two key informants were chosen using purposive quota sampling method. The respondents belonged to different age brackets, all had attended formal education and were married and single. Photos were also taken for documentation.

Based on the results, prisoners enumerated several designs. However, the common designs were dragon, heart, flower and G.I.G. (Genuine Igorot Gang) letters.

Only a few of them have symbolic meanings of their tattoo. The tattoo attached with meanings symbolizes wife, brotherhood, brokenhearted, long lasting love, liberty or death, God is Good, God's eye which symbolizes loneliness, God's commandment "thou shall not kill" and shame.

The prisoners have different reasons for having a tattoo. It is for skin art, to ease boredom, belongingness, just for fun, love and lastly brokenheart.

It is then recommended that the individual who has a tattoo should not be perceived as an ex-convict or a criminal because it is a skin art for others and because it has symbolic meanings that represent one's feelings and emotions.



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## INTRODUCTION

### Rationale

Everyone is an artist by nature. People portray different styles for a quality appearance in expressing things from within.

Symbolism is a means of interpreting reality. It is considered to be a communication tool to disseminate things that happen in all aspects of life. It signifies meanings that will create relevance to the existence of living. This has a great influence in shaping the style and structure of how our individuality pictures our personality. The art of symbolism has a sense of conveying the in-depth representations of what we saw or what we learned.

Tattoo art exemplifies the alter style of symbolism. The figures provide a source of personal identity, the reflection of human behaviors and conditions.

Tattoos are made by the tattoo needles pushing ink into the deeper dermis layer of the skin. This layer sheds cells at a much slower rate than the epidermis thereby allowing the tattoo to last your lifetime. The tattoo remains visible due to the translucent nature of the epidermis. The first step in the development of a tattoo is the outlining. This is usually where the greatest pain is encountered. The first few strokes will be the worst until the person's body has a chance to adjust to the pain. How much pain and how it feels is dependent on the person's tolerance (Kromarik, 2003).

As Agoncillo (1975) also said that adornment of the body is not only by wearing costly and heavy jewels, but by tattooing it with various designs. The tattoo then, is a form of ornament to enhance beauty of the man or woman.



However, due to the diversity of life, it is now being used in any purposes. In today's generation, they use this art for belongingness, for fraternities and gangs. But despite this, each of us has his personal reasons for having tattoo/s. It is a great way of projecting our individuality and personality to the outside world. It tells others people about our nature and approach to life.

Like for the prisoners, we look them as criminals especially when we can see that they have tattoo/s. But in their world, they have their own inner thoughts which they can not express such as their emotions orally, hatreds, frustrations and depressions. They address these in a form of tattoo, which they are practicing until now.

In our locality, people see the tattoo/s alone as heirlooms of the body, others see them as pictures for fraternities or as a mark of something different among other people. People lack knowledge about its symbolical meanings and representations. People may appreciate them but they do not understand what the tattoos are for. Considering that the tattoos are visible to the prisoners in La Trinidad Provincial Jail, this study then aims to document the practice of tattooing among the prisoners.

### Statement of the Problem

This study answered the following:

1. What is the profile of the respondents?
2. What are the designs of the tattoo?
3. What are the meanings or implication of designs of the tattoo?
4. What are the reasons for having a tattoo?



### Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To characterize the profile of the respondents;
2. To describe the designs of the tattoo;
3. To determine the meanings or implication of design of the tattoo; and
4. To identify the reasons for having tattoo.

### Importance of the Study

The study attempts to help the people appreciate and apprehend the symbolical meaning of tattoo and to inspire the people on the essence of tattooing. Moreover, it seeks to promote the relevance of this art to our locality and to provide an insight of the symbolical meaning of these figures among prisoners.

### Scope and Limitation

The study only focused on the symbolic meaning of the prisoners tattoo. Twenty-five prisoners with tattoos and two key informants were interviewed.

The study was conducted from December –January 2008 at the Benguet Provincial Jail, La Trinidad , Benguet.





## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Tattoo Meanings

Tattoos are an expression of individuality. Here are the list of the most popular tattoos and their meanings (inkedmagonline.com).

DESIGNS	MEANING
Angel tattoo	Protection, guardians, keepers of dreams
Bird tattoo	Birth, intuition, freedom.
Butterfly tattoo	Spiritual immortality, temporary element of life.
Cross tattoo	Sacrifice, love and salvation.
Devil(baby)tattoo	Mischievousness, urgent desire for sex.
Dragon tattoo	Strength, power. Rules over fire and air.
Dragonfly tattoo	Affinity with the Spiritual Life. Illusion.
Eye tattoo	Self protection. Ever watching!
Fairy tattoo	Good or evil supernatural powers.
Feather tattoo	Creativity, rebirth and spiritual elevation.
Heart tattoo	Love, provided it is neither bloody nor torn into pieces.
Leaf tattoo	Joy, rebirth
Rose tattoo	Fertility.
Skull tattoo	Courage, death
Sun tattoo	Sacredness of life. Warmth, nurturing.
Sword tattoo	Represents justice, honour, energy
Yin yang tattoo	Harmony and totality

### Reasons for Having a Tattoo

There are many reasons why people choose to have a tattoo on their body, including: Cultural reasons – i.e. coming of age or rites of passage; To express individuality; To indicate membership of a particular group or way of life; To make a statement; To establish a permanent reminder of an event – such as the death of a loved





one; To reclaim the body after an event – for example, a sexual assault; To make the body more pleasing to their eye and to annoy parents (<http://www.cyh.com>).

Apart from its decorative purpose, tattooing has been practiced for a variety of reasons. In some cultures, it has ritualistic significance in puberty or maturity rites. It has been believed to have talismanic powers against disease or ill luck; and it has been employed to mark criminals and persecuted groups. To the Polynesians it is a mark of wealth and social prestige (Norwich, 1990).

People get tattooed to mark an important point in their lives that they have reached or to mark a milestone in their life like a marriage, birth of a baby, a divorce or even the coming of age. Some people get tattooed because all their friends are getting them (tattoos) and they think that it would be cool to get one. This is one of the more popular reasons people get tattoos nowadays. Then there are the others who get tattooed simply because they like tattoos and they get tattooed just because they like tattoos (Hubbard, 2002).

Tattoo is for loved ones. Some get them to remember a loved one who passed away and some get their sons or daughters' names or faces on them as a gesture of love. For religious tattoos it serves as a devotion to their beliefs, and is very commendable (Straiten, 2007).

Tattoos have served as rites of passage, marks of status and rank, symbols of decorations for bravery and marks of fertility, pledges of love, punishment, protection and as the marks of outcasts, slaves and convicts. The impact of tattoos varies in different places and cultures, sometimes with unintended consequences (Jackson, 2007).



For most people today, getting a tattoo is more of a lifestyle choice than an expression of religious faith, or an appeal for fertility. As (Lockhart, 2005) explained that “though the tattoo may be only skin deep, its significance can run as deep as the soul.”



## **METHODOLOGY**

### Locale and Time of the Study

La Trinidad, which is known as the salad bowl of the Philippines and the Strawberry capital of the Philippines, is located 3 km north of Baguio City and is 256 km north of Manila. It is bounded on the north by the municipality of Tublay, on the south by Baguio, and on the west by Sablan and Tuba. The terrain is generally mountainous with springs, rivers and creeks. La Trinidad's valley floor elevation is at 1300 meters above sea level. Elevation ranges from 500 to 1700 meters above sea level.

La Trinidad was chosen as the place of study because this is the place where tattooing is visible among the prisoners.

### Respondents of the study

Twenty-five respondents and two key informants were selected. A criterion used is that respondents should have a tattoo on any part of the body.

### Data Collection

The researcher personally interviewed the respondents using interview schedule and photos of tattoos were taken.





Figure 1. Map of Benguet showing the location of the study



### Data Gathered

Data gathered were the physical features of the tattoo. It includes the designs, the reasons for having tattoo and the meanings or implication of the tattoo.

### Data Analysis

Data gathered were consolidated, summarized, and tabulated. It was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentage.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents according to age, civil status, and educational attainment. In terms of age, most of the respondents (44%) belonged to the age bracket of 20-25 years old. This implies that having tattoo can be applied as young as twenty years old. Moreover, the oldest among the respondents was 55 years old.

In the civil status of the respondents, most (76%) of the respondents were single and 24% of the respondents were married.

For the educational attainment of the respondents, all of the respondents were educated. Most of the respondents (76%) have reached elementary level and 16% of them have reached high school level. Moreover, 12% of the respondents were elementary graduate and only 8% of the respondents were high school level.

Table 1. Profile of the respondents

AGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
20 – 25	11	44
26 – 30	5	20
31 – 35	3	12
36 - 40	2	8
41 – 45	2	8
46 – 50	1	4
51 – 55	1	4
TOTAL	25	100



### Common Designs of Tattoos and their Symbolic Meanings

In Benguet Provincial Jail, the respondents enumerated several designs but only few of them have symbolic meaning.

Table 2 presents the common designs and symbolic meaning attached to the prisoners' tattoo. It includes the following: dragon, heart, flower, and letters such as the Genuine Igorot Gang (G.I.G.)

According to Mr. Eugene who is a tattoo maker in the jail, the dragon was one of the most preferred tattoo design of the prisoners who want to have tattoo.

Moreover, Mr. Gabriel who is also a tattoo artist said that heart is one of the designs that the prisoners choose especially those who are brokenhearted or those prisoners who cannot let go of their love.

The similarities of the different four dragon designs were the dominant colors, which are red and green. Their tails have the same style and the zigzag looks are similar. The three dragons have the same color of the skin, which is black. It was observed that the position of the dragons implies that they are ready to fight.

On the contrary, the differences of the four, as was observed was, two dragons were puffing a fire while the other two were not. The colors of the spikes were also different from each other. The first dragon has color blue, the second was red, the third was red green and the last used green color.

Furthermore, only the first dragon has a symbolic meaning. It symbolizes wife and brotherhood. As cited by [inkedmagonline.com](http://inkedmagonline.com), the dragons signify strength and power. For the case of brotherhood, a person with a dragon tattoo is powerful because he has "brothers" who protects him.





Moreover, the heart design has different concepts. It can be observed that all of the tattoos have female names on it. The dominant colors used were red and black.

On the other side, two of the five heart designs have swords on it. An arrow was also inserted in one of the tattoos. It can also be observed that they differ in linings, tattoo designs/accessories such as flame, wings and sun.

In addition, only two designs of heart have attached meaning, it symbolizes a long lasting love and brokenhearted. As cited by inkedmagonline.com, heart tattoo means love which provide neither bloody nor torn into pieces.

When it comes to the flower designs, both have a dominant color which is black. It can be observed though the flowers were not the main focus of the design, they were just added to make the designs lively and colorful.

According to Jose Bulatan, he included the flowers in his tattoo because it is a good design.

The G.I.G (Genuine Igorot Gang) tattoos also have similarities. Aside from the text, which is G.I.G, the dominant color used was black. A mountain and a bird were also used in the tattoo.

The differences, however, include the placement of a word and a phrase. One tattoo contains the phrase “Cordillera” on top of it, “Liberty or Death” and the name “Jethro” below it.

Furthermore, they have different concepts. As said by one of the respondents, “it depends on how you will elaborate the designs but the letters G.I.G. should be emphasized because this will serve as your identification”. The two designs symbolizes God is Good, liberty or death, brotherhood and identification.



Table 2. Common design and their symbolic meanings





COMMON DESIGNS	DESCRIPTION	ATTACHED MEANING
<p data-bbox="289 348 391 380">Dragon</p> 	<p data-bbox="662 386 1084 709">The dominant color was black. It can be seen that the skin has spiky scales and the color is blue. The dragon in the figure is puffing a fire. Its shape portrays a zigzag look, a typical form of a dragon. This image was located on the arm of one of the respondents.</p>	<p data-bbox="1127 386 1404 453">Symbolizes wife, brotherhood, strength</p>
	<p data-bbox="662 812 1084 1058">Its dominant color was green and the rest of it was color red. Just like Figure 1.a, it has spiky scales and its shape portrays a zigzag look. This tattoo was also located on the arm of the respondent.</p>	<p data-bbox="1230 779 1295 804">none</p>
	<p data-bbox="662 1213 1084 1499">The style is same with other previous dragons discussed. The skin has spiky scales, which is color black. It only differs among the different dragons when it comes to the color of the spikes and tail. This one used the colors red and green.</p>	<p data-bbox="1230 1184 1295 1209">none</p>
	<p data-bbox="662 1591 1084 1801">The dragon is also puffing a fire which has a color of red. The skin has spiky scales and the color of this spike is green. This one is the longest among the four tattoos.</p>	<p data-bbox="1230 1562 1295 1587">none</p>



Table 2. continued









COMMON DESIGNS	DESCRIPTION	ATTACHED MEANING
Heart	It only use colors red and black. For the edges of the design, a black color was used. The heart has six wings and a sun above the heart. A name Rose was written in the heart that was located at the middle of the tattoo.	none
	It uses the dominant color red. For the edges of the design, a black color was used. The heart has six wings and a sun above the heart. A name Rose was written in the heart, which was located at the middle of the tattoo.	Long lasting love
	The dominant color used was black that surrounds the heart. A flame was placed above the heart.	none
	This heart design used different colors that made it appealing: red, yellow, blue, and black for the edges of the design. This design has a sword which was inserted in the heart and a flame was placed above the heart. A phrase "Bakit Pa" was located above the design. There were names written surrounding the design. Male names (Marvin and Sammy) were written in both sides of the flame. Female names (Grace and Clare) were also written below the design. A name (Zeny) was written on a ribbon which was placed on the center of the heart.	Brokenhearted, brotherhood
		



Table 2. continued

COMMON DESIGN	DESCRIPTION	ATTACHED MEANING
	The heart was struck with an arrow on the right side and a sword was inserted on the left side of the heart. A lining design was used inside the heart (diagonal, vertical, and horizontal). Letter G was located on both sides of the heart and a name "Ofelia" was written below the design. There were other designs that surround the heart such as asteris.	none
Flower 	It used different designs like circular, a cloudy look-alike, diagonal and spiral shapes, which made the appearance beautiful. Although the flower was not the main focus, it still portrayed art. There were different colors used such as green, red and white. The dominant color was black	none
	Flowers were added to make the tattoo lively or add variation to the plainness, according to the respondent. He further said that the design will appear dull without the flowers. It can be noted that the face of the character is sad. The flower somehow brightened it up.	none
G.I.G. letters 	It was a simple design. It used color blue- green to make the design colorful. This was placed on the fore finger of the respondent. This letter means Genuine Igorot Gang	God is Good, identification, Brotherhood.

COMMON DESIGN	DESCRIPTION	ATTACHED MEANING
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It was also a different style of design. G.I.G. letters were placed and a pyramid was situated on the letter itself. There were birds on both sides of the pyramid.

none

Compared to the previous two G.I.G. tattoos, this one has more variations. This design was tattooed at the back of the prisoner. The color used was a pure black. A G.I.G. letter design was placed in a bold style. Like figure 4.b, a mountain was situated in the letter itself. A bird was placed on both sides of the mountain. Moreover, "Cordillera" was written above the design and a name Jethro was written below the G.I.G. Below this name, "Liberty or Death" was written.

Liberty or death,  
brotherhood



the other designs that the prisoners had. It includes here the and sword. Moreover, yin-yang design, faces of Jesus Christ, Logo of San Miguel and fairy were also used. Some of them have symbolic meaning. As cited by [www.vanishing.com](http://www.vanishing.com), sun tattoo is very popular with both men and women.

The God's eye symbolizes loneliness, the logo of San Miguel symbolizes God's commandment that is "thou shall not kill". Furthermore, the fairy symbolizes shame.



As Piersol (2008) cited, “the tattoo design that is chosen is entirely, well at least most of the time, up to the person who wants to mark their body. It is their way of letting the world knows what they stand for, love or hate.”

Table 3. Other designs used




DESIGN	DESCRIPTION	ATTACHED MEANING
	This scorpion design used the colors red and black. A yin yang design was included on top of the scorpion.	none
	The design could not be seen immediately as scorpion but when you take a closer at it, it portrays a scorpion. It used only black color.	none
	The face of Jesus Christ was also used for designing the tattoo. The face of Jesus Christ appeared to be sad, pitiful, with a sun that surrounds him and thorns on his head.	Loneliness



Table 3. continued







DESIGN	DESCRIPTION	ATTACHED MEANING
	<p>Just like the cross that we usually see inside church, Jesus Christ is being crucified. "INRI" was written at the top of the cross.</p>	None
	<p>Tattoo portrays sadness and shame according to the respondent. It was tattooed at the feet of the prisoner. It is colorful for it uses good combination to make the design appealing. The fairy was surrounded with flowers and hearts.</p>	Shame
	<p>The sun surrounded the navel of the prisoner. The dominant color was red and the edges of the sun was black.</p>	None
	<p>It used three colors which were black, red, and green. It was observed that the color of the circle on the red part was green and for the green part was red. This tattoo was placed on the nape of the prisoner.</p>	None





Table 3. Continued

DESIGN	DESCRIPTION	ATTACHED MEANING
	The skull design was also used. It was tattooed at the back of the prisoner. Two small skulls were placed beside the big skull. It used only one color which is black.	None
	The design is a devil, though the face looks like a pig. It has a crown on the head. Its clothes are color green. The devil has a tail and he is holding a spear. Above the design was a phrase, "conquer me first".	none

### Feelings of the Prisoners After Being Tattooed

Table 3 presents the feelings of the respondents after being tattooed. More than half of the prisoners (64%) felt painful. This can be attributed to the fact that tattooing involves such materials like needles that are used for tattooing. One respondent had fever for two days.

However, 24% did not feel any pain, they claimed that it is good. Moreover, 8% felt numb feeling and 4% felt a stinging feeling



Table 4. Feelings of the prisoners after being tattooed

FEELINGS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Painful	16	64
Not painful	6	24
Stinging feeling	2	8
Numb	1	4
TOTAL	25	100

#### Regrets of Respondents After Being Tattooed

Table 4 presents the regrets of prisoners after having a tattoo. A great majority (76%) regretted because they realized that having tattoo was bad, they said they could not have done it in the first place. As one of them puts it, “*kauuma nga kitkitaen.*”

Moreover, some of them considers it as dirt in the body after all. They explained this by saying that when they will be released from the jail, their tattoos can be a factor of not qualifying for a work.

On the contrary, 24 % did not regret having tattoo/tattoos. They said that it feels nice because it is pleasing to the eye, especially to their “*kakosa*” and “superiors” in the gang they belong with. These made them feel they belong to the group they want to stay with.

As said by one of the respondents, this is one way of expressing their emotions and this is the only thing they can own for the rest of their lives. One of them said that, “we have tattoo to show that we are useless because we do not own nothing.”



As Bronnikov (1993) cited, “a prisoner has nothing of his own, not even decent clothes...because the only thing that belongs to the prisoners, is his body, it can be violated bartered or turned into a picture gallery.”

Table 5. Regrets of respondents after being tattooed

REGRETS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Has regrets	19	76
Did not regret	6	24
TOTAL	25	100

#### Reasons for Choosing the Design

The main reason of the prisoners for choosing such designs was for art’s sake. As said by one of the respondents he chose such design because it is a good art to him “*mangipaayayo nga buybuyaen*, as he puts it.

Belongingness is also one of the common reasons, especially those who have the G.I.G tattoo. The tattoo alone means that he belongs to a group.

Others said that having a tattoo is an act of going with the flow inside the jail. As Charlie Pulonio said, he chose the design because it is a trend inside the jail, so that he will be “in” in the group.

For fun’s sake is also one of the reasons as said by the respondents in having tattoo/s. Moreover, it is a tattoo artist choice. One prisoner said that he was not the one



who chose this design but it is the choice of the one who made his tattoo. He just liked it eventually so he said that it is a good design.

According to Raymond Binwag, one of the prisoners, he chose the design (heart which was inserted by a sword titled “*Bakit Pa*” with different names located at the side of the design) because he was broken-hearted during that time.

“My girlfriend got married when I was detained and it really hurts because until now, I still love her despite the pain she brings to me,” he said.

Another prisoner, Eric De Leon, said that he chose the design (face of Jesus Christ with a thorn which surrounds his head) because it represents his face, lonely and sad.

But for Eric Padua, he chose the scorpion design because it is his zodiac sign.

As Piersol (2008) cited, tattoos have been and will continue to be a means of expression. Prison tattoos have a symbolism and culture that is unique. These tattoos can identify what the prisoner is in for, what they are willing to do, if they can be trusted or not and many other things.

Table 6. Reason for choosing the design

CATEGORY	IMAGE
According to emotions Love	



Table 6. continued

CATEGORY	IMAGE
Brokenheart	
Loneliness/ sadness	 
According to belongingness	<p data-bbox="370 1535 716 1570">Identification, brotherhood</p> 





Table 6. Continued

CATEGORY	IMAGE
Gang requirement	
Trend inside the jail	
According to principle	
"Thou shall not kill"	
According to choice	
Own choice/zodiac sign	



Table 6. Continued

CATEGORY	IMAGE
Tattoo artist's choice	

\* Multiple responses

#### Location of the Tattoos

Table 7 presents the location of the tattoo on the body parts of the prisoners. The different designs were located on the different parts of the body of the prisoner. Forty-eight percent of the respondents' tattoo were situated on their arms, 28% on their backs, 12% on their chests. Furthermore, on the neck, feet and navel has the same response with 4%.

Two respondents claimed that they situated the heart tattoo on their chest because they were brokenhearted and cannot let go of their love. The rest of the respondents claimed that they do not have any reason why they located their tattoo on the arm, feet, back and neck. As one respondent said, "*trip ko lang.*"





Table 7. Location of the tattoos

LOCATION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Arm	12	48
Back	7	28
Chest	3	12
Neck	1	4
Feet	1	4
Navel	1	4

#### Reasons for Having a Tattoo

Among the 25 respondents (Table 8), 32 % said that having tattoo is an art to the body. As they put it, these tattoo/s serves as an outlet of their artistic inclinations.

Twenty percent also claimed that they had a tattoo to ease boredom inside the jail. This can be attributed to the prisoner's lifestyle inside the jail where they have a lot of free time.

Moreover, 16% said that it was just for fun. According to one respondent he said, "*trip ko lang*". Others said that they had it because they are not doing a lot of things inside the prison. As one them puts it, "*kayat ko lang ta awan maararamid dito.*"

Meanwhile, 12% of the respondents said that having tattoo is for companionship inside the jail and it is a requirement in a gang. This is in particular to those who are members of the G.I.G gang.



Moreover, 4% said that it is for love matters such as when they were broken-hearted and when they deeply love somebody else.

The tattoo/s is also one way of expressing their emotions and this is the only thing they can own for the rest of their lives. As one of them said, “we have tattoo to show that we are useless because we do not own nothing.”

As Bronnikov (1993) cited, “a prisoner has nothing of his own, not even decent clothes...because the only thing that belongs to the prisoners, is his body it can be violated bartered or turned into a picture gallery.”

Table 8. Reasons for having a tattoo

REASONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Skin art	8	32
Ease boredom	6	24
Belongingness	5	20
Just for fun	4	16
Love	1	4
Brokenhearted	1	4

\*Multiple responses

#### Years of Having Tattoo

From the results, the oldest tattoo was done in the year 1985 and 1989. The rest were done from the year 2000 onwards.



## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION**

### Summary

The study was conducted to determine the symbolic meaning of figures of the tattoo. Specifically, the study aimed to characterize the profile of the respondents, to describe the designs of the tattoo, to determine the meanings or implication of design of the tattoo and to identify the reasons of having a tattoo. Photos of the tattoo were also taken.

The researcher personally interviewed the respondents who were the prisoners at the Benguet Provincial jail.

Results showed that the prisoners' tattoo have different designs. The respondents enumerated several designs but the common designs used were the dragon, heart, G.I.G (Genuine Igorot Gang) letters, and flower. Furthermore, majority regretted having tattoo because they realized that having tattoo was bad. Some of them consider it as dirt in the body after all. They explained this by saying that when they will be released from the jail, their tattoos can be a factor of not qualifying for a work.

The reasons for choosing such designs were: it is a good design or a good art, it is a trend inside the jail or it is just their choice. Other reasons included were: it is the representation of their love to their sweethearts and a representation of their face such as loneliness. Moreover, it is a member requirement in a gang such as the G.I.G. (Genuine Igorot Gang).

Majority of the respondents do not have stories related to their tattoo, it is just for art's sake. Other respondents claimed that it is about love and about brotherhood. One



respondent represent his love to his sweetheart through his tattoo. Others said that it is for and companionship, it is their choice.

From the findings, only few designs were given symbolic meanings. The dragon symbolizes brotherhood, identification, fraternity and lastly, symbolizes a wife.

For the heart designs, it symbolizes brokenhearted and love.

The Genuine Igorot Gang (G.I.G) symbolizes that God is Good and the other meaning were for liberty or death. In addition, it is for brotherhood and for identification as well.

The eye design, which is God's eye, symbolizes loneliness and emptiness. The logo of San Miguel Gin symbolizes the God's commandment which is, "thou shall not kill"

Moreover, the fairy symbolizes shame.

The respondents have different reasons for having a tattoo. Majority said that it is for skin art. Most of them said that they had it to ease their boredom. Moreover, respondents said that it is just for fun. Others said that having tattoo will mean you have a companion. It is for group identification and it is a requirement as a gang member to have tattoo. The rest said that his tattoo symbolizes his lasting love and one prisoner said that it was to show that they are useless because they do not own nothing. Furthermore, one prisoner said that he was brokenhearted.



## Conclusions

From the findings, the following conclusions were derived:

1. Tattoo comes in different designs. The prisoner or individual who wish to have a tattoo will be the one to choose the desired design except for gang requirement.
2. Tattoo designs represent brotherhood, love, brokenheart and shame.
3. Through the tattoo, the prisoners express their past happenings and memories, this is also one way of expressing their feelings.
4. A primary reason for having a tattoo was for skin art and to ease boredom inside the jail.
5. Tattoo can be applied as young as twenty years of age.

## Recommendation

Based on the findings, it is recommend that an individual who has a tattoo should not be perceived as an ex-convict or a criminal because it is a skin art for others; and because it has symbolic meanings that represent one's feelings and emotions.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Communication Letter

Benguet State University  
College of Agriculture  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTENSION EDUCATION &  
DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION  
La Trinidad, Benguet

January 18, 2008

JAMES C. SIMON  
Provincial Warden  
Benguet Provincial Jail  
La Trinidad, Benguet

Sir:

Warm greetings!

I am a fourth year Bachelor of Science in Development Communication student of Benguet State University and presently conducting the thesis titled "Symbolic Meaning of Figures of Prisoners' Tattoo in Benguet Provincial Jail."

In this connection I would like to request your good office to allow me to interview prisoners who have tattoo. Your favorable decision will help me so much in completing my research undertaking.

Rest assured that all information will be for academic purposes only.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Truly yours,

JENILYN CAOILE  
Researcher

CHRISTINE GRACE SIDCHOGAN  
Adviser





## Appendix B. Interview Schedule

### A. PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Name:

Age:

### B. DESIGNS

1. What is the design of your tattoo?
2. What do you feel after being tattooed?
3. Why did you choose the design?

### C. MEANINGS

- Does your tattoo have a story?
- What is the meaning of your tattoo?

### D. REASONS

- When did you have a tattoo?
- What is your reason for having a tattoo?

