

Extracting the values from the songs of an indigenous group in Northern Luzon: A foundation for the development of learning resource

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ABSTRACT

Music is a vital part of human culture, serving as a medium for expression, storytelling, and tradition. The indigenous songs of the Ga'dang people in Paracelis, Mountain Province, hold significant cultural value, reflecting their history, beliefs, and way of life. Despite their importance, these songs have received little academic attention, leaving a gap in literature on their preservation and potential integration into education. This study explores the cultural and educational significance of Ga'dang songs, identifying the values they encapsulate as a foundation for developing localized learning resources in English education. This research applied a qualitative research methodology utilizing content analysis to extract the values from the songs of ga'dang tribe in Paracelis, Mountain Province as foundation for the development of learning resource. Data is collected through interview with the participants. These values like resilience, industriousness, respect for elders, education, emotional authenticity, cultural pride, and unity—not only define Ga'dang heritage but also offer powerful tools for moral formation and cross-cultural learning. As such, these songs are vital instruments for cultural preservation and education, enriching both community identity and contemporary pedagogy.

Keywords: Ga'dang songs, cultural values, community identity, educational integration

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INTRODUCTION

Music plays a significant role in human culture and has been utilized for various purposes throughout history. Cassar (2023) highlighted that music is a key aspect of cultural expression, fulfilling different roles across diverse cultures. Music is integral to many societies' significant life events such as weddings, births, and funerals. Similarly, Café (2022) noted that indigenous cultures often incorporate music into life ceremonies, rituals, and other special occasions, showcasing a variety of musical expressions.

The indigenous music of Northern Luzon, Philippines, is a cultural treasure that encapsulates centuries of tradition, social norms, and indigenous knowledge. Songs from the regions of Northern Luzon specifically the Cordillera region are not merely artistic expressions but they hold profound cultural values, moral lessons and collective memories of the communities.

In the different parts of the Cordillera region, the singing and chanting of various oral traditions can still be heard and thriving despite their riddance during the Spanish occupation

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(Constantino, 2021). Maceda stressed the need for ethnic music to preserve the ethnicity of the different tribes in the Cordillera. His work deals with how the songs are used in rituals, storytelling, and maintaining oral history.

Paracelis is located in the eastern part of the Mountain Province within the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) in Northern Luzon, Philippines. It is surrounded by the provinces of Ifugao, Kalinga, and Isabela. Ga'dang is one of the tribes of Paracelis Mountain Province in the Cordillera region. Ga'dang is their identity, settlement, and language wherein they have settled in geographic terms is now called ga'dang ancestral domain. According to the study of Galdonez & Reyes (2023), the beliefs and principles in the life of the Ga'dang passed from their ancestors to the present generations are seen in their daily ways of living. These can be seen in celebrations like baptism, birthdays, weddings, fiestas, healing death and burial, and other social gatherings. Also, they emphasized the importance of preserving Ga'dang customs, ceremonies/rituals and indigenous knowledge. Indeed, the cultural songs of the Ga'dang people of Paracelis in Mountain Province are an essential part of their cultural heritage. These songs are not just a form of artistic expression but a way to keep their history, hardships, and values. They also play a key role in rituals and ceremonies including agriculture, struggling experiences, healing and life cycle events like birth, marriage, and death. One of the composers of the cultural music of Ga'dang tribe in the municipality described that the songs are very significant to the Ga'dang community because they tell the stories of the Ga'dang people's roots, hardships and connections to other ethnic groups such as Balangao, Majukayan, Likoy, Bago, Kalinga, Ifugao and other ethnic groups that are neighbors and live in the same municipality.

However, despite the cultural importance of their cultural songs, they have received little attention in academic research. While there is a growing body of literature on the cultural music of various indigenous groups in the Philippines particularly in Cordillera region, there remains a significant research gap concerning the cultural songs of the Ga'dang tribe in the municipality. Most studies on indigenous music in the Cordillera region, for example, have focused on more prominent groups like the Kankanaey, Ibaloi, Ifugao, Kalinga, Bontoc, and Sagada, leaving the cultural songs of the Ga'dang tribe in Paracelis, Mountain Province underexplored.

On the other hand, the K-12 curriculum of the Philippines which highlights contextualization as one of the main characteristics of educational reform geared towards coping with the changing needs of the learners (Gaudalupe, Abaya & Camposano, 2023). According to the K to 12 Philippine Basic Education Curriculum Framework, students of this century must be "co-constructors of knowledge and active meaning makers and not merely passive recipients of information" (DepEd, 2014, p. 3). Localization is creating "locally produced teaching and learning materials" (K to 12 IRR, 2013, Section 10.3). Indigenization is about incorporating indigenous knowledge skills and practices into the curriculum (DepEd Order No. 35, S. 2016b). Fagsao (2019) contended that cultural songs are effective teaching instruments in the K-12 curriculum of the Department of Education in the Philippines.

In fact, Ga'dang songs are integral to the tribe's rituals, celebrations, and daily life, serving as a means of preserving and transmitting cultural values, history, and social norms across generations. The goal of this thesis is to extract the values encapsulated in the indigenous songs of Northern Luzon specifically the cultural songs of Ga'dang in Paracelis, Mountain Province and to propose a foundation for developing educational resources that integrate these values into formal learning settings. By extracting and analyzing the values embedded in these songs can contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage while enhancing educational materials with content that reflects local traditions, values, beliefs, and social norms.

Statement of the problem

This study aims to extract values from the cultural songs of the Ga'dang people in a specific municipality as a basis for learning resource development in English subject.

METHODOLOGY

This research applied a qualitative research design utilizing content analysis to extract the values from the songs of ga'dang tribe in Paracelis, Mountain Province as foundation for the development of learning resource. According to Tenny et al. (2020), qualitative study is a type of research which explores the perceptions, experiences and behaviors of chosen participants. Qualitative research is used to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions. Additionally, according to Bengtsson (2016) explains that content analysis focuses on interpreting meaning from the content of text data often involving coding and categorization. In this case, content analysis is therefore suited to be used in this study since the aim is to extract values from the songs of Ga'dang tribe in Paracelis, Mountain Province as foundation for the development of learning resource.

The researcher collected 10 Ga'dang songs composed by Junior B. Botal in Paracelis, Mountain Province. These songs served as the data for the study which utilized content analysis method. The inclusion-exclusion criteria was set in selecting Ga'dang songs: (a) originally composed by a Ga'dang composer of Paracelis, Mountain Province; (b) originally sang by a Ga'dang singer of Paracelis, Mountain Province.

The researcher used an interview guide as a data gathering tool with the participants to collect 10 Ga'dang songs.

The researcher notified the participants of the study. Additionally, the participants were informed that the data collection would occur in the comfort of their homes and at their convenience. This interview was conducted to extract and analyze the cultural values of the Ga'dang cultural songs as a foundation for learning resource development and how this impacted the culture and musical heritage of the municipality.

As a result of the nature of this study being qualitative, content analysis was used to identify patterns, themes, or categories, providing insights into the meaning and structure of 10 Ga'dang songs of Paracelis, Mountain Province. According to Bengtsson (2016) content analysis involves interpreting text subjectively but systematically, using coding to organize data and identifying themes and patterns to understand the meaning within the text.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher aimed to extract values from the cultural songs of the Ga'dang people in Paracelis, Mountain Province, to serve as a foundation for developing learning resources in the English subject. A total of ten Ga'dang songs were analyzed to identify their respective themes and their influence on Ga'dang culture and value formation.

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Song 1: Antu Yaw Istoryak (This Is My Story)

One key value drawn from this song is resilience and perseverance. The lines “Nothing to be compared when it comes to suffering” and “You wait, you carry” reveal the community’s ability to endure hardship. Despite the challenges faced in agriculture and livelihood, especially with dependence on farming corn and bananas, the people of Paracelis show steadfastness and determination. This mirrors findings by Dulawan (2005), who noted that the Ifugao people maintain cultural resilience through practices like the Hudhud chant during labor-intensive tasks, thereby honoring perseverance and hard work.

Closely linked to this is the value of hard work and industriousness. The song’s emphasis on planting bananas and reliance on limited resources highlights the necessity of diligent labor to survive. The pride in cultural and local identity is strongly reflected in expressions such as “This is my story of the place where I came from” and “I am not ashamed because this is the truth,” illustrating a deep-rooted sense of belonging and acceptance despite adversity. Dulay (2015) supports this by noting how Hudhud strengthens cultural pride and affirms unique ethnic identities.

Additionally, the song reveals honesty and courage to speak truth, as the speaker openly shares the realities of life in Paracelis without shame, encouraging listeners to acknowledge social truths, including issues like corruption and survival struggles. The line about government prohibitions on logging and bribery of officials reflects a keen social awareness. Lastly, family and early responsibilities are highlighted by the mention of early marriage and its impact on education, underscoring common social conditions affecting life opportunities.

Song 2: Paracelis A Lubbon Mi (Paracelis, Our Town)

This song conveys a strong value of unity and solidarity among the diverse tribes living in Paracelis. The call to “hold hands for the progress of our town” and the affirmation “We are all siblings, no one else” emphasize cooperation, inclusivity, and collective effort despite ethnic differences. Dulawan (2005) and Dulay (2015) similarly observe that communal activities in indigenous traditions foster teamwork and mutual help, strengthening social bonds. The local Kakarefin celebration exemplifies such unity, showcasing cultural expressions that reinforce solidarity.

The song also stresses equality and respect among tribes, gently discouraging superiority claims tied to ancestral arrival, promoting mutual respect for all groups. Peace and harmony are presented as natural outcomes of such unity and respect, with “Order, tranquility, peace shall prevail” serving as an aspirational goal rooted in love and collective cooperation. This harmony is further sustained by civic responsibility and good governance, as the plea to local officials to sincerely discuss conflicts reflects a community desire for accountable leadership. Faith and hope in divine guidance bind these social values spiritually, with prayers asking God not to abandon the community. Ultimately, love for one’s hometown emerges as the emotional core that sustains unity and progress.

Song 3: Ikkami A Ga'Dang (We Are TheGa'Dang)

The song highlights the value of cultural identity and pride by affirming the Ga'dang people's connection to their ancestral valley and traditional slash-and-burn farming practices. These practices, often misunderstood, are integral to their survival and cultural heritage. At the same time, the value of adaptability and survival is prominent, as the Ga'dang respond to environmental and social changes by relocating and innovating in agricultural techniques, demonstrating resilience.

Hard work and perseverance emerge clearly as the Ga'dang strive to sustain their livelihoods despite being left behind by modern development. The song's lament over the lack of infrastructure contrasts with their continued efforts, showing determination. Moreover, ancestral wisdom guides these practices, as respect for elders' decisions is emphasized through references to ancestral knowledge about survival and sustainability. Dulay (2015) notes that Hudhud chants honor elders' wisdom, fostering respect across generations.

Song 4: Da Ama Anni Ina (My Father and My Mother)

Parental love and sacrifice are foundational themes in this song, emphasizing hard work and dedication by parents to improve their family's future despite physical exhaustion and hardship. Parents in Paracelis often labor before dawn to sustain the household and provide education for their children, reflecting deep values of diligence and perseverance.

Closely related is the value of parental sacrifice, with parents willing to endure hardships to spare their children similar struggles. This dedication is celebrated in the song and aligns with Dulawan's (2005) observations about kinship and family ties in indigenous chants. Children grow up with profound gratitude and respect for their parents' sacrifices, as expressed by the commitment to carry forward parental teachings as moral guidance. Dulay (2015) reinforces the importance of strong family unity, which is sustained through life lessons passed down by parents to guide future generations.

Song 5: Istorya Da Manak (The Story of the Parents)

Education is the central value of this song, presented as a means of empowerment and a pathway to breaking cycles of poverty. The song highlights the contrast between parents who lacked educational opportunities and their children who are encouraged to study and improve their lives. This reflects national development goals and the recognition that education drives social and economic progress (Boholano &Dayagbil, 2020).

The song encourages learning from past generations' struggles by urging youth not to repeat their parents' educational limitations, promoting reflection on the sacrifices made by elders. The humility and honesty of parents, who openly acknowledge their inability to read or write and warn their children, add authenticity to this message. Furthermore, the song calls for awareness of the modern world, encouraging youth to seize new educational opportunities. Respect for parental struggles remains vital, reminding listeners to honor rather than judge their elders despite past hardships.

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Song 6: Sin Ka Abbing Ku (When I Was A Child)

This song presents a narrative about the importance of education, personal accountability, and the guidance parents provide to their children. Education is portrayed as a protective shield that guards against poverty and hardship, essential for future security and opportunity (Eduardo & Gabriel, 2021). The speaker reflects candidly on the regret that follows abandoning school and the consequences of that choice, underscoring personal responsibility.

Practical wisdom emerges as the speaker recognizes that without education or resources, farming becomes the only viable option, exposing the harsh realities many face. The role of parental guidance is emphasized as parents are urged to watch over their children, encouraging them to study and delay early marriage for their own good. The value of respecting elders and listening to their advice is stressed as a means to avoid repeating mistakes, reinforcing the enduring role of family in shaping life choices (Pannogan, 2024).

Song 7: AggangweninGagginafan (The Practice of Our Ancestors)

The song stresses respect for elders and parental authority, especially in decisions regarding marriage. It conveys the importance of abiding by traditional Ga'dang norms where parents select life partners for their children, reflecting deep trust in elders' wisdom. This respect for parental guidance aligns with Eustaquio and Luagna's (2024) findings on the vital role of elders in preserving Hudhud traditions.

Adherence to tradition and cultural norms is central, underscoring the value of maintaining indigenous customs related to marriage. The song acknowledges that personal desires may be secondary to collective decisions, emphasizing obedience and sacrifice for family and community welfare. Real-life examples demonstrate how arranged marriages, initially met with hesitation, can foster stability and eventually love. Intergenerational knowledge transmission ensures that younger generations learn and uphold these customs, reinforcing cultural identity and continuity. Pannogan (2024) further highlights the role of elders in educating youth about cultural heritage.

Song 8: Afu A Makkammang (The Oracle)

This song reveals the value of seeking wisdom and guidance through the speaker's plea to the oracle for understanding life's purpose. It illustrates the importance of consulting ancestral wisdom when facing existential uncertainty. The cultural identity and heritage of the Ga'dang are affirmed by references to ancestral beliefs in anito spirits, emphasizing the significance of remembering traditional spiritual practices, even as most Ga'dang have embraced Christianity (Pannogan, 2024).

Spiritual reflection and existential inquiry emerge as the speaker questions the reason for existence and the community's place in the world. Dulay (2015) notes that such chants incorporate reverence for the spiritual realm, highlighting faith and respect for unseen forces. The song also expresses emotional honesty and vulnerability, capturing inner turmoil and confusion, and valuing the acknowledgment of such emotions as part of the journey toward healing and truth.

Song 9: Kallowwingke a Dandaman (It's Painful to Think About)

The song deeply explores themes of love, loss, and personal growth through emotional honesty and vulnerability. The speaker expresses commitment and generosity in love by giving everything to a loved one, highlighting selflessness. Wong and Mayer (2023) suggest that true love encompasses both joy and pain, including sacrifice.

Despite the speaker's efforts, feelings of abandonment lead to emotional honesty about pain and confusion, showing the value of expressing heartbreak openly. The act of holding a photo symbolizes longing and sentimentality, illustrating the importance placed on shared memories even after separation. These feelings prompt reflection and self-questioning, essential for healing and understanding the breakdown of communication. Taylor (2021) emphasizes that such introspection is key to developing self-love and overcoming emotional hardships.

Song 10: O'ganAgganggam (Too Much Love)

This song addresses the dangers of obsessive love and the emotional toll of abandonment through the value of emotional honesty. The speaker openly shares sorrow and confusion, seeking clarity about what went wrong in the relationship. This openness reflects courage in facing painful emotions.

The value of love and vulnerability is evident as the song portrays love's potential to bring both deep joy and profound pain. The acknowledgment that "Too much love can make you cry" illustrates the risks inherent in emotional attachment. Self-reflection is shown through the speaker's willingness to question their own actions and seek understanding. Taylor (2021) emphasizes that true love involves an inner journey of acceptance and healing.

Lastly, the song underscores human dignity by highlighting the pain of being treated unfairly, as the speaker likens themselves to a discarded toy. This calls attention to the importance of respecting others and not using them for selfish emotional needs, emphasizing the need for compassion and ethical treatment in relationships.

CONCLUSION

The cultural songs of the Ga'dang people serve as a profound repository of values that are integral to their identity and way of life. These songs articulate virtues such as resilience, hard work, and perseverance, which have been passed down through generations by elders who emphasize the dignity of labor and the necessity of survival. At the same time, the songs underscore the significance of education as a vital means for empowerment, while simultaneously honoring ancestral knowledge and the sacrifices of those who came before. Deep respect for family emerges prominently within these traditions, portraying parental roles as essential moral and cultural guides. Emotional honesty, love, and vulnerability are also vividly expressed, reflecting the complexity and depth of human relationships within the community. Furthermore, these songs celebrate unity amid diversity, advocate for civic responsibility, and convey a strong sense of faith, calling for mutual respect and cooperation among different groups. Collectively, the values embedded in these songs not only define Ga'dang heritage but also provide powerful frameworks for moral formation and intercultural understanding.

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Consequently, these musical traditions represent vital instruments for cultural preservation and education, enriching both community identity and modern pedagogical approaches.

Recognizing the educational potential of Ga'dang songs, educators, curriculum developers, and cultural advocates have increasingly integrated these traditions into formal learning, particularly within language and values education. This integration enriches students' educational experiences by fostering cultural appreciation, empathy, and a strong sense of identity. It is imperative that instructional materials emphasize the core values found in the songs—such as resilience, industriousness, respect for elders, family cohesion, emotional authenticity, cultural pride, and spiritual faith—while also encouraging learners to critically reflect on how these values apply to contemporary societal contexts. When learners engage with the contextualized meanings of the Ga'dang songs, their understanding and appreciation of these values become more meaningful and relevant.

Moreover, the promotion of community-based programs and active collaborations with Ga'dang elders and cultural custodians is essential to ensure the authenticity and continuity of these traditions. Such partnerships foster an environment where cultural knowledge is transmitted accurately and respectfully, thereby strengthening efforts toward cultural preservation. Ultimately, the incorporation of Ga'dang songs into educational curricula and community initiatives not only advances cultural safeguarding but also nurtures inclusivity and inspires a deeper, more personal connection between younger generations and their indigenous heritage. This holistic approach holds promise for sustaining Ga'dang identity while enriching the broader educational landscape.

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