

Safeguarding *Lagaylay*, an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Canaman, Camarines Sur, Philippines

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Abstract – *As mentioned by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), intangible cultural heritage (ICH) contributes to sustainable development and they play a crucial part in keeping the culture alive. UNESCO adds that ICH includes songs, music, drama, dance, crafts, and the other parts of culture that can be recorded but cannot be touched and interacted with, without a vehicle for the culture. In the Bikol region, most of the ICHs are oral traditions. Oral traditions are cultural materials that are passed on by word of mouth by the older generation to the younger ones. The town of Canaman is rich in ICH but most of these remain as oral traditions. One of the surviving few is the lagaylay, a two-hour song and dance performance that exalts the Holy Cross. As an oral tradition, its survivability faces many challenges such as modernization and globalization. For the purpose of safeguarding this tradition, this research identified its parts and the different roles played by the participants. The researcher also created a dance vocabulary for better identification of the movements. The researcher made use of phenomenological methodology, a description of a “lived experience.” Emic approach or the insider’s perspective was also applied. The major parts include the timbako, duyag, pagatang nin corona (offering of the crown), pasyon, pag-corona (bringing back the crown), pagdulot nin palma (offering of flowers), and the danza. The movements particular to the performance are tarok-tarok—a rhythmical movement of the feet in dancing, ekis—a quarter turn to the right or left, and close steps.*

Keywords: lagaylay, oral tradition, intangible cultural heritage

INTRODUCTION

In 1972, the World Cultural and Natural Heritage has inscribed in the World Heritage List several monuments, sites, and landscapes which needed immediate preservation. However, an equally important aspect of heritage—that of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has been left out. Because of this, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has redefined cultural heritage as those “traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants.”

A society’s intangible heritage holds its collective memory—knowledge, skills, beliefs, traditions, arts, which enables the members of that community to successfully thrive and adapt with the changing environment.

Being an oral tradition, ICH is ephemeral and fragile. It is limited in scope as it cannot be remembered for so long. When the elderly fails to transmit its tradition to the younger generation, it is most likely to vanish. When it vanishes, a part of history is lost leaving a gap in people’s knowledge of local history which is the foundation of national history. ICH is threatened by a multitude of factors that include the mass media, urbanization, large-scale migration, and environmental change, thus it needs safeguarding.

Dance is one example of an intangible cultural heritage which reflects the lifestyle, outlook, and ritual features of the communities. Religious dances, especially here in the Philippines are also seen by the people as sacred symbols that bind them together.

Performing Arts and Oral Traditions and Expressions are two of the five domains that need

safeguarding [1]. In addition, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) is mandated to “preserve, develop, and promote Philippine art and culture. Documenting a traditional dance is one way of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. “Culture change is upon us, many fear, like a tsunami advancing rapidly to the shore threatening to engulf whole populations, erasing them and all memory of what they once held dear. Once the wave washes over the island and retreats again, all we can expect to find is the debris of what formerly had been a living and vibrant culture”[2]. With the advent of modernity comes the different priorities of the younger generations—in which oral traditions might be included in the erosion of traditional practices. Modernity might also cause independence which means the breakdown of social ties which can be a dangerous episode in a society. Putting these oral traditions (including dances) on record would help save a sacred symbol and a heritage that can bind people together.

Canaman, a second class municipality in the town of Camarines Sur, Philippines is rich in performing arts and oral traditions, but these have never been documented before. For example, its *Pastora*, a song and dance ensemble performed during the Christmas season, has been lost. When its trainer has passed away, the *Pastora* tradition in Canaman also died. Some of the performing arts that vanished are the *panharong-harong*—a playlet that dramatizes the search for an inn of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem, the *comedia*—a showdown of *moros* and Christians through a dramatic presentation, and the *panjardin*, a dance drama that is about growing and maintaining a garden of flowers to be offered to the Holy Cross. The older generation of the people of Canaman says with sentiment that these were beautiful and colorful performances in the past that they used to look forward to.

Although slowly losing its popularity, one important oral tradition is still being observed in Canaman—the *Lagaylay*. *Lagaylay* is a two-hour praise to the Holy Cross manifested through singing and dancing. Performed for nine consecutive nights, it reenacts the finding of the Holy Cross by St. Helena and her female entourage. If this tradition is not preserved, (or taken for granted) it might suffer the same fate as the *Pastora* and other performing arts. D.M. Gerona [11], a local historian, has precisely captured this problem by saying that the “dearth in

research on local history and culture is a reality and its death is just a stone’s throw away” (p.xi).

Thus, this research has been undertaken to address the issues stated above. With the researcher’s efforts, it hopes to preserve *Lagaylay* through identifying its parts, implements, and different roles played by the participants. This also aims to create a dance vocabulary for better identification and documentation of the movements.

It also hopes to encourage its people to get to know more of this heritage so that they would continually support this activity for the next generations to see. This also aims to encourage other people to safeguard the traditional practices in their own locale to avoid the dangers of cultural extinction and to realize that these intangible heritages are jewels of a society.

This research hopes to provide a reference for culture-based education— as mandated by the NCCA, sub-commission for cultural education for the k to 12 curriculum. By building on the current scholarship work (or lack thereof) on local dances, this research will provide a related literature on dance.

Forty years before the UNESCO’s Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, reference [3] argued that “we must cultivate our arts, our songs, and our dances which are expressive of our character. It is in this way we shall be identified as a nation with the past and a destiny of its own” (p.5). Studying history does not only constitute the narration of past events but also studies on arts for arts are reflections of the mores of the people. Dance as a form of artistic cultural activity plays diverse roles in society as form of cultural expression. It also encapsulates, reinforces and transmits cultural traditions and values. Reference [4] noted that “sociologists have pointed out that in many cultures, dance is seen as being far more than graceful movement. Instead, it is a profoundly important social experience—a powerful rite shared by all members of the culture, and essential to its well-being” (p.14).

In the Philippines, the diversity of dances performed on the different parts of the country has attracted researchers to unearth and document them. Francisca Aquino, the national artist for dance, published a number of books from 1953-1979 [5]. They consist of dance notations and musical scores. Her famous six-volume publication of Philippine dances provided an avenue to preserve the precious art of dance in the Philippines. Similar to Aquino’s

research was done by Libertad V. Fajardo, who documented Visayan dances [6]. The documentation of Visayan dances was an attempt to focus the research on the dances of the Philippine countryside. After which, several other people collected the songs and dances from the different provinces like Teresita Pascua Ines who collected Ilocano dances in 1973 [7], Jovita Sison Friese (1980) on Pangasinan dances [8].

In the Bicol region, a book entitled, “*The Bikol Pastora*” was written by Eden K. Nasayao in 2001 [9]. This is a documentation of the production and performances of the different *pastora* groups of the six provinces of the Bicol region. She described the different characteristics of each group and provided a simple dance notation of some of these *pastora* as part of its preservation. In the same way, Margate (2005) notated two versions of *pastora* from Baao and Bombon in Camarines Sur as part of her thesis entitled “The Production of the *Pastora* in Camarines Sur” [10].

These documentation efforts of the dance researchers are a good model for more researchers to collect oral traditions. It is because despite these research efforts on Philippine dance, still, there are many dances waiting to be unearthed and recognized in the field of research especially in the Bicol region. Similar effort of the above-mentioned researchers was done in this research like description of parts, identification of the implements, notation of the prevalent dance steps, and creation of dance vocabulary.

OBJECTIVES

This research sought to explore the available documents that will act as a springboard to extend the depth and breadth on the study of the *Lagaylay*.

This research aimed to identify the parts of the *Lagaylay* and the different roles played by the participants; to create a dance vocabulary for better identification and documentation of the movements; and to describe the implements, costumes, accessories and musical instruments used in *Lagaylay*.

METHODS

Research Design

Qualitative research procedure was employed. It includes structured and unstructured interviews,

stimulated recall, focus group discussions, video and audio documentation, and participant observation.

Key Informants and Locale of the Study

The town of Canaman was the focus of the study. Canaman is one of the oldest towns in the province of Camarines Sur. Having evangelized by the Franciscan Missionaries in 1580’s, this town was declared as a *convento*—which means that this town received direct gospel teachings from the Franciscan missionaries. Other neighboring towns were declared as *visita*. The *visita* gather to the *convento* (like Canaman) to attend gospel teachings [11]. This could be the reason why Canaman is known to have a rich cultural tradition, in which *Lagaylay* is one of the surviving few. There are a few barangays in Canaman where *Lagaylay* is performed. The key area of this study is the Barangay Dinaga, the town proper where the parish church is located. In this area, the tradition of *Lagaylay* is maintained for fifty three (53) years straight (not to mention the years it was performed way before the outbreak of World War II).



Fig. 1 Map of Canaman [12]



Fig. 2 Map of Barangay Dinaga [13]



Fig. 3. Canaman Church Patio where the *lagaylay* is performed in front of the 162 year-old Holy Cross (built in 1863)

One of the key informants of this research is Mrs. Aurora Lara, the current trainer of the *Lagaylay*. Other informants were also interviewed like the elderly, local historians, etc.

Instruments of the Study

To achieve the research objectives, there is a need for phenomenological methodology, a description of a “lived experience.” This is the gathering of the participants' descriptions of their experience, or the participants' written or oral self-report, or even their aesthetic expressions [14]. The researcher also applied emic approach, or the insider’s perspective. Having joined in this activity for three times performing three different roles, including the lead role of Reyna Elena, the researcher’s familiarity with the characteristics of the *Lagaylay* played an essential role in the documentation of this activity. The movements particular to the dance were notated following the dance notation format of Francisca Reyes-Aquino.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The *Lagaylay*

There were various celebrations introduced by the Franciscan friars in the Bikol region and one of the most celebrated until today is the *Santacruzán*. This is

centered to the devotion to the Holy Cross used in the crucifixion of Jesus. In the Roman churches, May 3 was celebrated as the feast of the finding of the true Cross by St. Helena. The *Lagaylay* is one unique activity in the town of Canaman during the *Santacruzán*. It is a performance that re-enacts the finding of the Holy Cross by St. Helena and her entourage. It is a two-hour song and dance performance that exalts the Holy Cross which is regarded by the Catholics as the instrument of our salvation. This is performed by young girls/women (who are referred to as *para-lagaylay*) usually around the age of 9 to 19 playing different roles of Reyna Elena, *responde*, *paraduyag*, and *panamparan*. Apart from it is performed for two hours or so, it is also repeated in its entirety for nine consecutive nights, which starts from May 3 until May 11. The performance takes place in the *lagaylayan*—a makeshift tent built and decorated at the patio, in front of the Holy Cross. The one who plays Reyna Elena wears a gown, a cape, and a crown. The rest of the participants are expected to wear nine elegant dresses matched with shoes and other accessories for nine consecutive nights.

The Different Roles Played by the *Para-lagaylay*:

1. The Reyna Elena



Fig. 4. The one who plays Reyna Elena wears a gown, a crown, and a cape. Her attire and accessories represent the image of a queen.



Fig. 5. During the part called *duyag*, the Reyna Elena, together with the two *paraduyag* wave their flags while singing and dancing.

2. The *Paraduyag*

The *Paraduyag* are usually the smallest and youngest girls among the group standing beside the Reyna Elena. Gerona [15] mentioned that the word *duyag* was defined by a Fr. Marcos de Lisboa (a Franciscan lexicographer in the 1600's) in his dictionary, that it is a noise created out of joy. During the part called *duyag*, each of them carries a flag which they wave while singing and dancing. After the part where Reyna Elena offers her crown, they also yell "Victoria! Victoria!" which is a series of responses they do after Reyna Elena and the chorus sing, "viva, viva."

3. The *Responde*

Fig.6. A *Responde* swings the thurible in the *duyag* part



The *Responde*, is a pair of spokeswomen positioned in front of the formation. They are assigned to sing most stanzas of the *Lagaylay*. In some parts, they *responde* in a form of singing to the song sung by Reyna Elena. The manner of their singing is similar to the term *echo phrase* in music. During the part called *duyag*, each of them carries a thurible, an important implement used in ceremonies in the Catholic Church which contains burning incense. The *responde* swing the thurible to cense the Cross and crown.

4. The *Panamparan*

Llana [16] refers *panamparan* are guards of honor. The term may have also been derived from the word *tampad* (or *panampad*), which means parallel or equivalent, the girls stand next to each other as pairs. During the *timbako* and offering of flowers, the *panamparan* work as pairs—they sing their respective stanza of praise and honor to the Holy Cross while moving forward by twos. The *panamparan* are the ones who compose most of the *para-lagaylay*. They are composed of six to eight pairs. They are lined up vertically—one group on the right, and one group on the left. They are the chorus who sing in homophony—the girls on the right sing the melody or the first voice and the girls on the left sing the second voice.



Fig. 7. The *panamparan* standing in two vertical lines

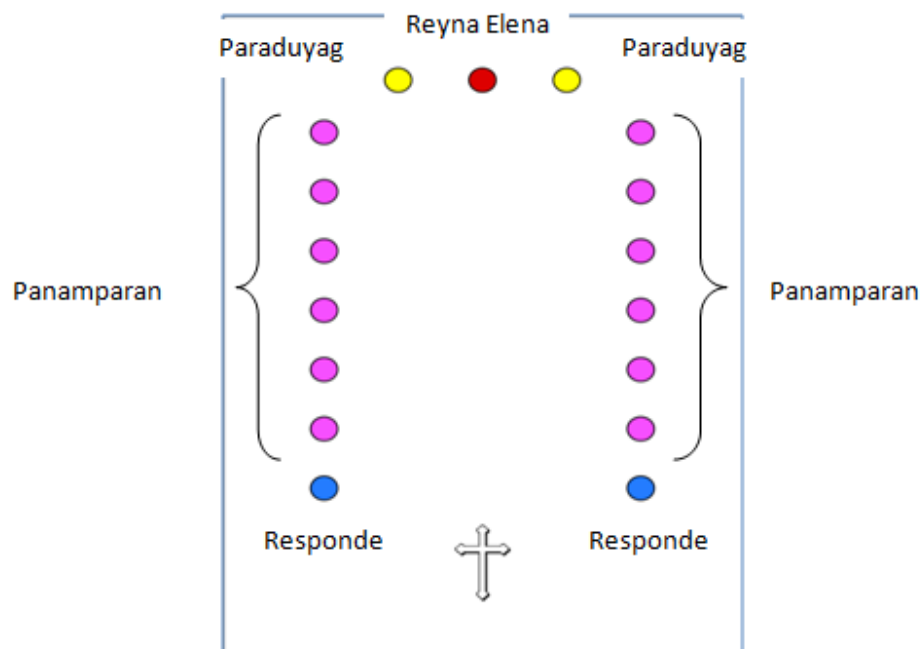


Fig.8. The Basic Formation of the Lagaylay

The Formation

The *para-lagaylay* are arranged from tallest to smallest. The *responde* are usually the tallest and the *paraduyag* are usually the smallest. The one who plays Reyna Elena may be tall or average in height.

Parts of the Lagaylay

- A. Paso Altar y Canto – The participants enter the *lagaylayan* singing *vixilla regis*, while walking towards the Holy Cross. After which, they *cast out* going back to their respective positions.
- B. Timbako – In this part, the participants sing in chorus to invite the people to praise and honor the Holy Cross. They do close steps while moving towards the Cross by pair, singing their respective verses. After which they go back to their original places. Reyna Elena is the last one to walk towards the Cross while singing her own verse. Reference [15] states that the word *timbako* was mentioned by Lisboa as a pre-Hispanic word for a boys' game when they walk on a *sangcayao* (wooden stilt). *Timbako*, is similar to/ a relay where they move forward to exchange stilts.
 1. Canteco ni Elena – After walking towards the Holy Cross, Sta. Helena stays in front of the cross and sings five (5) stanzas which are about contrition, veneration, and petition.

2. Canto y Letra - *Responde* sing five stanzas in homophony. Every after each stanza sung by the *Responde*, all sings in chorus while they form different letter-formations: C R U X Z. They finish this part forming a cross and kneel on the last few measures.



Figure 9. Cross formation

3. Alavacion – While in cross formation, everyone is on kneeling position. They take turns in reciting one stanza of *alavacion* starting with Reyna Elena. The *alavacion* means reciting of verses about veneration and praises to the Cross.



Fig. 10. A girl does an “alavacion”

Duyag –the word *duyag* was defined as a noise created out of joy [17]. Reyna Elena and the two “*paraduyag*” wave their flags for having found the Holy Cross. The *paraduyag* are the two main performers in this part. They move forward and sing while waving their flags. Waving of flags symbolizes pride, victory and joy.

Elena to bring back the crown. This symbolizes that she deserves such honor as queen by showing humility and strong devotion to Christianity.



Fig.12. The *responde* bringing back the crown to Reyna Elena

C. Pagdolot nin Corona (offering of the crown) – Reyna Elena offers her crown to the Cross to show her reverence. This action is also a symbol of surrendering her wealth, honor, and fame for the greater glory of God [18].



Fig. 11. A *paraduyag* waves her flag while singing in the *duyag* part

1. Cantada – A short portion in the *Lagaylay* where everyone is on kneeling position. Reyna Elena leads the group in singing repetitively for a few times, “*O Jesus na kagurangnan, di mo kami pabayaan.*” (Jesus our Lord, do not forsake us).

D. Pasyon – The two *responde* sing excerpts from the passion of Christ.

1. Viva – the *responde* invite everyone to sing *Viva!* (long live). After which, Reyna Elena sings, “*maggalang an gabos,*” which calls everyone to pay respect (to the Cross). Everyone replies, “*maggalang ang gabos.*”
2. Pagpangadyi (to pray) – Sta. Elena calls everyone to kneel and pray one Our Father (The Lord’s Prayer) and one Hail Mary.

E. Pag-Corona (crowning of Reyna Elena)– The two *responde* sing praises to Reyna Elena for her perseverance in finding the Holy Cross. After a few stanzas, they do *paso* steps towards Reyna

F. Pagdolot nin Palma (Offering of flowers) – Compressed at the main entrance of the *lagaylayan*, each pair of *panamparan* moves (doing close steps and turns) towards the Holy Cross. They offer different kinds of flowers with Spanish names, such as, *rosas, rosal, asperilla, sampaga, clavel, azucena, lirio, clavelina,* etc. While moving towards the Cross, they sing their respective stanza then they go back to where they came from. The *Responde* offer their thurible. After everyone has done her part, the group moves forward then they shower the cross with flower petals. Everyone moves backward to their original places. Movements are: step (R), step (L), raise R or (L).



Fig.13. The para-lagaylay performing the engaño



Fig.14. The para-lagaylay doing the cadena while Reyna Elena does a series engaño at the center

G. Danza – This part is danced and sang to a livelier and faster beat. The dance steps are (*valse*) waltz with arms in lateral position, waltz turns, *engaño*, *de cuatro* (modified mazurka), and *cadena*. To end the performance, the Reyna Elena does a curtsy.

Movements particular to the Lagaylay

The movements performed in the *lagaylay* are easy to learn and remember because they are simple and repetitive. The movements particular to the dance are *paso*, *tarok-tarok*, and *ekis*. Most of the dance steps in *lagaylay* are not included in the list of fundamental dance steps in the book published by F.R. Aquino. After in-depth interviews, dance terms that are used by the elderly surfaced, and the researcher provided the dance vocabulary for other dance steps for thorough documentation of this activity.

Movements and Dance Notation	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Ekis</i>: quarter turn to the right (or left) step pattern: step right foot over left (or R) foot to make a quarter turn to the left (or R) (ct. 1), close left foot to right (or L) foot (ct. 2), step left (or L) foot back to its original position (ct. 3), close right (or L) foot to left (or R) foot (ct. 4). 	This is usually performed during intervals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Paso</i>: step pattern: step, pause, step, pause 	This movement represents walking.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Tarok-tarok</i>: step pattern: kick right (or left) foot about 30-degree angle from the supporting foot and close the same foot to the supporting foot. 	According to Reference [18], <i>tarok</i> is a rhythmical movement of the feet while dancing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Balanse</i> 	This is how the movement is called when going to the letter formations: C R U X Z after the <i>timbako</i> . Change in letter formation is done while singing the chorus—after the <i>responde</i> sing every stanza.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Sibog-sibog</i> step pattern: Step back right [or left] foot (cts. 1,2) then close right [or left] to left to stand in place (cts. 3,4). 	<i>Sibog</i> means to step back – this is done alternately to the right and left. This movement is done in the <i>duyag</i> part where Reyna Elena and the two <i>paradyag</i> wave their flags (simultaneous with the footwork). This movement allows more ease when waving the flags.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Pag-incenso</i> 	Each of the two <i>responde</i> carries a representation of a metal censer that is used in Christian churches during worship services. Incense is a sacramental symbol used to venerate, bless, and sanctify a person or an object. The <i>responde</i> do three double swings. This manner, according to Reference [19] is used to the Most Blessed Sacrament, a relic of the Holy Cross and images of the Lord exposed for public veneration, the offerings for the sacrifice of the Mass, the altar cross, the <i>Book of the Gospels</i> , the Paschal Candle, the priest, and the people.

Movements and Dance Notation	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pagdulot nin Palma</i> (Offering of Flower/showering of flower petals) 	Offering of flowers symbolizes giving praise and honor to a person or an object.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Valse</i> 	Based on the fundamental dance steps of Francisca Reyes-Aquino, waltz (or <i>valse</i>) has a step pattern of: step, close, step. Originally, it is a dance which originated in the western cultures which has a step pattern of right foot back, left foot side, right foot close, left foot forward, right foot side, left foot side. The waltz is a dance movement performed in social gatherings and other celebrations in Europe.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Engaño</i> 	<i>Engaño</i> has a step pattern of: step, cross, step close while moving the arms from first, second, to fourth positions. The <i>engaño</i> step is not included in the international dance vocabulary, however, this movement (especially the arm movement) is very similar to the flamenco dance where the dancer also executes the basic positions of the arms termed as <i>braceo</i> . Flamenco is of Spanish origin. <i>Engaño</i> may have been appropriated from the basic Flamenco movement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>De Cuatro</i> 	While singing <i>Sta. Cruz de Mayo</i> , the <i>para-lagaylay</i> performs a step I call a <i>de cuatro</i> . The step pattern is: step, close, step, hop. While the performer bends before the hop, free foot (R or L) is crossed in front of the supporting foot (forming like number 4). The free foot is then raised forward during the hop. This movement is not included in the list of the basic dance steps published by Francisca Reyes-Aquino. However, the closest dance step to this movement is called, <i>mazurka</i> , a dance which became popular in many ballrooms in Europe in the 19 th century. It has a step pattern of: slide, cut, hop—where the free foot is raised and crossed during the cut and hop respectively. While <i>mazurka</i> is danced in ¾ time signature, the <i>de cuatro</i> step in <i>Sta. Cruz de Mayo</i> is danced in 4/4 time signature.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cadena</i> 	<i>Cadena</i> in <i>lagaylay</i> is the joining of hands R and L alternately while walking in time with the music. This dance movement is usually done in <i>rigodon</i> and cotillion which are examples of the court dances which originated in Europe.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Curtsy</i> 	Reyna Elena ends the <i>lagaylay</i> with a curtsy. Curtsy is a traditional gesture of greeting, usually of an inferior to a superior in the western cultures.

Musical Instruments

In the past, the musical instruments that are used to accompany the performance of the *lagaylay* were violin, guitar, *banduria*, *octavina*, and double bass. These musical instruments are western in origin, in which playing these was a requirement for every young Bikolano to learn in schools that were ran by the Franciscans [20]. Depending on the budget, sometimes the *Hermana* and *Hermano Mayor* (who finances the production of the *lagaylay*) hire string instrumentalists. But most of the time, a sole electronic organ that could mimic the sounds of string instruments is used as accompaniment.

CONCLUSION

Lagaylay is an intangible cultural heritage that is maintained by the people of Canaman, Camarines Sur, Philippines. It affirms their identity and it keeps the faith alive. Like any other ICH, it also strengthens ties among its people. As a sacred symbol, it is imperative to preserve, promote, and practice this tradition for it nurtures cultural diversity, demonstrates people's ingenuity, and supports social cohesion.

RECOMMENDATION

For the preservation and promotion of this heritage, continuous support of the families of the participants, Parish, and the community is needed.

Regular performance is the best way to preserve a tradition. The Local Government should also include in their agenda the preservation, revitalization, and performance of cultural traditions. Similarly, educational institutions should make *lagaylay* as a reference for culture-based education as there is nothing more powerful than our own. Schools should promote nationalist education and activities may be centered to local culture and arts such as the *lagaylay* in order to foster pride and nationalism.

As mentioned on the objectives, this research is only limited to the documentation identification of the parts, movements, and implements of the *lagaylay*. Studies on its other aspects using the theories in music, anthropology, and sociology may be done.

More studies on the depth dances, festivals, and other traditions in the Philippine countryside should be done as these strengthen the local history which is the foundation of our national history.

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