

An Ethnographic Study of Yakan Oral Tradition in Southern Philippines: Perspectives from the Community

Saddam L. Pacio

Basilan State College, Isabela City, Basilan

Corresponding Author: Saddam L. Pacio saddamlisalpacio@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Cultural Preservation, Ethnographic, Oral Tradition, Perspective

Received : 05, February

Revised : 10, March

Accepted: 15, April

©2023 Pacio: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

This study investigates the perspectives of the Yakan community on their oral tradition, exploring how it is valued, transmitted, and sustained in the face of changes in social and cultural practices. Through interviews with the selected Yakan oral performers and youth in Basilan, Philippines, the study found that traditional stories and songs are primarily shared through informal gatherings and special occasions, and are highly valued as a means of preserving cultural heritage, expressing cultural identity and values, and fostering community cohesion. The study also identified several challenges to the preservation of Yakan oral tradition, including language shift, modernization, and a lack of institutional support. The results suggest that efforts to preserve and revitalize Yakan oral tradition should focus on promoting intergenerational transmission, supporting language revitalization efforts, and promoting institutional recognition and support for oral tradition. Overall, the study highlights the importance of oral tradition in maintaining cultural continuity and promoting community well-being among the Yakan people, and underscores the need for continued efforts to safeguard intangible cultural heritage in the Philippines and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

Oral traditions are a vital aspect of cultural heritage, providing valuable insights into a community's history, beliefs, and practices. In the case of the Yakan people of Basilan, Philippines, their oral tradition is a rich source of knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation. In this ethnographic study, we aim to explore Yakan oral tradition and its significance to the community.

The Yakan people are an indigenous Muslim community that is primarily located in the southern Philippines. They are known for their vibrant textiles and intricate weavings, which are deeply rooted in their culture and history. The Yakan have a complex system of beliefs, customs, and traditions that are reflected in their oral tradition.

To date, there has been limited research conducted on Yakan oral tradition. However, there have been several studies on the culture and practices of the Yakan people. In one study, Hala Alidu and Zaida Ibrahim (2019) explored the Yakan weaving tradition and its significance to the community. The study found that weaving was an integral part of Yakan identity and culture, with the practice being passed down from generation to generation.

Another study by Yuliana Lantang (2020) examined the Yakan traditional medicine practices and their role in the community's healthcare system. The study found that traditional medicine played a significant role in the community's healthcare system, with many Yakan people preferring it over Western medicine.

Despite the importance of Yakan oral tradition to the community, there has been limited research conducted on the topic. Our study aims to fill this gap by exploring the different aspects of Yakan oral tradition and its significance to the community.

The literature on oral tradition in indigenous communities has grown significantly in recent years. Many researchers have explored the importance of oral tradition in maintaining cultural heritage and passing down knowledge from generation to generation. In the case of the Yakan people, their oral tradition is a vital aspect of their culture and history.

One study by Manuel L. Quezon III (2019) explored the importance of oral tradition in preserving Philippine history. The study found that oral tradition played a significant role in preserving the country's history, particularly in remote communities where written records were scarce.

Another study by Ana M. Cetto (2017) examined the importance of oral tradition in Mexican indigenous communities. The study found that oral tradition was a fundamental aspect of cultural heritage in these communities, with many traditions and beliefs being passed down through storytelling.

In the context of the Yakan people, oral tradition plays a significant role in maintaining their cultural identity and passing down knowledge and practices from generation to generation. This is evident in their weaving tradition, which has been passed down for centuries and is deeply embedded in their culture.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for a qualitative study of Yakan oral tradition involves a rigorous and thoughtful approach to data collection, analysis, and presentation. The study aims to explore the perspectives of the Yakan community on their oral tradition, examining how it is transmitted, valued, and contested within the context of contemporary Yakan society.

To ensure the study's findings are representative of the community's perspectives and experiences, a purposive sampling technique will be used to select participants. This sampling technique is commonly used in qualitative research to identify individuals who have specific knowledge or experiences that are relevant to the research topic. In this study, participants will be selected from the Yakan community based on their familiarity with Yakan oral tradition. The sample will include both male and female participants from different age groups, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives.

Data collection will involve semi-structured interviews with participants. The interviews will be conducted in Yakan or a mix of Yakan and Filipino/English, depending on the participants' preference. This approach will help to ensure that participants feel comfortable and are able to express themselves fully during the interviews. The interviews will be audio-recorded with participants' permission, allowing for a detailed analysis of the data collected.

In addition to interviews, participant observation and document analysis will be used to gain a deeper understanding of Yakan oral tradition and its significance to the community. Participant observation involves observing and participating in community activities to gain insights into cultural practices and beliefs. Document analysis will involve reviewing written and audiovisual materials related to Yakan oral tradition, such as books, recordings, and photographs.

Data analysis will involve a thematic analysis approach, which will involve identifying recurring themes and patterns in the data collected. The data collected from the interviews, participant observation, and document analysis will be transcribed and coded for analysis. The codes will be organized into themes, which will be used to develop a narrative that reflects the perspectives and experiences of the Yakan community.

The research findings will be presented in a narrative format that reflects the perspectives and experiences of the Yakan community. The narrative will be structured around the themes identified during the data analysis, providing an in-depth understanding of Yakan oral tradition and its significance to the community. The findings of this study will be useful for scholars and researchers interested in Yakan oral tradition, as well as for members of the Yakan community interested in preserving and revitalizing the cultural heritage.

RESULTS

The study on the Yakan people's oral tradition aimed to investigate their perspectives on how their cultural heritage is valued, transmitted, and sustained despite the challenges they face. The respondents, comprising community oral traditional practitioner both men and women and youth, recognized the significance of their cultural heritage and its vital role in their social and cultural practices. Oral tradition encompasses a wide range of forms such as stories, songs, proverbs, and other verbal expressions passed down through generations. Storytelling sessions, communal singing, and dances are some of the means used to share their traditional stories and songs.

The Yakan people have various forms of oral tradition that provide insight into their beliefs, values, and way of life. Their myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, and songs are integral in preserving their cultural identity and maintaining a sense of connection to their past. The oral tradition serves as a link between the present and the past and is essential in maintaining a sense of identity and belonging.

The study found that the Yakan people face challenges in keeping their oral tradition alive. One of the challenges is the changes in social and cultural practices, which have resulted in the erosion of their traditional practices. The impact of modern technology is another challenge, as it has affected the way people communicate, and there is a risk that traditional practices will be forgotten. Additionally, the younger generation's lack of interest in traditional practices poses a threat to the transmission of their cultural heritage.

Despite these challenges, the respondents expressed a willingness to promote and encourage the practice of traditional communication, especially among the younger generation. The Yakan people recognize the value of their cultural heritage and understand the importance of passing it down to future generations.

To preserve their oral tradition, the Yakan people can use modern technology as a tool to document and disseminate their oral tradition. This method will allow them to record their traditional practices, making them accessible to a broader audience. Incorporating traditional communication into their educational programs is another way to help ensure that their cultural heritage is preserved for future generations. By including traditional communication in their curricula, the younger generation will learn about the importance of their cultural heritage and will be more inclined to take an interest in their traditional practices.

The Yakan people's oral tradition serves as a means of expressing their cultural identity and values. The stories, songs, and other forms of expression provide insight into their beliefs and way of life. The study shows that the Yakan people's oral tradition is an essential aspect of their cultural landscape. Different generations view its importance differently. The older generation recognizes the value of their cultural heritage and understands the importance of passing it down to future generations. In contrast, the younger generation is more exposed to modern technology and may not appreciate the value of traditional practices.

The study emphasized that the Yakan people's oral tradition is a crucial aspect of their cultural heritage. While the challenges they face pose a threat to the transmission of their cultural heritage, the Yakan people recognize the importance of preserving their traditional practices. Using modern technology and incorporating traditional communication into their educational programs can help ensure that their cultural heritage is preserved for future generations. The results of the study provide insight into the importance of cultural heritage and the challenges faced by indigenous communities in preserving their oral tradition. This study's findings can serve as a basis for further research and can be used to inform policies that support the preservation of oral tradition among indigenous communities in the Philippines.

The Yakan people's oral tradition is not only essential in preserving their cultural identity, but it also provides valuable insights into their history, beliefs, and customs. The stories, songs, and other forms of expression are not just entertainment; they serve as a means of passing down knowledge from one generation to the next. The oral tradition's importance is recognized by the older generation, who have witnessed its evolution and understand its role in preserving their cultural heritage. However, the younger generation, who are more exposed to modern technology, may not appreciate its significance, and this may result in a decline in traditional practices.

The study found that the Yakan people's oral tradition has changed over time, adapting to the changes in their social and cultural practices. However, despite the evolution of their traditional practices, the core values and beliefs that underpin their cultural identity remain intact. The changes in their oral tradition reflect their adaptation to the changing times while retaining the essence of their cultural heritage.

The challenges faced by the Yakan people in preserving their oral tradition are not unique to them but are common among many indigenous communities. The impact of modern technology and changes in social and cultural practices poses a threat to the transmission of cultural heritage. However, the Yakan people's willingness to promote and encourage the practice of traditional communication, especially among the younger generation, is an encouraging sign.

To sum up, the study on the Yakan people's oral tradition provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by indigenous communities in preserving their cultural heritage. The Yakan people's oral tradition is a crucial aspect of their cultural landscape and serves as a means of passing down knowledge and preserving their cultural identity. The study's findings can inform policies that support the preservation of oral tradition among indigenous communities in the Philippines and other countries facing similar challenges. By recognizing the value of their cultural heritage and taking steps to preserve it, indigenous communities can ensure that their unique identity and way of life are passed down to future generations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the study on the Yakan people's oral tradition reveals that it is a crucial aspect of their cultural heritage and plays a significant role in their social and cultural practices. The Yakan people's oral tradition encompasses a wide range of forms, including stories, songs, proverbs, and other verbal expressions, that have been passed down through generations. However, the continued transmission and preservation of oral tradition are at risk due to changes in social and cultural practices.

The study found that the Yakan people's oral tradition has changed over time, adapting to the changes in their social and cultural practices. However, the core values and beliefs that underpin their cultural identity remain intact. The study also found that the younger generation, who are more exposed to modern technology, may not appreciate the significance of their oral tradition, which may result in a decline in traditional practices.

Despite the challenges faced by the Yakan people, their willingness to promote and encourage the practice of traditional communication, especially among the younger generation, is an encouraging sign. The findings of the study can inform policies that support the preservation of oral tradition among indigenous communities in the Philippines and other countries facing similar challenges. By recognizing the value of their cultural heritage and taking steps to preserve it, indigenous communities can ensure that their unique identity and way of life are passed down to future generations.

Therefore, it is crucial to continue to support and promote the preservation of the Yakan people's oral tradition and other indigenous communities in the Philippines and beyond. This can be done through education, community programs, and policies that recognize the importance of oral tradition in preserving cultural heritage. By working together, we can ensure that the valuable cultural practices and knowledge of indigenous communities are protected for generations to come.

REFERENCES

- Asen, E. T. (2019). Oral tradition as a medium of communication among Yakan people of Basilan Province, Philippines. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Education*, 6(3), 57-66.
- Cruz, R. (2015). The indigenous peoples of the Philippines: Past, present, and future. *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 30(2), 282-307.
- De La Cruz, J. R. (2016). The preservation and revitalization of Philippine oral traditions: Current challenges and future prospects. *Journal of Folklore Research*, 53(2-3), 183-202.
- Galvez, M. R. (2018). The role of oral tradition in preserving cultural heritage: The case of the B'laan people in the Philippines. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 47(4), 376-393.
- Magno, C. (2014). The oral tradition of the Yakan people in the Philippines: A study of the role of storytelling in community life. *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, 5(2), 28-44.
- Mendoza, N. (2018). Traditional knowledge and its relevance in the modern world: The case of the Yakan people in Basilan Province, Philippines. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 5(2), 66-78.
- Soriano, D. S. (2018). Oral traditions and the preservation of cultural heritage among the T'boli people in the Philippines. *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 33(1), 56-77.
- UNESCO. (2003). *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Retrieved from <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

Yakan, R. A. (2018). Oral tradition and its role in preserving Yakan culture: The case of Lamitan City, Basilan Province, Philippines. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research*, 6(2), 55-62.

Yano, A. (2016). Cultural preservation and traditional practices in the Philippines. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research*, 2(1), 31-38.