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Kullilipan Chant: A Reflection of the Tingguian Identity of Hospitality

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the *Maeng Tingguian* tribe's *Kullilipan* chant, which came from the Municipality of Luba, Abra, and serves as a reflection of their cultural identity and hospitality. Regardless of the colonization by the Western countries, the music of the indigenous tribes in the Philippines has been preserved and continuously evolving, incorporating traditional and contemporary features. An ethnographic thematic approach was employed in this study, integrating participant observation, structured interviews, and thematic analysis. There were eight expert *Tingguians* in the *Kullilipan* chant, who served as the participants of the study from different barangays in Luba and shared their expertise regarding its historical foundation, cultural relevance, and role of the *Kullilipan* chant to show the hospitality of Tingguian. Findings revealed that the *Kullilipan* chant is described by its unique nature; an extemporaneous and thematic chorus that is presented during happy gatherings, and social and ceremonial events. The *Kullilipan* chant serves as a way to express greetings to the guests, gratitude, and advice. The incorporation of *Kullilipan* chant in the school curriculum in one of the components of the subject MAPEH, which is Music accentuates its socio-cultural significance and the collective exertion of efforts to preserve *Kullilipan* chant for future generations. This study highlighted the role of chant in promoting and preserving the attitude of unity and cultural pride, exhibiting how the *Tingguians* in the Maeng tribe use music to warmly welcome guests and celebrate their heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Despite being colonized by Western forces, the Philippines continues and still thrives in its indigenous music. Philippine indigenous music has not just been preserved, but it also helped to improve and develop contemporary Philippine music, mixing the old with the new, and merging the original tunes into modern rhythm. The presence of rich and diverse indigenous music shows how creative and artistic the forefathers of different indigenous groups in the Philippines are. Hughes (2021) mentioned that music serves as a medium for cultural interaction among groups from various countries and backgrounds, they share their music to better understand each other. Additionally, Fowler (1994) also stressed that learning music from one's culture helps people understand themselves and their relationship with cultures.

Aplaten (2010) stated that Filipinos are graceful by nature and have a natural love of dancing and music. They sing and dance for different events, including birth, love, romance, gratitude, weddings, victories over enemies, planting and harvesting, journeys, healing, prayer for rain, sun fertility, protection, and even forgiveness. Moreover, indigenous music is delivered in different forms such as chants, songs, and instrumentals that have different

meanings among the different indigenous groups in the Philippines. Oral traditions are crucial in preserving intangible cultural heritage, as they allow their knowledge, systems, and practices to spread across generation (Refae, 2024).

The Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), which consists of the provinces of Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Kalinga, Ifugao, and Mountain Province has various indigenous groups that are spread out in the region, some of them are the Isneg, Kankanaey, Tingguian, Ibaloy, Karao, and Ifugao.

In Benguet, the celebration of *Adivay* of the *Ibaloy* tribe is a fellowship and thanksgiving festival of the different tribes of the said province in honor of the spirit of camaraderie and sharing. Furthermore, Mangahas (2012) said that people flock around a booth playing videos and music of indigenous songs. Another example is the *Hudhud* chants of the *Ifugao*, which according to Rastrollo (2008), consist of narrative chants that are performed by the Ifugao community primarily describing the harvesting of rice and are also performed during funeral wakes and rituals.

Apart from these tribes, the *Tingguians* of Abra also have their kind of chant and music that differentiates them

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from the others. The *Tingguians* are the indigenous group that lives in the province of Abra; as of 2003, they are found in all of the 27 municipalities comprising 40% of the total population and occupying almost 70% of the total land area.

Tingguians are also called “*Itneg*” a contraction of the Ilocano word “*iti uneg*” which means interior and refers to the location of their settlement in the mountainous province of Abra. *Tingguians* were the first settlers in Abra, subdivided into 12 ethnolinguistic groups namely; *Adasen, Balatok, Banao, Belwang, Binongan, Gubang, Inland, Mabaka, Maeng, Masadit, Maydan, Agta or Negrito*. (Romero, 2021) This study focused on the Maeng tribe who originated in the towns of Tubo, Luba, and Villaviciosa in the province of Abra.

While there are different indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices of the *Tingguians* of Abra, there is one tradition that still exists and thrives to be preserved by the Maeng tribe, the *Kullilipan* chant. According to Pressenza (2021), *Kullilipan* is an indigenous *Tingguian* chant that adopts the sound of a Kuling eagle in flight, referring to it as the “Master of the Skies.” The eagle’s ability to soar to great heights that no other creature can match is what gives it this distinctive ability. The eagle is a representation of bravery, agility, grace, ingenuity, awareness, endurance, and vitality. It serves as a way to express hospitality, happiness, and congratulations to the focal point focus of a celebratory event, a practice that is deeply ingrained in their lives. It also represents how the *Tingguians* value their culture and tradition, that they pass these to the next and younger generation. Indigenous song should be used as examples in textbooks so that the appreciation of the culture would still be present in the coming generations (Mangalen, et. al. (2023).

The study aims to discover how the *Kullilipan* chant becomes a reflection in *Tingguian* identity of hospitality. Moreover, this study focused on the documentation and transcription of *Kullilipan* from Luba, Abra that must be preserved.

This study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the *Kullilipan* chant and how did it evolve in the *Tingguian* community?
2. How is the *Tingguian* hospitality being showcased in the *Kullilipan* chant?
3. What is the cultural relevance of *Kullilipan* chant in the eyes of present-day *Tingguians*?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used an ethnographic thematic research design. This involves the researchers setting out and systematically observing the activities, specifically the *Kullilipan* chant of the *Maeng Tingguians* in Luba, Abra, through immersing themselves in collecting a range of data, such as recordings, field notes, and documentation using participant observation. The researchers also used thematic analysis in interpreting the data, wherein similar and shared meanings across interviews are treated and identified to answer the different themes of this study (Bernard, et al; 2016).

The snowball method was used wherein the participants recommended who could be interviewed by the researchers. Eight (8) *Tingguians* who were from Luba, Abra, and are knowledgeable about the *Kullilipan* chant were the participants of this study. The participants of this study are from different barangays of Luba, Abra particularly the barangays of Poblacion, Luzong, Nagbuquel-Tuquipa, and Lun-Luno to further understand the depth of this tradition.

The researchers made use of structured interviews and employed an interview guide questionnaire to gather relevant information on the *Kullilipan* chant as a reflection of the *Tingguian* identity of hospitality. It was also translated into *Iloko* for the actual interview. After gathering data, written answers and recorded interviews were transcribed and translated from *Iloko* to English. Furthermore, the participant observation method of ethnography was used wherein the researchers observed the participants performing the *Kullilipan* chant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This portion presents and gives meaning to the data collected grouped into three themes; (1) the Historical foundation, (2) *Tingguian* Hospitality, and (3) the Socio-cultural relevance of the *Kullilipan* chant.

The first theme, the historical foundation aims to discuss the origins of the *Kullilipan* chant as it answers the questions of where, why, and how the chant became a part of *Tingguian* tradition. The second theme, *Kullilipan* chant as a reflection of the *Tingguian* hospitality explains the process of celebrations wherein the chant is being used and performed. The last theme, the socio-cultural relevance of the *Kullilipan* chant gives importance to the preservation of the *Kullilipan* chant to the younger generation and the actions that are expected of the government and community to sustain the tradition.

Historical Foundation of the *Kullilipan* Chant

“Kullipdi *Kullilipan*, Kullip Kuskukullipanan, Kullipdi *Kullilipan*, Kullip Kuskukullipanan,” -Chorus of the *Kullilipan* Chant

Culture, as passed down from generation to generation, fosters a deep bond between generations, as the respondents define *Kullilipan*. The *Kullilipan* chant, which represents the tribe’s way of life, originated with the Maeng tribe of Luba-Tubo, Abra. It has its tune and rhythm that is usually performed extemporaneously; thus, the chant has no exact lyrics except its chorus. It is a type of indigenous song to express and entertain guests on special occasions such as weddings, Christmas, birthday parties, mass, and others, all except for burial. Expert *Kullilipan* chanters usually write the lyrics and the message that is suited for the occasion.

Oral history telling is better at making historical connections because cultural stories are passed down from generation to generation (Smith, 2006). When asked about the literal meaning of *Kullilipan*, the respondents said that there is no exact translation since it is about the

“ayog ti Kaitnegan ti Maeng” (ethnic language and accent of the Tingguians of the *Maeng* tribe). They claimed that although they heard it from elders singing it, they learned it at school. As *Tingguians* are proud of showcasing the Maeng tribe’s culture and talents, the chant gained recognition on many occasions and school competitions. *Kullilipan* is taught to the younger generation by elders and teachers who are musically inclined.

“Ubbing kami pay laeng ket mangmangngegmin ti *Kullilipan*.”

While the respondents have learned *Kullilipan* from their elders and teachers, they are unable to fully trace its origins. As a result, the *Kullilipan* chant is claimed to have been passed down to generations through oral passage and listening.

Live performances bring intangible cultural treasures to life (Refae, 2024). *Kullilipan* is still performed today on many occasions and is led mostly by elders and teachers because of its extemporaneous nature. Instead of reading their messages, the chanters tend to sing them to the tune of *Kullilipan*. The song’s content varies depending on the occasion, the guests, and the individuals present. For instance, the song’s main theme during a wedding could be advice for the newlywed couple.

Below is a sample of a *Kullilipan* chant for wedding:

“Ti inda pinagayat, ta isu ti panda panagkallaysa, da (name of the couple). Itan ta agasawa kayo, masapul nga agkinkinnaawatan kayo. Aginnayat kayo kuma iti tudotudo. Ken barretan to laeng ti mamagsina kadakayo.”

(This wedding has been performed and successful because of the love of the couple. Understanding each other is important now that you are married. May you love each other, so that only death can break your relationship.)

The *Kullilipan* chant has evolved, and there has been a mix of cultures between *Tingguians*, *Ilocanos*, and other lowland inhabitants. Thus, different variations of the chant occurred and have developed. The chant also adopted the *Iloko* dialect that is widely used even in the Tingguian community of Abra for the wider and general audience to understand the message of the chant. Moreover, while the *Tingguians* have their traditions where the *Kullilipan* chant is being performed, it has also been adapted and integrated into modern events like Christmas parties and other religious practices. The chant as a cultural identity of the Tingguian community is believed to have been performed as part of various social and ceremonial events within the Tingguian communities.

The chant is traditionally performed by the elderly members of the tribe, but at present, teachers have been more active in doing this as they promote the preservation of the Maeng culture. Anyone who can chant and compose their lyrics is welcome to chant the *Kullilipan*. In a recent study conducted by Benedito (2023), Dacuycuy (2023), Navarro (2023), Suarez (2022), Ancheta (2022) and Rabago (2021), part of continuing cultural traditions in a society is their preservation through written texts and this can be done through development of educational materials such as learning activity packets (LAPs),

mobile-based learning apps, contextualized learning materials (CLMs), supplemental aids and other forms for instructional delivery.

In modern times, the *Kullilipan* chant continues to be an integral part of the Tingguian occasions and celebrations, and it keeps on changing but also maintains its traditional form as it maintains its relevance in the face of modernization.

Tingguian Hospitality as Manifested in the *Kullilipan* Chant

The *Kullilipan* chant is an integral part of the Tingguian hospitality tradition. It embodies their cultural values of unity, cooperation, and support for one another. Through the rhythmic chanting, participants express their commitment to helping each other by showing entertainment on different occasions that show hospitality and working as a community, reinforcing the idea of hospitality and mutual assistance among the Tingguian people.

“Maar aramat ti *Kullilipan* iti ania man nga pangragragsak nga okasyon. Maipakita ti panagbisita babaen ti *Kullilipan*, masarakan yanti nilaon ti kanta nga adda ti panangkablaaw mi ken mensahe mi kadagiti nanumo nga bibisita”.

(The *Kullilipan* is used on all joyous occasions to convey greetings to visitors through its content, which includes messages for the guests).

“Dagiti mabalin nga ag*Kullilipan* ket amin nga tao nga ammo da ti agcompose ken mangi- ayog. Ti nilaon ti *Kullilipan* ket tallo: umuna ket greetings. Mabalin nga panagyaman ken Apo Diyos nga namarsua kadayo ken kablaawan dagiti VIP nga bisita kas kada Mayor ken iraman nga kablaawan dagiti tattao nga adda ayanti lugar. Maikadwa ket message. Diay message ket depende iti okasyon, kasla kuma idi kalman adda agkasar ket siak ti nagkullilipan. Diay message yanti *Kullilipan* ko ket pangkasar ti tema na ken tay nilaon mensahe ket advice ko para kadagijay baro nga agassawa. Maikatlo ket diay tono ti chorus nga isapit sapit mi, isu ni *Kullilipan*.”

(Those who can perform *Kullilipan* are those people who can compose and give tune to the said composed song. There are three parts of the *Kullilipan*: first greetings; which can be thanksgiving to God, and it also includes greeting to the leader of the town, and other guests. Second is the message; the message depends on the occasion, for example, yesterday at a wedding, I was the one who performed the *Kullilipan*. Its theme and message are my advice to the newlyweds. The third is the tune of the chorus that we apply, that is the *Kullilipan*).

Chants can set a culture apart from others, highlighting its unique language, musical styles, rhythms, and themes. They become symbols of cultural diversity and help foster a sense of pride and belonging among members of that culture.

All the respondents stated the importance of practicing the *Kullilipan* chant because it is their way to preserve their culture and most importantly to promote their pride and their identity.

“Masapul nga aramiden ti *Kullilipan* ta isu ti mangipakpakita ti ugali mi a kas maysa nga tingguian ken Pilipino nga hospitable.”

(The *Kullilipan* needs to be done because it demonstrates our attitude of being hospitable as *Tingguians* and Filipinos). “Isu gamin mangipakita ti kinatao mi wenna ugali mi a kas maysa nga Tingguian.”

(Because it reflects our identity and customs as Tingguian) “Tapno han maawan ti kultura, masapul adda ti wagas tapno mapreserba ti kultura nga tingguian ti maeng tribe” (To preserve our Tingguian culture, especially the Maeng tribe).

In this theme, we can see how the *Tingguians* value their guests in their joyful celebrations through the *Kullilipan* chant. Their chant creates a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for the visitors. The tune and message evoke a sense of belongingness, making the guests feel comfortable and accepted. By sharing their chants with their visitors, the *Tingguians* are sharing a part of their life and heritage. This is a sign of invitation for the guests to join them and experience their culture. It also creates a connection between the tribe and their audience often heard and listened to in a story-telling manner, wherein the chanters share their invaluable lessons and advice throughout their lives, therefore sharing their history, values, and beliefs.

Socio-Cultural Relevance of the *Kullilipan* Chant

One way of sharing and presenting a certain culture is through music. Anyone who appreciates music appreciates the culture that is woven into the songs and chants. The *Kullilipan* chant of the Maeng tribe of Luba, Abra is a part of their community. This chant strengthens their culture and it also represents their values, attitudes, and identity as *Tingguians*. The respondents, who were *Kullilipan* chanters themselves say that it is also a sign of unity of the tribe. The *Kullilipan* chant is very important to the Maeng tribe in present times, as it gives the audience a glimpse of the life they live and the lessons they learn throughout their community.

According to all the respondents, the younger generation of the Tingguian tribe knows what the *Kullilipan* chant means for their community. The respondents who are public school teachers in Luba, Abra, say that the *Kullilipan* chant is being taught in school and that the high school students can compose and perform the chant but still need guidance and mentoring for them to perform on occasion. Additionally, a retired teacher said that there are also students who come and ask for their help in composing their lyrics.

According to Mangelen, et. al. (2023), singing and listening to songs, as well as music in general, should be included in school activities, it encourages students to express themselves in lessons that relates with them. The role of teachers and the school as a social institution in preserving the *Kullilipan* chant in the Maeng tribe occurs when students take an interest and join the community to experience the culture first-hand. According to teachers

who have been interviewed, the *Kullilipan* chant and other Tingguian traditions are being integrated into their MAPEH subjects and are also a part of the Indigenous People Education (IPEd) curriculum. The students are also encouraged to join the *Kalinawa* Festival, an event that is conducted by the Department of Education -Schools Division of Abra as their Festival of Talents. Overall, students are invited to any occasion of the community wherein their practices and traditions are being showcased.

The *Kullilipan* chant leaves the audience not just musical appreciation, but also lessons from the Tingguian tribe about their daily lives.

One respondent performed the *Kullilipan* chant she gave at a wedding she attended that week.

“Ita ay agew intako nadatngan, Agew ay kagagasaan Panagkasar dad agtuban, Intako ngarud daida danggayan Kullip si *Kullilipan*.”

Dakayo ay agatuban, awatenyo garud ay napinpinsan Panagpipinnateg di tunggal esang,

Inkayo ngarud aywanan nan ayat di tunggal esang.

Dakayo met garud ay nagannak inkayo ngarud ipakaawat Nu kasanu nan pamilya ay naragsak.”

(In this chosen day, a blessed day for the newlywed couple. Let us accompany them in celebrating this occasion.

For the couple, accept each other’s life and values with care and concern.

Most importantly, may you love each other.

For the parents of the couple,

Be the model and guidance of how a family should be happy.)

The chant shows the *kinainget* ti *Tingguians* ti *kinapateg* (giving stringent importance to the Tingguian cultures and traditions), said one of the respondents. There are a lot of lessons that could be learned and heard while listening to the *Kullilipan* chant depending on the occasion that is being celebrated. With *Kullilipan*, the chanters could share their experiences and life lessons that would leave valuable lessons not just to the newlywed but also to the guests who attended the occasion. To end, chanting the *Kullilipan* is a form of patriotism to the Maeng culture wherein their tribe grew in the past and with the community at present, preserved for the future.

The *Kullilipan* chant is not just a song for the Maeng tribe but a story of their life. It is not just a form of entertainment but it is deeply rooted in the customs and traditions of the Tingguian community. The *Kullilipan* chant serves as a cultural identity to the Maeng Tribe, it is an expression of their language and a reflection of their rich history, it is one way of their artistic expression and shows just how creative the *Tingguians* are. It also serves as a platform for social interaction and strengthens the community bond as they use this in celebrated occasions. And lastly, the *Kullilipan* chant is an educational tool for the younger generation about their own culture. Through the chant, they learn about their community’s values, stories, and traditions. And wherever this generation will go, they have their culture to guide them.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while there are a lot of traditions and practices the *Tingguians* of Abra have, the *Kullilipan* chant needs to be preserved and taught to the younger generation at large not only in schools. The *Kullilipan* chant is indeed a reflection of tribal identity and can be a powerful expression of valuing guests and hospitality. Based on all gathered data, it serves as a way for the Maeng tribe to welcome and embrace their guests uniquely, through their love for music. It created a sense of unity and belongingness and shared as this cultural heritage is for everyone who plans to visit their communities today and in the years ahead.

UNESCO emphasizes the importance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) for socio-cultural continuity and community well-being. ICH, including oral histories, performing arts, and social practices, strengthens social bonds and facilitates cultural transmission (Bortolotto, 2016; Casut & Vecco, 2017) It is vital for the *Kullilipan* chant to be preserved and to be documented as this tradition shows how the *Tingguians* welcome their guests into their tribe with songs about their lives. This study shows how schools integrate their tribe's traditions and practices in their curriculum, thus, providing strong grounds for reiteration and importance of the Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) policy of the Department of Education (DepEd). In addition, the study shows the support of the provincial and local government of Abra for the preservation of their culture and to ensure relevant influence of culture with time.

Lastly, as the Tingguian community of Luba, Abra help each other, young and old in guiding and teaching the chant, increased community participation is expected over time. As the younger generation learn the *Kullilipan* chant, their experiences as members of the Tingguian tribe will always be relevant and will be used in their next programs and activities. The Maeng tribe's cultural traditions will flourish even with the modernization, strengthening their cultural identity and community pride for the future generations of the tribe.

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