

Yogad Folk Songs of Echague: Reflections of Life and of Love

Divina Gracia S. Sabio, University of Santo Tomas,
Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Philippines

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Abstract

This paper endeavors to retrieve and translate a collection of Yogad folk songs of Echague, Isabela, Philippines. It further explores the folk songs thematically to establish the Yogad's identity as indigenous peoples. The paper establishes the significant role of folk songs in the life cycle of the Yogad tribe reflecting their culture and traditions. This is a simple way of preserving both the vanishing folk songs and language of the Yogads.

The study recognizes the importance of folk song studies in the Philippines and the need to preserve the oral traditions of indigenous peoples which are abundant in the country. This study also addresses the national need for regional cultural preservation mandated by RA 7356 as part of the objectives of the Philippine National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

The translation approach employed in the study is the Meaning-Based Translation (MTB) by Mildred Larson (1984) which acknowledges a work of translation involving texts growing out of ancient cultures into highly diverse languages spoken all over the world. The folk songs was analyzed based on the classification system purported by Damiana L. Eugenio (1996).

Keywords: folk songs, regional literature, Yogad language, indigenous peoples, National Identity

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Introduction

The cultural heritage of a country defines its peoples. It plays an essential role in the process of cultural identification, in maintaining identity, in creating bonds between and among human beings within a particular place, region or country. The indigenous Filipino cultures manifest many variations in the ways of life in the country. The oral traditions give certain perspective and spirit to the growing nationalism and are a treasure house of art forms, styles and motifs that can be mobilized for contemporary literature. Nowadays, however, these oral traditions and indigenous cultures are rapidly disappearing. Thus, an intensive and extensive study of Philippine oral traditions as means of preserving vanishing cultures is imperative for national identity of a country to remain pure and unique. Hence, the National Commission on Culture and the Arts as mandated by RA 7356 emphasized the national need for regional cultural preservation (<http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca/aboutncca-ra7356.php>).

The Philippines is composed of diverse cultures with 152 different ethnic groups or Indigenous Peoples (IPs) like the Ifugaos of the Cordillera, the Manobos of eastern Mindanao, the Samal or Bajaw, the Sulod of Panay and the scattered groups of Aeta. Each of these tribes have their own language and cultural heritage. However, some of them are being rapidly assimilated by dominant groups which result in the disappearance of other indigenous cultures.

Such is the case in Echague, my hometown. The native ethnic group of Echague is Yogad, but there are also Ibanag, Itawes, Gaddang and other groups that reside there. It is evident that Yogads are now becoming a minority because few people are speaking the language. This motivated me to study the oral traditions of the Yogad tribe of Echague for purposes of preserving their cultural heritage and record their language through their folk songs.

Echague is a town mistakenly identified during the Spanish time as “Camarag”. Camarag, originally founded by Mengal Alingog, was a town in Cagayan province in 1752. In 1776, the site of the original Camarag at the Ganano site was transferred to Sitio Katuray, at the western bank of the Rio Grande de Cagayan. When Cagayan province was divided into two provinces, Camarag became the capital town of Nueva Vizcaya in 1839.

With the creation of the province of Isabela in 1856, Camarag ceased to be the capital of the province. Ilagan was named as the new capital town of Isabela. Originally, Echague covered the vast areas now being occupied by the municipalities of Cordon, Santiago City, Jones, San Agustin, San Isidro, portion of San Mariano, Dinapigue and upstream to as far as Maddela, Quirino Province.

On March 4, 1863, the petition of Gobernadorcillo Antonio Mangadap, a native Yogad, for the creation of a new pueblo was approved at Malacanang Palace by the Governor General Rafael de Echague. The petition was approved with the condition that the new town be named after him. Thus, Katuray was renamed Echague to perpetuate his name and honor (Acosta, 1982).

The Yogads are fond of singing and dancing: “The Yogads are music lovers. Generally, Yogad music, like the kundiman and other Filipino Folk songs and melody is characterized by its sentimental tune... (Acosta, 1982).”

Although some researchers/scholars have already studied the vanishing practices, beliefs and rituals of the Yogads, their folk songs were only mentioned in passing even if most of these studies agree that the Yogads are music lovers. They play the guitar, violin, banduria, accordion, harmonica and other wind instruments like flute and brass. Their songs express the sentiments of the people whose struggle for freedom and liberty has been denied for centuries under foreign domination (Acosta, 1982). The Yogads use folk songs during occasions like birthing, marriage, death, in times of sickness, etc.

Folk song lives in oral tradition and has no original text nor a standard form. As such, it has been handed down orally from one generation to the next. When a song had passed from one singer to another for a few generations and had taken a bit of change each time it is sung, then a song becomes a true folk song. Both words and tune are essential elements of folk song for they are inseparable and considered the organic whole of the genre. The tune gives life to the song, while the words give meaning to it.

In the Philippines, folk song plays a vital role in the life of a Filipino. Almost every stage in the human life cycle is marked by a song (Eugenio, 1997). Folk song mirrors the cultural traditions and history of peoples. Thus, the serious study of folk song as part of regional literature is greatly encouraged, more so because the retrieval and study of Philippine folk songs are very sparse. Most of the existing Philippine folk song collections include only the major languages spoken by Filipinos. The folk songs of the ethnic groups are left within the periphery and considered literature of the margins for they are not understood by many. These folk songs are on the verge of extinction together with the language and the cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples.

Objectives and Locale of the Study

This study endeavored to retrieve whatever text/s that could still be salvaged on Yogad folk songs. The retrieved materials were translated and analyzed. This is a simple act of preserving the Yogad folk songs before time could completely bury and erase them for the next generation to have a glimpse of a collection of cultural heritage.

The place of study were the Yogad speaking barangays of Echague, Isabela which are Annafunan, Soyung, Sto. Domingo, Tuguegarao, Dammang East and West, Malitao, Carulay and Silauan Sur and Norte.

The informants of the study were the Yogad folk song singers and performers of Echague, Isabela. The informants were identified with the help of the officers of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Isabela Chapter. The informants were pre-identified based on their background records with the Commission. Specifically, the informants came at least three generations down the line of the

known origin of the folk songs. The number of informants depended on the NCIP's record and availability of informants.

Materials and Methods

This is a three-pronged qualitative research that made use of translation and annotation processes.

The retrieval process depended on extensive archival research and ethnographical fieldwork which include personal interviews of informants and digital and electronic documentation of folksingers' performances. Transcription of source texts was done right after the field work.

The transcribed materials were translated using Meaning-Based Translation (MBT) purported by Mildred L. Larson (1984). The MBT approach acknowledges a work of translation involving texts growing out of an ancient culture into highly diverse languages spoken all over the world. MBT ensured that the nuances and socio-cultural meanings of the source texts were preserved and remained uncompromised.

The source texts were analyzed based on the folk songs system of classification of Damiana L. Eugenio (1996) who divided folk songs into narrative and non-narrative. However, since some of the classifications of the two divisions were overlapping, this study used the non-narrative sub-classifications which are: Children songs, songs about nature, Didactic songs, Love, Courtship and Marriage songs, Serenades, Wedding songs, songs of Family Life, songs of Friendship and Conviviality, Humorous songs, Occupational songs, Social Protest songs, Religious Festival songs and Death and Funeral songs.

Results and Discussion

Folk Songs are stories of Life and Love

Children Song

In general, Philippine Children songs have soporific tune and repetitive words. They reflect the carefree nature of children and picture their kind of upbringing.

The Yogad song "Wara Lobu Cu" (I Had a Balloon) however, shows that a child could also be thoughtful and mature in nature. The song talks about a child whose balloon flew away. In regret, the child realized that it would have been better if he/she bought food instead.

"Wara Lobu Ko" (I Had a Balloon)

Wara lobo cu (I had a balloon) Sayang lan yu cuarto co (I just wasted my money)
Naccagab tu langit (It flew to the sky) Pinaggatang tu lobu (Buying the balloon)
Mecu ra pa neta (I didn't see it anymore) Tu maccan minacu (If I bought food instead)
Nabattaga sica (It already burst, you know) Nabattug can tappa (I would have been full)

Some Yogad children songs are adaptations of English nursery rhymes like “I Have Two Hands” (Addu Kamat Ku), although some words have been modified. This clearly shows that the tribe was not free from the influences of colonization.

“Addu Kamat Ku” (I Have Two Hands)

Addu kamakku (I have two hands)	Poppokan nu (You clap)
Wigi annu wanan (The left and the right)	Tu mamillu (for three times)
Yoddum tu utun (Raise them up)	Malinis ya kammatt (Clean hands)
Malinis ya itan (Clean to look at)	Malinis ya itan (good to look at)

The Yogad children songs, instead of having a soporific tune has livelier melody for they are often used as means to enliven the classes of grade schoolers. The words are repetitive for the pupils to easily remember and often suggest an action for the children to perform. They are not just sung in schools but also at home when parents or older siblings and even neighbors play with children like in the song “Mak Kansyon Quitam” (Let Us Sing).

“Mak Kansyon Quitam” (Let Us Sing)

Mak kansyon quitam atanan (Let us all sing together) (3X)
Sika, sikam, siquitam atanan (You, all of you, all of us)

Song About Nature

Songs about nature talk of the natural world. They also reflect the relationship of the folks to their natural environment and habitat. The natural world is personified in nature songs. Plants, animals, body of water, are given life that they can talk and commune with the folks.

The Yogad song “Balansinat, Kamatis, Parya (Eggplant, Tomato, Bitter Gourd) is a typical nature song because the vegetables could talk. The singer according to the song could hear the eggplant bragging that it is the tastiest of them all. Bitter gourd in reply gives the moral of the song saying that eggplant should be careful with its words. The song also reflects friendship when bitter gourd addressed eggplant as friend. It also pictures the backyard and the simple life of the folks.

“Balansinat Kamatis Parya” (Eggplant Tomato Bitter Gourd)

Kada lelelao tu kada agaw (Every early morning)
Da balansinat, kamatis, parya (They are eggplant, tomato, bitter gourd)
Simangku sira maggarabid (I listen to them talking)
Yu allun na ni balansinat (Eggplant says)
Sican mananam nikitam atanan (I am the tastiest among all of us)
Kunta si parya, sinabbangga pa (But bitter gourd replied)
“Ampipian nu lan maggarabid kolak” (“Just be careful with your words friend”)

Didactic Song

Didactic songs are heavy on moralizing. The moral is simply shown in the situation for others to detect easily. Didactic songs encourage folks to ponder on the moral to avoid being in the same predicament. Usually it is in a form of an advice.

In the Yogad song “Yu Taddan” (The Advice), a lady who experienced falling into the superficial attitudes and the deceptive demeanor of her suitor gives advice to her friends to be very careful in choosing a potential beau. This folk song is sung on the eve of a wedding when friends of the bride and the groom come together to celebrate the last night of the couple being single. The occasion is a festive social gathering where the ladies and the gentlemen take turns singing some songs. “Yu Taddan” (The Advice) is usually a response to the song “Yu Lappao” (The Flower).

“Yu Taddan” (The Advice)

Ariggu wagi amma fusto (I thought friend that it was true)
Yu anggam ba danu lallaki (The love of those men)
Antu lan yu akwan da (The only thing they do)
Yu mamuru-pureba (Is to try and test)
Matassim yu aggabi-abid da. (Sweet are their words)
Masimpat yu agguyuguyu ra (Proper are their ways)
Kunta yu futu ra ay mamuru-pureba (But their hearts are trying and testing)
Ne anngarigan yu anggam ba (Their love for example)
Ay kattu yu tata ya maseta (Is like a flowering plant)
Amma nalurot, itappol da ra (When it has withered, they just throw away)
Te awan da pamman tu sirbi na (Because it already worthless)
Antyina wagi ammetam ba (That’s why friend let’s not anymore)
Mangurug taku danu lallaki (Believe with these men)
Te yu itamba ra atanan you karalu ra (For they wager all their souls)
Matassim yu aggabi-abid da (Sweet are their words)
Masimpat yu agguyu-guyu ra (Gentle are their ways)
Kunta yu futu ra (But their hearts)
Ay mamuru-pureba (Are just trying and testing)

Love, Courtship, Serenade and Marriage Songs

The most popular Yogad folk songs collected fall on this classification. Even children in the past could easily sing songs of this kind. Apparently, they were also used as lullabies. Through these Yogad folk songs, one sees the profile of a Yogad lover and the attributes of a Yogad lady being courted.

Romantic qualities of the Yogad lover are evident through the words of “Yu Lappao” (The Flower). The man addresses the woman he loves as the flower. The words bear exaggeration as in any courtship song to describe the man’s love for the woman to the extent of saying that the lady is the only cure to his fatal wound.

“Yu Lappao” (The Flower)

Dyesaw, O Nenang (Here I am, Oh Nenang)
Futuku mattangi-tangit (My heart constantly bleeds)
Bangung-ngu ya lappaw (Your fragrance as flower)
Akuruga makammemmi (Is truly very sweet)
Simannu kadda Nenang (Listen, would you Nenang)
Yu daguiraguining nu futu (The miseries of my heart)
Bigad ya mepatay (A wound that is fatal)
Sika lammun yu makabannay (Only you could heal)
Bigad ya mepatay (A wound that is fatal)
Sika lammun yu makabannay (Only you could heal)
Mabeling yu aggyu-guyuan nu (Prim are your ways)
Nikan magimammat (It doesn't waver)
Neyarig tu balsamo (It's likened to a balm)
Amma libro yaw yu gakoku (If my chest were a book)
Kadda allanna neturak ay yu nagan nu (2x). (Your name would be written on its front.)

The Yogad love song “Yu Tamba” (The Promise) speaks of a broken vow. The lady in the song made a vow never to fall in love as she had already padlocked her heart. But because of the man's sweet words of promises, she had unlocked her heart only to be broken once more when the man left for someone prettier than her.

“Yu Tamba” (The Promise)

Wara tata a gabi, mapaddaw yu bulan (There was one night when the moon was so bright)
Lappat maddarannag so tu kakaddattan (Dews are falling on the bushes)
Futu ku ya ne alladdu fersadu nabukkatan (My heart that is locked was suddenly opened)
Mamegafu tu kasta nu nittambam nikan (Because of the beautiful promise you gave me)
Arra guindan tuta unta yu nappromesan ta (For in the beginning the promise we made)
Ammem mangangamtu babay a tameta (You will not fall in love with a lady you will meet)
Gafu lammun naketa ka tu mas makasta nikan (But because you saw someone prettier than me)
Nagin nakan nibatang tu cocopan cadigatan (You left me in the midst of difficulty)

Another Yogad love song entitled “O, Bulan” (Oh, Moon) has a melancholic tone that expresses the fear of losing a lover. The singer is asking for the moon to listen to their fears and to guide them every day. The lover is telling the moon that it would be better to die than to lose his/her love one.

“O, Bulan” (Oh, Moon)

O, mapaddao ya bulan, dagiraging siman nacan (Oh, bright moon, listen to my pleas)
O, manawag ya paddao yadam nican kaggao (Oh, very bright moonlight give me star)
O, mapaddao ya bulan dagiraging siman nacan (Oh, bright moon, listen to my pleas)
Yu kokopan ya daddaman ingca cadda udwan (Would you light this dark path am going through)

Taketa meku mawawan. (So that I won't get lost.)

Chorus:

Amma kalimmunan nacan (If you ever forget me)
Yu anggiam kapangarian (This love when it's broken)
Mas mapi landa yu matay (It is even better to die)
Amma tu sigga matolay (Than to continue living)
Nalurodda yu anggiam (Love is already drowned)
Ingca cadda patolayan (Would you please revive it)
O bulan siman nacan tu madagan (Oh, moon listen to me at once)

Songs of Family Life

The Yogads also have songs of family life that express the ideals of a Filipino family much like any Filipino folk songs of this kind. The Yogad song “Anac” (Child) advises a child to be mature, to think of the sacrifices of the parents and be grateful for their love. The singer could be the eldest of the siblings.

“Anac” (Child)

Udungan nu yu baggim (Take good care of yourself)
Futu cu mattangi-tangit (My heart is crying)
Mannacanacam, mannononot (Be mature, be reflective)
Tu digada amma anni inna nicam (Of the sacrifices of father and mother to you)
Tucura nappataganac (Through them we have grown)
Addu inattaman da ya digat (They have gone through so much trials)
Digat a nelalot, a nagidduc (So much sacrifices, for loving)
A nanaron nicam (2x) (for taking care of you)
Tu antu yao yu quiddawang cu (That is why I ask)
Tu Dios namaratu nonot annu futu (To God who made my mind and heart)
Tu indon nacan tu docal ya allac (To give me so much help)
Taqueto nammucu yu mabbalat tu digada nican. (So that I can thank them for their sacrifices for me.)

“Manggan Da” (Time to Eat) is revealing of the simple Yogad family life. This song could even be considered as didactic song for it moralizes, too. The mother in the song could only afford smoked fish for the family. The singer tells the family to be content of the dish for surely the next day when they have money, they would have some meat. Noteworthy in this song is the typical role of the mother who cooks for the family.

“Mangngan Da” (Let’s Eat)

Cambasao te mangan da (Come on here for it’s time to eat)
Nacagacu ra si Innang (Mother is done cooking)
Cambasao, cambasao (Come here, come here)
Yu yaccan ay sinapa (Our food is smoked fish)
Mappasensiya quitam ambit (Let’s be patient for a while)
Te awan tu cuarto tam (Because we have no money)
Natu lelao, natu lelao (For tomorrow, for tomorrow)
Magyaccan quitam tu baca. (We will eat some meat.)

Social Events Song

The Yogads are fond of fiestas. During social gatherings like town and patronal fiestas, folksingers and other performers would always sing a farewell song that expresses apology for whatever shortcomings they had on their performances and that they pray that the town’s folks would be back again in the coming year to watch them. The entire town would end up joining in the singing which makes it a sort of a closing song.

“Appacammu” (Permission to Leave) shows the humility, faith and gratitude of the Yogads. The song is similar to a prayer where the singers ask for indulgence for their shortcomings, hope for good health and better year ahead for them to be able to meet and celebrate again. The ending of the song expresses strong faith in God for another good year to come and gratitude to everyone who attended the affair.

“Appacammu” (Permission to Leave)

Yaw a nepeta mi (This that we have shown)
Gagginafan wawagi (our efforts folks)
Antu yu kigad nu nammu mi (Is the limit of what we can)
E kiddawan mi (So we ask)
Yo tulok a anggam (Your understanding love)
Yu ammakoma maw (Your forgiveness)
Tu takkurangan (For our shortcomings)

Kigad allelaw tu dagun damman (Until tomorrow and the coming year)
Amma iyada nu Dios yu kawagawayyan (If God would give us the strength)
Dios mebulun nikam atanan (May God be with you all)
Dios mabbalat nikam ya nangat-tam. (May God thank you for gracing the show.)

Humorous Songs

The Filipinos have innate sense of humor. This could be sensed even in their folk songs. The Yogad folk songs also bear these characteristics based on the songs “Nattalebag Kan” (I Passed By) and “Wara Tata Agaw” (One Day). These songs are humorous in that the scenarios they picture show one’s silliness and human frailty.

The Yogad song “Nattalebag Kan” (I Passed By) tells a story of friendship and of rumor mongering of some sort. The singer describes how he came back to life upon

hearing the name of a friend who backstabs him but in time of need would still call him friend. This song could also be classified as didactic and friendship song.

“Nattalebad Kan Nuani” (I Passed By Earlier)

Nattalebag kan nuani (I passed by earlier)
Ammem nallalangi (You never even glanced)
Assisim ko tu ngaral lu (When I heard your voice)
Nattoli angkat ko (My breath came back)

Ara aw kungku lammun (Yes just go ahead I said)
Tu darallu pangngupangu (The destruction you have caused)
Natu pangalufutan (But in times of need)
Wagi kunnu balat nikan. (You will also call me friend).

“Wara Tatta Agaw” (One Day) is a song that tells the experience of a suitor who was bitten by a dog when he went to serenade a lady called Ana, a teacher. This song confirms that serenade is a custom dominant in the Philippine culture.

“Wara Tata Agaw” (There was One Day)

Wara tatta agaw (There was one day)
Nangekan naharan (I went serenading)
Gingku hinaran (I went to serenade)
Si Ana ya maestra (Ana a teacher)
Kinassim ma uning ko (It bit my butt)
Kinariganakan nu atu (A dog attacked me)
Aray! Aray! Kungku (Ouch! Ouch! I said)
Diga nu adyang ku. (How painful my body.)

Conclusion

The retrieval process of folklore studies is rigorous. There must be proper coordination between the researcher and the relevant agency that takes care of the indigenous peoples' rights. The documentation process would become problematic when technology fails. Thus, paper and pen and keen observation are still the best means of data preservation. The archival research also was a daunting experience to the researcher because records and other source materials from the Echague Municipal and Isabela Provincial Libraries were long before condemned due to natural calamities and termite pest. Hence, data collection of this study depended largely on interviews of primary informants.

The accuracy and veracity of ethnic language transcription and translation would depend much on the personal knowledge of the researcher on both the language and history of the peoples. Employing other translators may affect the outcome of the study.

The Yogad folk songs of Echague bear traces of colonization and language accommodation. The songs were influenced by other ethnic languages of neighboring towns and provinces and have several variants depending on the barangay where the

informants live. The folk songs of the Yogads are romantic in nature and showed evidence that they, too had practiced serenades in courting. They also mirror simple folk life and reflect Philippine national identity. The Yogads are described in the songs as religious, humble, humorous, and resilient, loving and family oriented. The folk songs carry the characteristics of true folk literature as they have been handed down from one generation to the next. The informants came from three generations from down the origin of the folksongs like Mr. Alejandro Dumon, Ms. Socorro Quiseng, Boy Clemente, and Juanito Pereira.

There is still a large quantity of Yogad folk songs waiting to be retrieved. Literary researchers should endeavor more to study this ethnic oral tradition. The preservation of ethnic languages, culture and oral traditions of a country would help identify the origin of its peoples thereby establishing the National Identity of the country. The corpus of the Yogad folk songs included in this study although just a representative of the entire collection is a reflection of the Yogad tribe's way of life and a story of the kind of love they have for their loved ones, community and their country.

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Primary Informants:

Mrs. Angelita Alindada (88), Cabugao, Echague, Isabela (Yu Lappao, Yu Taddan, Pappakammu)

Mr. Alejandro Dumon (84), Soyung Echague, Isabela (Yu Lappao, Yu Taddan, Appacammu, O, Bulan)

Miss Socorro Quiseng (86), Annafunan, Echague, Isabela (Yu Lappao, Yu Taddan, Pacammu, Natta Lebad Kan Nuani)

Mrs. Teresita Macadaeg (61), Taggappan, Echague, Isabela (Yu Lappaw, Yu Taddan, (Ap)pacammu, Wara Tata Agaw, Addu Kamat Ku, Wara Lobu Ku, O, Bulan, Nattalebad Kan, Mangngan Da, Anac, Balansinat Kamatis Parya, Mak Kansyon Quitam)

Contact email: divina_gracial8@yahoo.com.