

Roots and Routes: The Role of Women in the Intergenerational Transmission of Intangible Culture

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Date received: April 12, 2024

Date revised: June 30, 2025

Date accepted: July 22, 2025

Originality: 97%

Grammarly Score: 99%

Similarity: 3%

Recommended citation:

Amigo, R. (2025). Roots and routes: The role of women in the intergenerational transmission of intangible culture. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(8), 749-755. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2024.128>

Abstract. This research delved into the dynamics of cultural preservation and acculturation among Ivatan women migrants in Bukidnon, Philippines. Focusing on the role of women as custodians of intangible heritage, the study examined how Ivatan women navigated the challenges of maintaining traditional practices amidst socio-cultural transformations. The research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews with 50 first-generation Ivatan women aged 18 and above, who were purposively sampled for their knowledge and experience in Ivatan culture. Through thematic analysis of interview transcripts, key themes emerged on the transmission of cultural understanding, the impact of migration on cultural identity, and the evolving role of women in Ivatan society. Findings indicated a complex interplay between tradition and acculturation. While Ivatan women remain resilient in upholding cultural practices like language transmission and farming traditions, younger generations exhibit signs of cultural adaptation influenced by modernization and external influences. The study highlighted the significance of intergenerational knowledge transfer in preserving Ivatan intangible heritage amidst shifting socio-economic landscapes. Moreover, the research highlights the pivotal role of women in cultural preservation, emphasizing their contributions to maintaining community cohesion and identity. By shedding light on the experiences and perspectives of Ivatan women, this study contributes to the broader discourse on cultural resilience and adaptation in the face of globalization. It advocated for proactive measures to support cultural sustainability, recognizing the agency of women as cultural custodians and agents of continuity within the Ivatan community.

Keywords: Ivatan women; Cultural preservation; Acculturation; Intangible heritage; Migration.

1.0 Introduction

A woman can tell a story of her culture in a way that humanity can understand. This is evident among the Ivatan women, who have brought their rich culture with them since settling in Bukidnon a long time ago. The pivotal contributions of women to the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage are widely recognized across diverse societies [Wang, 2016; Ardichvili & Kuchinke, 2009; Kirylo & Briones, 2018]. Geographically, the Ivatans are from Batanes Island, a remote northern province of the Philippines, which the government supported in migrating to Bukidnon. They eventually settled in Malinao, Kalilangan, with their arrival recorded in 1958.

Resettlement areas in the Philippines are attributed to the government's economic policy of distributing land, particularly in rural areas and vast fertile regions in Mindanao, for their utilization as agricultural areas and the eventual productivity and economic growth of such localities. Several farm projects located in the Mindanao

Islands were offered to farmers in Luzon during the Magsaysay administration (Horakova, 1971). In 1955, the Philippine Government declared that certain parts of Mindanao would be a "Promised Land" to any interested farmers that are willing to settle and cultivate the area. This motivated farmers from different parts of the archipelago to resettle in Mindanao, as they would be given land to farm. Bukidnon was then one of the declared provinces. The LASEDECO or Land Settlement Development Corporation undertook this program. The Ivatans are one of the settlers, along with the other groups from Luzon, Visayas, and nearby provinces in Misamis Oriental (Santiago, 1979).

The Ivatan people are renowned for their traditional roles as farmers and fishermen on the island of Batanes. Interestingly, it was the Ivatan women who significantly shaped the identity of farmwomen. They are known to be experts in plowing the fields with the use of farm animals. This remains the case, despite some of these women already being professionals in various fields, such as teaching, medicine, dentistry, and business. This is quite remarkable and can be attributed to the geographical isolation of Batanes, which has historically fostered the preservation of their unique customs and traditions.

In Ivatan culture, the role of women was to help perpetuate the economic status of the entire family or society (Buendia, n.d.). Division of labor based on gender is not standard, whereby men and women share in all family activities, both in the home and on the farm. In contrast, Ivatans in Malinao are aware of the present cultural changes that they are experiencing. The traditions, value systems, practices, and even their language are losing their popularity among the young Ivatans. The increasing awareness of the Ivatan people losing their distinct cultural practices inspired the researcher to conduct this study. This is also in support of UNESCO's recommendation on Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, which emphasizes the critical role of communities and individuals in preserving their intangible heritage [Harrison, 2013; Lenzer, 2019]. It is in this context that the contributions of women to the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage are further underscored, aligning with international frameworks for cultural safeguarding [Benboune, 2014; Kuroda, 2016].

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how acculturation affects women as they fulfill their roles as custodians of distinct cultural practices. This aligns with broader research on how individuals and groups adapt when different cultural backgrounds meet, particularly in the context of migration and resettlement [Berry, 2005; Sam & Berry, 2010; De Haas, 2010]. In particular, this paper adopts a holistic approach to Ivatan women from a cultural perspective. It seeks to present how the Ivatan women fulfill their roles as custodians of culture and how these roles were challenged by migration. The researcher, who was born and raised in a resettlement area, had been exposed to distinct cultural traits of the different ethnic groups, including the Ivatans. Thus, the researcher is motivated to examine the distinct cultural traits and the effect of acculturation using sociological inquiries.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study design employs a qualitative approach utilizing semi-structured interviews with a targeted sample of Ivatan women aged 18 years and above, selected through purposive sampling for their knowledge of Ivatan culture. Data collection instruments include modified statements from the Handbook of Indigenous Peoples' Development and a researcher-created interview guide encompassing sections on cultural knowledge transmission, the role of women in intangible heritage custodianship, and an exploration of Ivatan intangible culture. Thematic analysis will be applied to qualitative data, with coding and categorization of interview transcripts to identify key themes related to women's contributions to cultural preservation.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in Malinao, an urban barangay of the Municipality of Kalilangan, Bukidnon. Kalilangan is one of the 20 municipalities in Bukidnon, situated in the Southern part of the Province. It is a 2nd-class municipality covering a total land area of 28,414 square meters. 10 hectares. The town is bounded on the North by the municipality of Talakag, on the South by the province of Lanao del Sur, on the East by the Municipality of Pangantucan, and on the Southwest by the province of Lanao del Sur. It is further politically subdivided into 14 barangays, 4 of which are urban and 10 are rural barangays.

2.3 Research Participants

The subject respondents of this study are the 50 first-generation Ivatan women migrants. Specifically, the

respondents are the Ivatan women who were born in Batanes. The respondents are representatives from two sitios with large numbers of Ivatan residents. The respondents of the study were obtained from the updated list of the Barangay Captain. Since the respondents were limited to first-generation migrants, they were identified using snowball sampling.

2.4 Research Instrument

This study used modified and adopted statements to assess the transmission of cultural knowledge of systems and practices from the Handbook of Indigenous Peoples Development. It also includes an assessment of the role of women as custodians of Intangible heritage, encompassing language, proverbs, idioms, metaphors, customs, and practices. This is used to gather information about Ivatan women's indigenous knowledge of Ivatan's existing and non-existent, yet identified, cultural patterns. Furthermore, the questionnaire assessed the intangible culture of the Ivatans, specifically in terms of cuisine, farm tools, jewelry, and ornaments, as well as any other materials they made or produced. Lastly, a researcher-made interview guide was used to gather data on women's role as custodians of culture.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

This study used specific steps to collect the data. First, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the office of the Barangay Captain. After the request was approved, participants were obtained from the list provided by the office of the Barangay Captain, with the assistance of a key informant, Mr. Anton Escalona. Mr. Escalona is a native of the place and the son of Marcos Escalona, the man to whom the Ivatans are indebted for his relentless efforts in resettling them in Malinao. The researcher introduced herself to the participants and explained the purpose of the study. After the interview, the researcher assured the participants that their responses would be kept confidential and that the study's findings would be used solely for academic purposes.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This research study followed ethical guidelines. The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary. Key ethical considerations include obtaining informed consent from all Ivatan women involved, ensuring they are fully informed about the research's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, with the freedom to withdraw at any time. Participant confidentiality will be maintained by anonymizing and securely storing all collected data. The research will be conducted with profound cultural sensitivity, respecting local customs and seeking guidance from community members. Furthermore, to ensure that this research study is free of plagiarism or research misconduct, proper result communication must be practiced.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Profile of Participants

In terms of Age

As shown in Table 1, we can infer the demographic composition of the participants in terms of age. The largest age group is 66 - 73 (34% of participants), followed by 58 - 65 (24% of participants). Older age groups like 74 - 81 also have a significant representation (26% of participants), while the very elderly age groups (82 - 89 and 90 - 97) make up a smaller proportion of the participants (2% each). This indicates that respondents are predominantly senior citizens, as they are first-generation migrants. Furthermore, as elders in the community, they can be a good source of information on how Ivatan culture is preserved and transmitted.

Table 1. *Frequency distribution of participants in terms of age*

Age	Frequency	Percentage
50 - 57	6	12.00
58 - 65	12	24.00
66 - 73	17	34.00
74 - 81	13	26.00
82 - 89	1	2.00
90 - 97	1	2.00
Total	50	100.00

In terms of Religion, all of the respondents are Roman Catholic. They have retained their religion throughout the settlement period. History tells us that the Ivatans are generally Roman Catholic, influenced by their Spanish heritage. Their religion is deeply rooted in their culture, and after more than 35 years of settlement, they were able to retain it. It was observed during the early settlement that the Roman Catholic religion was a significant presence among the residents, and the Roman Catholic Church was one of the first buildings constructed, preceding the

school (Santiago, 1979). However, the researcher observed in the community that the second-generation Ivatans are Born-Again Christians. This indicates that the young generation is more acculturated in terms of religion compared to the first-generation Ivatans. This can also be explained by a series of intermarriages with other ethnic tribes, such as the Cebuano, Ilonggo, Maranao, and Ilocano. Another reason is that, as Santiago (1979) observed, the Pentecostal church was established in Malinao as early as the 1970s. This may have contributed to a marked decline in interest in religious functions within the Catholic Church by the second generation. This might have contributed to the conversion of the young generation to other religious denominations.

In terms of Place of Birth

Table 4 shows that the respondents are mostly from Basco, Batanes. This is the capital of the province, where early settlers had to assemble for transportation when traveling to Mindanao (Santiago, 1979). A community leader who encouraged the Ivatan to become settlers was from Basco, Batanes.

Table 2. *Frequency distribution of respondents according to place of birth*

Place of Birth	Frequency	Percentage
Basco	28	56.00
Sabtang	9	18.00
Uyugan	6	12.00
Mahatao	5	10.00
Ivana	2	4.00
Total	50	100.00

This might have contributed to the number of settlers coming from the place. Basco, as the capital of Batanes, is the most populous among the nearby municipalities. While some are from Sabtang (an island with barrios scattered along the islet), Uyugan (located at the southern tip of Batan Island), Mahatao (also known as Diura fishing village), and a few are from Ivana. The reason why only a few settlers are from Ivana is that Ivana had few agricultural lands (Hornedo, 1993). Thus, most of the residents are fishermen rather than farmers. The economic opportunities in the resettlement call for farmers.

In terms of Civil Status

Regarding civil status, Table 3 indicates that twenty-five respondents are married and twenty-one are widowed. Meanwhile, some remained single. In an Ivatan community, marriage is highly anticipated. This is displayed during a wedding. Wedding is widely celebrated because being married is expected of them.

Table 3. *Frequency distribution of respondents according to civil status*

Civil Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	3	6.00
Married	25	50.00
Separated	1	2.00
Widow	21	42.00
Total	50	100.00

In terms of Years of Settlement

Table 4 presents the profile of the respondents' years of settlement. The years of settlement for most respondents fall within the range of 51 to 55, followed by those who had lived in Malinao for 46-50 years. Those who have been in Malinao for 41-45 years also follow this. Thus, they have been in Malinao for more than 50 years. This length of time may contribute to their level of acculturation.

Table 4. *Frequency distribution of the length of years in the settlement of the respondents*

Years of Settlement	Frequency	Percentage
30 -35	1	2.00
36 - 40	2	4.00
41 - 45	5	10.00
46 - 50	7	14.00
51 - 55	34	68.00
56 - 70	1	2.00
Total	50	100.00

According to a study on Hispanic acculturation (Lopez, 2010), the acculturation process takes an estimated 10-15 years. According to the table, the shortest years of settlement are 30-35 years. A significant percentage has

been in Malinao, as indicated by one respondent who has been in the place for 66–70 years.

3.2 Ivatans as Custodians of Intangible Culture

Language

As observed in Malinao, the Ivatan language is still widely used and common among the Ivatan elders. However, it is less common among young Ivatan children. This linguistic shift could be due to the children having been socialized in a community where the primary language used at school and in the broader community is Cebuano. This phenomenon of language erosion among younger generations in acculturating contexts is a documented challenge to cultural transmission (Kirylo & Briones, 2018).

According to the respondents' accounts, they learned the language from their parents and within the community. They stressed that language can be transmitted through everyday conversation or when children ask questions. Additionally, they noted that children learn language when it is primarily used at home, typically during everyday conversation. A respondent stated that she had learned the Ivatan language in Batanes. In contrast, another respondent mentioned that she was exposed to the Ivatan language and taught it during communal activities in Malinao. A respondent also emphasized the importance of always "*serbien chirin*" or making use of the Ivatan language, highlighting the conscious effort to preserve linguistic heritage.

Proverbs

Proverbs are learned from relatives, parents, and the community (Batanes), although when asked for an example of an Ivatan proverb, they cannot remember any. Accordingly, it was used to explain to the children how to correct specific misbehavior. A respondent said that she heard it in Batanes, but she finds it difficult to remember the proverbs. Although there is little recollection of their intangible culture, this does not imply that they had forgotten their intangible heritage. During the interview, they were able to recall some stories, epics, and to their surprise, could even sing Laji. They thought they had forgotten how to sing Laji.

Thus, Ivatan women play a pivotal role in preserving this intangible culture. Research consistently shows that women are often the primary agents in the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge and practices, including oral traditions such as proverbs and songs [Wang, 2016; Ardichvili & Kuchinke, 2009; Kirylo & Briones, 2018]. There may be some issues with the transmission of their culture, but with significant recognition, this will unfold. A realization that women can impart or transmit their own culture and tradition.

Idioms and Metaphors

Superstitious Beliefs. Most of the Ivatan women's superstitious beliefs are part of their Spanish heritage, which is based on the Catholic religion. In a baptism, for example, a white dress or "*valtak*" should be worn as prescribed since white symbolizes purity and innocence. Sundays are rest days, and no planting should be done. These beliefs, while evolving, represent an enduring aspect of their cultural fabric influenced by historical interactions [Yeoh & Chang, 2001].

Customs and Practices

The enduring customs and practices among the Ivatans in Bukidnon include their unique celebration of weddings and their Bayanihan system. However, these customs and practices are no longer as popular as they were before due to the advancement of technology and modern ways of life. The Bayanihan system of Ivatans is slowly being abandoned because some Ivatans are now capable of paying men to work for them. This shift highlights challenges in maintaining traditional collective practices in the face of economic changes, a common issue in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage [Lenzer, 2019; Harrison, 2013]. In the early days of the settlement, Bayanihan helped their community to adjust to the new environment successfully.

As observed by the researcher, wedding celebrations among the Ivatans are one of the must-see events that are eagerly anticipated and attended by people from other ethnic groups. A wedding is typically arranged after the families of the bride and groom meet. This is also referred to as "*pamamanhikan*" among the Tagalogs. The man will visit the woman's house with his parents or a companion to discuss the wedding plan. This is referred to as "*pangcachoren*". Santiago (1979) noted the practice of "*pangcachoren*"; however, the researcher observed that it is not practiced in Malinao. Santiago also wrote about a spokesman called "*ichasaray*". This spokesman will serve as a representative for a debate to win the heart of the woman, as well as that of her parents. A debate is often presented in the form of a song, also known as "*Laji*". According to the Ivatans, the singing of Laji during

weddings is no longer practiced in Malinao. There are still a few who know how to sing a Laji, just like Nanay Juana, but she tends to forget some of the lyrics because it was a long time ago when she was still a Laji singer. This generational decline in traditional performance arts underscores the urgency of safeguarding efforts for intangible heritage [Kuroda, 2016]. Furthermore, an Ivatan wedding is a well-organized event where everyone has a written task assigned to them by the overall chairman, which they request from their parents. The chairman becomes the event coordinator of the wedding. A panawagan will be set up as an invitation committee. This committee is responsible for overseeing key tasks related to the wedding. The committee will compile a list of members who will serve as servers, cooks, and decoration in charge. An essential task is that of the light and sound, for dancing is the highlight after the wedding, which usually lasts until dawn.

The wedding gala, or the offering of gifts by the guests, is marked by a couple's dance, during which paper bills are pinned to their clothes. The next dance is for the guests, where a "*manayay*" or usher invites them, or an usherette invites a guest and brings them to the table where a donation is recorded. Afterward, a glass of wine is given to the guest. The guest is then given the honor to dance as with the "*manayay*". This will serve to raise funds for the newly married couple. After the wedding, "*panientriga*" is conducted by the parents of the couple, where the raised funds are given to the newlywed couple, along with some advice from the parents on how to manage the couple's relationship and raise a family. This is done to formally introduce the bride to the groom's family.

Farming

Farming is at the center of Ivatan culture. Farming played a significant role in their culture. It includes the value of hard work, simple living, and the virtues of tending their farms. Ivatan women play a crucial role in farming and share an equal task with men on the farm. It is observed that Ivatan respondents' main occupation is farming. Ivatan women share equal labor with men, or in the absence of a man in the family, they labor to tend their farms. This equitable division of labor within agricultural contexts is a notable feature of many indigenous societies, reflecting distinct gender roles and contributions to communal well-being [Corntassel, 2012]. This is an exceptional value that can be appreciated by some women who prefer to stay at home. Even at old age, they would plant root crops in their backyards, a source of sustenance in the early days of settlement. According to some respondents, it was their parents who taught them about their responsibilities on the farm. When they became parents themselves, they would carry their children on the farm and then show them what they do on the farm. These children are sent to the farm at a very young age. They are designed to clear weeds or perform other tasks that make them useful. Farming is not only vital in the Ivatans' lives, but it has also become a family activity. One of the respondents mentioned "*pilaton*", a ritual made in planting the first seeds. A prayer is done, and this is known as "*pinaskan du kuros*" among the Ivatans. Farming was never forced on Ivatan women. This work is voluntary, but the women love working on the farm. In some instances, a baby is carried on the mother's back or hung in a baby crib from a tree branch, allowing her to continue her work on the farm.

House Management

On house management, the house must be kept clean before they retire in the evening. The house must be cleaned before the family goes to bed. Additionally, newly cooked rice should not be eaten with previously cooked rice. As observed, the Ivatans are family-oriented; relatives must be consistently recognized. They believe that if one person conflicts with another, they should not involve those around them. In a marital relationship, the husband should be served. The Ivatans also recognize the importance of kinship relationships. The value of reciprocity is shown in returning favors to one's relatives or even to neighbors. This is reflected in their "*bayanihan*" activities. This bayanihan is also known as "*pontoon*". It can be seen in the preparation for a wedding, building a house, a birthday, and in the death of a community member. Among the Bisayan group, the communal activity during the wake is called "*dayong*". For the Ivatans, upon the death of a member, everyone is expected to help. In a marital relationship, a misunderstanding between the husband and wife must be settled before sunset. The children must show respect by using "*mano po*" with the elders, as well as with family visitors. The members of the family must always look for one another. They always maintain a smooth interpersonal relationship. In most Ivatan customs and practices, the respondents who act as models facilitate the transmission of culture. The respondents would demonstrate to the children physically and concretely how things should be done. This direct, experiential transmission of cultural knowledge is crucial for safeguarding intangible heritage [Lenzer, 2019]. A respondent also mentioned that celebrations are not too expensive. This is particularly true among Ivatans, who are accustomed to complex life and simple ways of living.

This "*bayanihan*" system may also have contributed to the low acculturation of Ivatan women. Despite their long

years of stay in Bukidnon, they have preserved most of their cultural practices. Their ability to maintain their cultural identity despite external pressures demonstrates a strong cultural resilience [Adger, 2000; Corntassel, 2012]. The domain of their culture rests on their Bayanihan system. If they can maintain their “*bayanihan*” spirit, it will ensure the sustenance of their culture.

4.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights the resilience of Ivatan culture in the face of evolving socio-cultural landscapes. While younger generations exhibit signs of acculturation, particularly in their religious beliefs and language use, the enduring customs and practices among senior Ivatans underscore the community's commitment to preserving its unique heritage. Efforts to document and support these cultural practices, primarily through intergenerational knowledge transfer, will be essential for safeguarding Ivatan intangible heritage in the face of modernization and external influences. Despite challenges such as language shift and the decline of traditional customs, Ivatan women play a pivotal role in preserving and transmitting cultural practices related to language, farming, household management, and communal activities. The Bayanihan system, in particular, remains a crucial aspect of Ivatan identity and social cohesion.

5.0 Contribution of Authors

Sole authorship.

6.0 Funding

This work received no specific grant from any funding agency.

7.0 Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

8.0 Acknowledgment

I am sincerely grateful to Dr. Remedios R. Barretto for her invaluable guidance and unwavering support throughout this research, which significantly contributed to its successful completion. The cooperation and openness of the Ivatan women who participated in this study were essential, and I extend my heartfelt appreciation to them for sharing their experiences and knowledge. I am deeply thankful to my husband, Mr. Cheryl Amigo, for his constant encouragement and companionship during fieldwork, which made the research journey more meaningful. The warm hospitality and cooperation of the people of Malinao during data collection enriched this study, and I extend my special thanks to them. I am also grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Anton Escalona for their generous insights and contributions that enhanced the depth and quality of this research. Lastly, I acknowledge the guidance and blessings of Almighty God, which sustained me throughout this research process. Each of these individuals and groups played a vital role in the completion of this study, and for that, I am profoundly grateful.

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