



## ETHNIC MUSIC, RITUALS, AND NATURE: THE CASE OF BANGIAN IN PAMAGUAN IN ALANGAN TRIBE, ORIENTAL MINDORO

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**ABSTRACT** – Music has been a medium through which humans have expressed their relationship with nature. To further understand the relationships between ethnic music and nature, this study examines *bangian* as part of the *pamaguan* rice festival or traditional work songs in a Mangyan community in Sitio Alangan in Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. Through thematic interpretation of the musical content and its social context and music theoretical analysis of the *bangian*, the study has unpacked how *bangian* ritualizes the community's reality, how nature provides materials for performance of *bangian*, how *bangian* tells about everyday life and reinforces communal bonds, and how nature shapes the performance, execution, and notation of the work songs. Implications and contributions of the study to cultural preservation and identity construction are also highlighted.

*Keywords: ethnic music, nature, musical theory, Mangyan, agrarian rituals*

### INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of civilization, humans have had a symbiotic relationship with nature (Negi, 1998). As sense-making creatures, humans have developed systems of meanings around their doings and the natural environment from which they draw much of sustenance (Tagg, 1982). This system of cultural practices and the beliefs that underlie these are often expressed not only in spoken words but also through sounds that either mimic sounds produced by animals or natural phenomena (e.g., thunder) as well as through the use of naturally occurring objects like stones, sticks and sheepskin (Tagg, 1982; Petrovic and Ljubinkovic, 2011). It has been argued that music may be a way for people “mapping reality through metaphors of sound as if it were a parallel way of thinking to the visually dominant metaphors of our speech and written symbols” (Dunn, 1997: 2). Unlike vision where “our sense of vision emphasizes the distinct boundaries between phenomena,” the experience of listening is often

one of perceiving the inseparability of phenomena” (Dunn, 1997: 1).

Music and nature have always been seen as interconnected and mutually constitutive of each other. Before the Cartesian separation of the cultural practices and the biophysical worlds (Harle, 1996), ancient societies have never seen these two domains as separate from each other. While nature has a materiality that exists apart from human consciousness, its status in the social world is shaped by people's interpretations of it and enacted in discourses and artifacts, music included (Bird, 1987).

The paper attempted to understand the relationships between ethnic music, rituals, and nature by examining traditional work songs in an indigenous community in the Philippines. Set in the Mangyan community of Sitio Alangan in Oriental Mindoro, Philippines, the study recorded and analyzed *bangian* as part of the *pamaguan* rice festival. Based on this analysis, the study

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attempted to unpack the role that the natural environment plays in the performance of the work songs and the role that the traditional music performs in the social life of the community.

We argue that this study can contribute not only in expanding our understanding of the relationship between music and nature but also in cultural heritage preservation. While there have been previous attempts to document ethnic music in Mangyan and other indigenous communities in the country, the study attempted to build on these by interpreting traditional music from the perspective of its relationship with the natural environment. This has several implications. First, it provides us with creative lens to understand the everyday lives of this rarely understood community. Second, in situating the traditional music in the agricultural practice of the community that performs it, the study can unpack the complex relationship between the musical form and content and the natural environment in which it is enacted. With more extensive research in the future, such understanding can help identify ideas on the use of traditional music for conserving this nature for the benefit of the local community (Chiang, 2008; Sahi 2010; Gilmurray, 2012).

The study's attempt to preserve this cultural tradition with proper documentation goes beyond the goal of protection for posterity. We see cultural preservation as a means for the appreciation of the community's intangible and tangible cultural heritage and a space for members of the community to construct individual and collective identities. As Susemihl (2010) cited, cultural heritage helps in the formation of identities when people transfer "the significance of their respective material and immaterial historical products from the past to the present and to future generations" (Albert and Gauer-Lietz, 2006: 30). Not only can cultural artifacts be a source of pride for the indigenous community, studying and preserving these traditions also enable people outside the community to have a better understanding of indigenous people, which through colonialism have been marginalized and gazed at as the "primitive" Other (Morris, 1997; Carino, 2012).

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

While the literature on Mangyan music has been relatively scant, this section presents the review of related literature that provided the basis for conducting the documentation of *Bangian* in *Pamaguan* of Alangan Mangyan which is the thrust of this study. We commence with a review of ethnic music in the Philippines, of which *bangian* is one of the traditions. A survey of world ethnic music is presented to show the relationship between Philippine ethnic music with its counterparts in selected countries or regions. With this backdrop, an introduction to Mangyan ethnic music is presented, particularly the agrarian context in which music in these communities are performed. The section ends with discussion on the relationship between ethnic music, rituals, and nature.

### **A. Ethnic Music in the Philippines**

The CCP Encyclopedia (1994) cited that, Philippine musical traditions are diverse. Although they have many common instruments and life cycle functions, they vary in form and structure, performance media, style, aesthetics, and theoretical properties, such as tuning temperaments, scales, modes and terminologies. Many Philippine cultural traditions evolved over the centuries. A small minority of Filipinos, perhaps less than 10%, remained untouched by or resisted the Spanish colonial campaign to convert the archipelago to Catholicism, allowing them to preserve their cultures and practices.

In most tribal communities that have no generic name for vocal music (or "music" for that matter), each vocal genre bears a specific name, usually referring not only to the musical and textual contents but also to its social role. The vocal repertoire consists of a great variety of types, forms, styles, uses, and functions. Some of these life-cycle songs are lullabies, songs related to birth, courtship, wedding rites, laments for the dead and work songs that accompany the different phases of the agricultural cycle, fishing, hunting, gathering of firewood, etc. Examples are "the **Acta dururu**, the general term for work song; the Subanon **gagonapu**, referring to hunting or fishing; the **Ata panubad**, a prayer before

## Ethnic Music, Rituals, and Nature: The Case of BANGIAN IN PAMAGUAN IN ALANGAN Tribe, Oriental Mindoro

planting; the **balatuking**, the harvest song of the Manobo; the **sowe-ey**, rice-pounding song of the Bontoc; the Kalinga **daku-yon**, for hunting bats; the Ilongot **dinaweg** for catching wild boar, and the dandannag and owayat, sung while gathering firewood; and the Batac **didayu** for wine making. Songs refer to particular occasions or activities and express individual feelings and emotions” (CCP Encyclopedia 1994: 30).

Many vocal rendition can be observed in tribal communities in Philippines such as solo or group singing, responsorial, song debate, acappella or with accompaniment. The example of solo songs with accompaniment can be seen among the highland groups of Mindanao, Palawan and Islamic coastal groups. Meanwhile, the song performed in groups which is considered as the work song is known as the Bontoc chey-assa, a rice-pounding song (CCP Encyclopedia 1994).

The songs are based on “certain metric patterns which are not strictly complied with in actual performance” (CCP Encyclopedia 1994:35). The same source described local ethnic music further as follows:

The melodic structures vary from the most ornamented or melismatic to syllabic and speechlike rendition. Vocal techniques include trills, vibrato, slides, and glottal stops. Each cultural tradition has its own set of musical concepts and aesthetic values. In many cultures, is not purely auditory or affective: the musical or sound component may be part of a larger artistic act. In most vocal repertoires, the text functions as the main artistic element more than the musical sound, where poetry and rhetoric define the value of a song as a whole (CCP Encyclopedia 1994:34).

Overall, Philippine traditional music is in free-rhythm. The basic pulse connects the group rendition but there is a bit of difficulty in terms of executing the downbeat. Without affecting the freedom to innovate with indefinite duration on the motifs, phrases, rhythms of the music, the opening and closing formulae function apply in ensemble of instrumental musics which describes the formal elements (CCP Encyclopedia 1994).

### B. World ethnic music: Some examples

Just like Philippine ethnic music, tribal music in other societies are observed to be as simple when seen from the Western musical forms like operas, symphony orchestras, and electronic-music studios. Upon close examination, however, it is actually more complex than our first impression would lead us to believe.

North and some South American Indian Music, just like Philippine ethnic music, is basically vocal. There is a wide variety of form, but many of them fall into a dual pattern where the song is repeated in part or with a variation. A lot of their songs are performed in planting and harvestings seasons (Fields 1993). However, it is noted that there are some tuned-produced instruments, especially in North America, although flutes are an important exception.

On the other hand, the music of black Africa is homogenous, especially given the numerous different cultures, languages, and even racial groups that exist on the continent. Forms are quite short (Reimer et, al 1972). The composition of a song usually has many repetitions—with no precisions but with variations. It is described by the method of one sung by a leader, the other by a responding group or known also as the responsorial which is usually performed in Philippine ethnic communities. African music has this dualistic structure, which is one a tone higher than the other; or one monophonic, the second polyphonic that can be observed at various levels. A distinctive characteristic of African music is its close relationship to language which is similar somehow to the music of the Philippine tribal music. Most African languages are tone languages: through the pronunciation of pitch pattern the meaning of a word is adopted.

Obviously, when words are set to music, the composer is tasked to take into account their pitch patterns; otherwise the words may be understood. The language tones are served to give signal on “talking” drums, horns, whistles, and other instruments for which African cultures are considered popular, and in strictly musical situations as well sentences may be translated into melodies that become the bases of instrumental

pieces and improvisations. The main characteristic of African is their rhythmic complexity. African traditional music is usually performed at rituals of birth, marriage, and livelihood activities like hunting, farming, gathering, etc. (Traditional African Music, 2008).

Menuhin (1977) pointed out that the music of the Far-East, comprising China, Japan, South-East Asia and Indonesia, has distinct features compared to Europe and African music. The music of the high oriental cultures is claimed to be the venue of professional musicians, with a separate and inimitable “folk” music predominating within tribal culture. Furthermore, the music of the Far-East is quite different in terms of form and scale in their songs. Though, these countries contributed the pentatonic (five-tone) and heptatonic scale to the world and illustrate the enormous rich and varied musical culture, the Philippine music remained intact with regards to the style, form and scale which were adopted from the West (diatonic and chromatic). When it comes to the tribal music, the Philippine ethnic music and Far east indigenous music are both complex and simple and more vocal than instrumental (Menuhin, 1977).

According to Kamien (2000), North Africa and near east countries emphasize melody and rhythm, rather than harmony or texture. Music in nonwestern culture uses different modes or scales and usually, the scales have five, six, or seven tones. Philippine traditional music has drawn influence from nonwestern musical styles and over time also adapted Western influences.

### C. Ethnic Mangyan Music Tradition

According to the CCP Encyclopedia (1994), one of the tribes that occupies in Northwest Central Mindoro is the Alangan Mangyan. These minorities are swidden agriculturists who reside in a tiny or large abodes. The families in the tribe are usually kinfolk related by blood or marriage ties. Their spiritual beliefs are connected to their ways of livelihood which is swiddening.

Agricultural ceremonies evoke the relevance of farming and the belief in spiritual

beings or forces that can give a good harvest. **Binayi** is a sacred female spirit, caretaker of the rice spirits or the **kalag paray**. She is married to the spirit **Balungabong** who is aided by 12 fierce dogs. Erring souls are chased by these dogs and are eventually drowned in a cauldron of boiling water. The **kalag paray** must be appeased to ensure a bountiful harvest. It is for this reason that specific rituals are conducted in every phase of rice cultivation. Some of these rituals include the **panudlak**, the rite of first rice planting; the rite of rice planting itself; and the rites of harvesting which consist of the **magbugkos** or binding rice stalks, and the **pagmag-uhan**, which follows the harvest.

The traditional Alangan “big house” has different levels or “paykamalayan”, which is a spacious dwelling for a new families who live together and are related by marriage or blood ties. Each family has to contribute their stocks of seeds to the **kuyay** (caretaker) who is in charge of preserving the rice seeds for the next planting season (CCP Encyclopedia, 1994).

The Mangyan traditional music can be understood in terms of the “ambahan”, which is a literary product and poetic expression of the Southern Mangyans of Mindoro, Philippines (Mangyan Heritage Center, undated). Postma (1971) introduced the compilation of Ambahan to present across-section of the Mangyan poetic verse with regards to the life-cycle of the Mangyan, first Ambahans to be chronological, from birth and infancy to death.

The “ambahan” is a rhythmic poetic expression with a certain beat of seven syllable lines and having rhythmic end-syllables. It is most often in a manner of a chant without assigned tune or playing by a musical instruments. Ambahan aims to express in an allegorical way, liberally using poetic language, certain situations or certain characteristics referred to by the one reciting the poem (Postma 1971).

While the “ambahan” is part of the universal and normal order of music and musicality development, it also represents the high level of sophistication of the melody in Far Eastern music. Compared to that of the West, the

## **Ethnic Music, Rituals, and Nature: The Case of BANGIAN IN PAMAGUAN IN ALANGAN Tribe, Oriental Mindoro**

melody in this part of the world relied more on vocal rather than instrumental music. It is usually performed at the celebration of the agricultural year with songs and dances. Music was the main element of the religious ritual of the early dynasties (Menuhin 1977). One can also surmise about the influence of Chinese traditions on Mangyan music given that the Mangyan people have had commercial relations with Chinese traders as reflected in 13<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese dynastic records (CCP Encyclopedia, 1994).

### **D. Ethnic Music and Nature**

In the previous discussion, we have seen the connection between traditional music and the natural environment in which they were executed, particularly in the context of early agrarian societies. The first influence of nature can be explained in terms of its “provision of physical matter”. It has been argued that music was refined by the humans’ masterful use of the natural material (e.g., sheepskin, wood, metal) for the production of tone. Tagg (1982: 2-3) illustrated how music evolved from early humans’ need to express him/herself through the natural world around him/her:

Imagine the musical equivalent of the caveman hunter-painter of Lascaux: when he uses the bone of a dead animal as a flute or makes music with the bow from which he shoots arrows to kill the animal providing him and his family with both food and clothing, he expresses a direct musical relationship between himself and nature.

Tagg (1982) also said that music has been a means for humans in early agrarian society to perform their animistic rituals and express their spiritual beliefs. Drawing upon the sounds of nature – wind and thunder – they create songs, chants, and dances that represent their collective attitudes and values.

The relationship between music and nature can also be explained in terms of human mimicry of animal sounds to create sounds. Animal sounds have also been imitated in traditional music. In Serbian music for example, animal sound patterns are recurring motifs in both songs and dances (Petrovic and Ljubinkovic

2011). Even traditional dances are also named after animals.

The similarities between traditional music and natural sounds were also echoed by Pope (2010: 65) who argued that that music, cultural diversity and biological diversity are interrelated. He pointed out that:

...The sounds and movement of birds, insect and other animals, of wind and waves and other natural phenomena, are often represented in the music, dance, and stories of indigenous peoples. Moreover, the materials for making indigenous musical instruments come originally from the natural environment. Thus the sounds of instruments and the process of making them, as well as the content of songs, stories and dances, connect people’s daily lives to the diversity of plants and animals around them. Traditional performers express the value and diversity of their natural environments through sound and movement, and in this way they help to maintain the environmental consciousness of their cultures.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study generally aimed to explore how nature and working songs in Alangan tribe mutually influence each other. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Describe the indigenous working songs of the Alangan tribe and the rituals and other practices in which they are performed,
2. Analyze the notated work songs in terms of music theory, and
3. Analyze the working songs in terms of their relationship with the natural environment, including the roles they perform in the life of the community.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **A. Methodological Framework**

Given our interest in understanding the relationship between the work songs, rituals, and nature, the approach that we took to answer the research objectives saw the realities of “music”,

“rituals”, “nature”, and the “relationship among the three” as socially constructed phenomena (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and not as preexisting realities that have essential characteristics. The study took the perspective that such relationships are products of people’s interpretations and rather than the ‘realist’ view these phenomena exist ‘out there’. These songs and the meanings associated with them arise out of social processes sustained by language, which is the system people use to “objectify subjective meanings and to internalize socially constructed meanings” (Allen, 2005: 38). The study also takes the view that such meanings are never fixed given that the words people use to make sense and express their experience is variable over time and can carry several meanings across contexts (Burr, 2003).

While we recognize that “nature” has materiality that exists apart from human interpretation, we interpret “nature” here as consisting of both the biophysical and the social interacting in multiple ways. We take the view of Harley (1996: 2) of “links between nature and culture, seen not as opposites, but as permeating one another in a mutual relationship.”

In order to understand the relationship between ethnic music, nature, and the social context in which they are embedded, the study adopted a single-case approach (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003). Understanding this phenomenon requires analyzing the dynamics of the musical performance and the functions it serves in the community. A case approach is suited to this inquiry because it lends itself best to answering “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 2003). Given that our research interest, a single case approach, while limited in terms of generalization (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), is nonetheless appropriate for a deep, interpretive and holistic understanding of the phenomena in question (Stake, 2003; Yin, 2003).

## B. Data Gathering

The first author lived with the participants for one week in Alangan tribe in Oriental Mindoro in October 2012 and two weeks in January 2013. In-depth interviews with the elders and tribal leaders were applied to get the authentic

information essential for the study, in particular the work songs, the rituals in which they are performed, and people’s reasons for singing the *bangian*.

Participant observation was done to obtain the manner of singing of the song verses and learn their vocal styles in performing the *bangian* in the *pamaguan*. The types of instruments used in the performance were also noted.

The study used unstructured Focus Group Discussion with two to four respondents from the community to ascertain the data gathered from the key informants. Field notes were kept to record the data while songs were audio recorded with the permission of the participants (Best and Kahn, 1998). These procedures were employed to capture complete characteristics of the ethnicity of SitioSulong, Alangan tribe.

## C. Data Analysis

The first author wrote down the lyrics of the songs and translated them from Mangyan to Filipino. The authors collaborated in the translation of the *bangian* into English. The *bangian* songs were also categorized in terms of the topic of the song and the purpose for which they are performed.

The first author notated the *bangian* and analyzed them according to music theoretical elements of temporal, tonal, timbre, textual and formal.

Both authors collaborated in the identification of themes between the music and nature, using the data gathered and preliminary analysis made by the first author. The analysis involved categorizing the data according to ritual involved, song’s topic, instrument used, theoretical element, and purpose of performance. Using these categorizations and keeping the music theoretical analysis also in mind, the authors made conceptual maps and notes to identify how such elements relate to nature. Typical of qualitative research (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998), the process of thematic analysis was iterative - going forth between our analysis of the data, theme

## Ethnic Music, Rituals, and Nature: The Case of BANGIAN IN PAMAGUAN IN ALANGAN Tribe, Oriental Mindoro

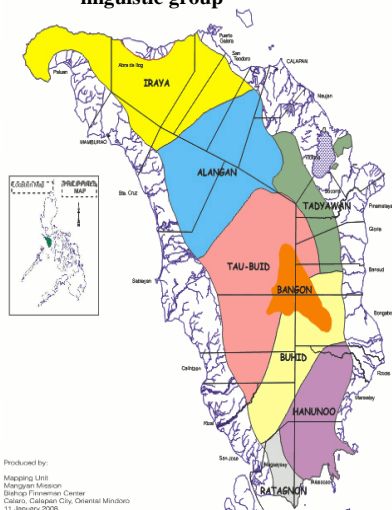
categorization, and readings of other work dealing with relevant topics at hand.

### D. The Study Site

The study focused on a Mangyan tribe in Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. There are about seven various ethnic groups living in Mindoro, collectively called the Mangyans, these groups are unique when it comes to language, customs, and ways of living. However, only the ethnic group residing in the south of Mindoro, roughly comprising the areas within the municipalities of Bulalacao (San Pedro), Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro and San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, claims the name Mangyan as the descriptive name of their tribe. To emphasize their point, they might add the epithet: "Hanunoo" Mangyan, that is, a "truly, real, genuine" (Mangyan Heritage Center, undated).

The study was conducted in Sitio Sulong, Barangay Dulangan III, Baco, Oriental Mindoro (Figure 1). The community is composed of 25-30 families as of January 2013. Each Mangyan family has an average of five members and majority of the population is young (0-20 years of age). They communicate using two languages: Tagalog and Mangyan (Alangan). The missionaries of REAM for Christ Mission also provided some insights relevant to the study.

**Figure 1. Location map of Alangan ethno-linguistic group**



The research participants belong to the Alangan tribe, which is located in the northern part of both provinces Oriental and Occidental Mindoro, occupying Mt. Halcon, which serves as their wide abode. Some of the people of Alangan ethnic group are found in Lantuyan and Paitan settlements located near the midstream of the Dalungan River. The two main provinces of Mindoro, known as the Oriental and Occidental, are home to the seven tribes of Mangyan. Collectively they are called "Mangyan" but each tribe has its unique ways of living, history, and culture. The Mangyan population is estimated at 100,000.

According to the research participants, Alangan refers to "a group of people whose culture is awkward", and is derived from the Tagalog word "alangan", which means among other things "uncertainty", "doubt" or "precariousness".

The site is a 20-30 minute walk away from the main road. The topography of the community is moderately rolling with five to ten degrees and approximately 100 meters above sea level at the foot of Mt. Halcon (Tolentino, 2001). This tribe consists of communities that occupy northwest central Mindoro. One of those communities is Sitio Sulong.

According to the Mangyan elders, Sitio Sulong has been inhabited by the Mangyans of the Alangan tribe for a very long time particularly by the Pedro and Talibukas families. However, it was not yet established and remains unnamed for a time. A former village chieftain claimed that his grandfather owned the community and they used to plant rice in that area before the Tagalogs grabbed it from them.

In 1957, the road was constructed in the lowland due to the logging operation of Calapan Lumber. The road to the village, which is not yet concrete up to the present, is connected with the national road of Calapan to Baco. It was in the year 1955 when the population of Tagalog migrants bought or squatted the lands owned or maintained by the Mangyans. Eventually, the building of the lowland communities or Barangays with government started. It was during

this period when Barangay Dulangan III (formerly San Ignacio) was established.

The Mangyans were eventually displaced from the lands they owned or have been maintaining for a long period of time. It was during this time when the Talibukas and Pedro families were displaced. It was rumored that one of the two wealthiest families in Oriental Mindoro at that time bought or more exactly squatted on the land of the two families.

According to the Mangyan elders, they were obliged to move into the interior of the mountain. There, they built a small community and named it Sulong. Other Mangyans joined the two families and lived there together for some time. After seeking the approval of the authorities, they went back to their former land (Tolentino, 2001).

### E. The Researchers' Context

This research was part of a larger program implemented by the church organization of which the first author is a member and the cultural program coordinator. The church organization's program has several components, including livelihood, scholarships, missions, and cultural preservation. Using participative approach, the program has worked with the local community to help them address their major problems and concerns. While the program is mission-based, it espouses the recognition and preservation of the indigenous people's cultural identity, especially their traditional cultural expressions. The church and other religious organizations fund the program.

As part of her cultural preservation work, the first author has initiated the notation audio-, and audio-visual recording of traditional songs and performances. She has also worked with the community in organizing a stage performance of the traditional songs and dances by some members of the community at the church organization's center in Laguna, with funding from the latter.

The second author, on the other hand, has worked with the first author in several cultural activities at his home university. He has had previous interactions with some members of the church organization the first author belongs to.

### F. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study focused on unpacking the relationship between nature, rituals, and ethnic music. While it does not aim to develop a long-term cultural preservation plan for the traditional songs at this stage, it is hoped that the notation and documentation of the traditional songs can become one of the bases for future initiatives in the preservation of the said cultural expression.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we shall describe the indigenous music (*bangian*) performed by the members of the ethnic community within the context of a rice harvest ritual (*pamaguan*) as well as the notation and theoretical analysis done on the traditional music. The second part will present the themes on the relationship between the *bangian* performed during *pamaguan* and nature, which refers to both the physical environment as well as the social context in which the community members are situated.

### A. Nature of *Bangian*

#### 1. *Bangian* as part of *Pamaguan*

Upland agriculture or *kaingin* system is their main source of income. The community members usually plant rice in the sloping areas of the mountain and depend on rainpest management. They have the *bayanihan* wherein family relatives and almost everyone in the community are invited to join in planting grains at the start of the season and up to harvest time. Alongside with this cooperative farming activity, the Sulong community has this inimitable style of showing their *katuwaan* or *kasayahan* (merriment) called *bangian*-- a song of celebration or song of joy which they do from planting to the harvesting of rice. *Bangianis* is a kind of song in Alangan, which has a theme of planting, teasing, courting, or describing of how work is done. This song is usually performed by the women and men (the parents), youth girls and boys (the siblings) who are involved in the *bayanihan*. *Bangianis* mostly performed in a feasting harvest ritual called as the *pamaguan*.



**Ethnic Music, Rituals, and Nature: The Case of BANGIAN IN PAMAGUAN IN ALANGAN Tribe, Oriental Mindoro**

*Pamaguan* consists of eight steps or procedures that are accompanied by the singing of the *bangian* and playing of musical instruments made of wood and bamboo. This ritual is restricted within a family if the volume of harvest is not large enough to be shared with the whole community. Below are the steps in *pamaguan*:

1. **Agsanglaywa or Magsangagna** refers to replacing of drying grains under the sun. (*Ginagawaitokapalit ng pagbibiladupangmatuyoangpalay.*)
2. **Agpamuteor Pagkuhang “Popped Rice” o busangbigas** is cooling of the rice grains before pounding (*Ginagawahabangnagpapalamig ng palaybagobayuhin.*)
3. **Agpallasad or Sabayang pagbabayo** is when two to four people simultaneously do the same thing.
4. **Aglayap or Tinatahipan** is when rice grains are separated from the rice hulls (*Ginagawaupangmaibukodangkaramihan ng ipasabigas*)
5. **Agpasiri or Pagpapaikot ng bigas** refers to the separation of remaining husks from the rice grains the second time around (*Ginagawaupangmaihiwalayangpasian sabigas. Angpasian ay angbigasna may nakakapit pang ipakayakailangan pa ulimabayuhin*)
6. **Kalu-kalo** is getting the clean rice and preparing it for cooking (*Inihihiwalayangbigasnahandanangisaing*).
7. **Agtungtung or Pagluluto** is simply cooking the rice or *sinaing*.
8. **Agdamara or Pagsalu-salu** where the whole community is feasting together.

**2. Kinds of Bangian in Pamaguan**

While undertaking these steps in the *pamaguan*, the members of the community sing a

number of *bangian*. Below is a list of the *bangian* recorded in the field and their respective translations in Filipino and English as well as the topical content of each song (Table 1).

**3. The Notation of Bangian**

To represent the aurally perceived *bangian*, the first author notated the songs as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Notation of bangian in pamaguan**

**PAMAGUAN (Feast Harvest Ritual)**

Notated by: MD Rebutar

Table 1. *Bangian* translation and topical content

<b>BANGIAN</b>	<b>Tagalog translation</b>	<b>English translation</b>	<b>Topical content</b>
<p><b><u>APUGAN BIYOGSO</u></b></p> <p><b>APUGAN BIYOGSO NO YEWEDE PANTAY TUNGLO AKO DAYO KAYMO</b></p>	<p><i>Kung Hindi Pinagpantay-Pantay</i></p> <p><i>Ang Lagayan Ng Apog Ayoko Na Sa Iyo</i></p>	<p>If the lime put in the containers are not equal, I don't like you anymore.</p>	<p>Teasing</p>
<p><b><u>APUGAN BIYENGLAY</u></b></p> <p><b>APUGAN BIYENGLANG NO YEWEDE PANTAY PANTAY AKO DAYO MAYLALAY</b></p>	<p><i>Kung Ang Lagayan</i></p> <p><i>Ng Apog Ay Hindi Maayos Ang Pggkakagawa</i></p> <p><i>Ayoko Sayong Pumisan</i></p>	<p>If the lime's container is not made properly, I don't like to be with you anymore.</p>	<p>Teasing</p>
<p><b><u>ALA SI BILAS BILAS</u></b></p> <p><b>ALA SI BILAS BILAS IN AGPAMUKAN BAGBAG IN TUKOD AYAW KABWAT PANTAY WAGOT BALIKAT ISTA DAAN</b></p>	<p><i>Si Bayaw Kung Magkaingin</i></p> <p><i>Ang Tuhod Ay Huwag Mataaspantay Lang Dapat Sa Balikat Naroon Din Ang Pinutol Na Kahoy Sa Puno Ng Gamiras</i></p>	<p>When my brother-in-law does swidden farming, his knees should not go higher than the shoulder. Also there is the wood cut from the Gimaras tree.</p>	<p>Work</p>
<p><b><u>SINGSING SA SULO</u></b></p> <p><b>KANGAY SINGSING SA SULO MALABO</b></p>	<p><i>Ang Aking Singsing Sa Hintuturo</i></p> <p><i>Nahulog Sa Ibulo Hinanap Ko Ng</i></p>	<p>I lost the ring in my pointing figure. I searched for it three times but never found</p>	<p>Teasing and Courting</p>

**Ethnic Music, Rituals, and Nature: The Case of BANGIAN IN PAMAGUAN IN  
ALANGAN Tribe, Oriental Mindoro**

<p><b>SA IBULO MANGKALI MAKATULO</b></p> <p><b>ATAI WAKAY SA SABADO KANGAY SINGSING SA IPUSAN MALABO SA ALANGAN MANGKALI MAKASIYAM ATAI WAKAY DUGAYAN</b></p>	<p><i>tatlong Beses</i></p> <p><i>Pero Hindi Ko Makita Pero Di Bale Makikita Ko Din Sa Sabado Aking Singsing Sa Hinliliit Nahulog Sa Alangan Hinanap Ko Ng Siyam Na Besesmakikita Ko Rin Pag Nagtagal</i></p>	<p>it. No worries, I'll find it on Saturday. I lost the ring in my pinky finger. I searched for it nine times. I'll find it later.</p>	
<p><b><u>ALA MARUSAY</u></b></p> <p><b>ALA MARUSAY BUNANG AKO SAGKALWAYAN SA BARASO BUDBUDAN</b></p> <p><b>NO NGES AKO PIYAKAN POON YAUTOK APUYAN UWAY BALABASIYAN ABLAYAN DIN ABLAYAN SAG KITA PIYAKAN POON YANTOK APUYAN KUYAY MAGULANG</b></p>	<p><i>O Marusay Bunang</i></p> <p><i>Ako'y Nasasabik Sayo Sa Iyong Braso At Kamay</i></p> <p><i>Kung Ako Lang Sana'y Bibigyan Ng Pagkakataon Ng Iyong Magulang Na Ikaw Ay Makasama</i></p>	<p>My love, I miss your arms and hands. I hope your parents would give me a chance to be with you.</p>	<p>Courting</p>
<p><b><u>AGYAW SUNGKADON</u></b></p> <p><b>AGYAW AGYAW SUNGKADON ALUNGAN</b></p> <p><b>WA ABLUNGAN KANTA TE LIYANG BUDON</b></p>	<p><i>Mahal Na Sungkadon</i></p> <p><i>Iduyan Mo Ang Ating Bunso</i></p> <p><i>Kung Tanghali Na Pakainin</i></p>	<p>My love, rock our youngest kid in the swing. You feed and bathe our kid late into lunchtime.</p>	<p>Work, Lullaby</p>

<b>NO MORTO IN IBEUNG BODANGPASIBSIBUKEN PINGGAN PALITATANGON</b>	<i>Ang Anak At Paliguan</i>		
<b><u>DARAGA PANUBLIYAN</u></b>	<i>Si Panubliyon Nakasilip</i>	Panubliyon peeks into the wall. He just arrived. He has just finished his work.	Work
<b>DARAGA PANUBLIYAN AGPASUROK SA BIRABONG SA BALAY WAKAY NATENG PANEBEK MAY LAWENG LUBUS WA LUKAKANEN</b>	<i>Sa Dingding Dumating Na Pala Siya Ang Kanyang Trabaho At Tapos Ng Gawin</i>		

4. Analysis of the *Bangian*

A. Musical Theory

To better understand *bangian*, the first analyzed and examined the songs according to musical theory. All aural experiences can be described in terms of physical and psychological characteristics however, it is more helpful to discuss music in the context of music theory. The analysis was done according to the theoretical terms into five basic elements: temporal, tonal, timbre, textual and formal.

**Temporal Element**

The *bangian* is usually in downbeat beginning with the simple regular division. The number of beats in the measure is quadruple with the moderate tempo. The rhythm is described to be fairly prominent, consistent but simple, flexible, and syncopated.

**Tonal Element**

The tonality is in major with no modulation. The pitch direction is mixed but more of repeating patterns. The pitch contour is usually the climax at beginning with an average range and slight tremolo at the end of the verse.

**Timbre Element**

The articulation is *portato* in which there is no intervening pause between notes but there is a slight accent or articulation on each note.

**Textual Element**

The texture is monophonic and only the single line lyrics are heard with the accompaniment of ethnic instruments in which only the rhythm is produced and not the chords.

**Formal Element**

The phrases and periods are regular with the non-motivic treatment.

B. Nature themes in *bangian*

Based on the analysis of the data, the following themes between music and nature were identified:

1. ***Bangian* ritualizes the community's reality**

As a *pamagan* was being performed by the people of the Sitio Sulong, Alangan tribe, the songs (*bangian*) were spontaneously heard. The ritual ceremony began with the blowing of *budyong* (shell), which is considered a wind instrument. As the tribe executed the ritual step by

## **Ethnic Music, Rituals, and Nature: The Case of BANGIAN IN PAMAGUAN IN ALANGAN Tribe, Oriental Mindoro**

step from the drying of the rice to cooking the grains, it can be noticed that the music flowed naturally in *pagbabayo* by two to four people using simultaneously the *halo* or the *bayuhan* (pestle) through *pagtatahip* or *tahipan* where the women moved the *bilao* (woven flat basket) in circular motion to separate the rice from the hull (*pasian*) of the grains. Thus, music -- particularly rhythm -- was created and heard simultaneously as *bangian* was performed.

The previous description has shown that *bangian* is inextricably linked with the *pamaguan*. The songs and the accompanying sounds naturally flows from step of the *pamaguan* to another, and in the process accomplishes work. The rhythms and sounds produced in its performance are therefore intertwined with the patterns of the work involved in the *pamaguan*. *Bangian*, in this sense, is less about reflecting reality but more on constituting it. Drawing upon Frith (1996: 111), it can be argued that *bangian* is:

... A “cultural activity which reveals a group of people organizing and involving themselves with their own communal relationships...The aesthetic point of the exercise is not to reflect a reality which stands behind it but to ritualize a reality that is within it.

### **2. Nature provides materials for performance of *bangian***

The materials that served as the musical instruments of the tribe came from nature. The community members used natural and found materials like shell, wood and bamboo to accompany the songs (*bangian*) with a simple but consistent, syncopated rhythm. Pope (2010) cited that it is typical for traditional music to represent the sound and movements of birds, insects and other animals, of winds and waves, and other natural phenomena. The materials for making the indigenous musical instruments come originally from the natural environment. Thus the sounds of instruments and the processes of making them, as well as the content of the songs, stories and dances, connect people’s daily lives to the diversity of plants and animals around them.

### **3. Nature shapes how *bangian* is performed, executed, and notated.**

The performance of *bangian* in Sulong, particularly the sound it produces, is defined by the performers’ placement of voice, form, style and technique. This can be observed in their way of pronunciation and articulation of their own language, the spoken vowels in particular. These styles, together with the instruments/tools that serve as the sound producers, create an inimitable music in their harvest rituals.

As in any vocally produced sound, the unique style of singing of *bangian* is a result of the vibration of performers’ vocal cords and the production of pressure pulses when air is blown through them. The tension in the cords alters the pitch (in music) or frequency (in physics) of the sound. All sounds can be produced differently depending on the speed, shape of the air cavities in the throat, mouth, and the movement of the tongue and jaw. How others perceive the sound is affected by the speed and shape of sound as it moves through a medium, particularly the latter’s density, elasticity and temperature (Crisostomo et. al, 2010).

As the performers of *bangian* sing, sound waves move through dense materials. Sound can travel well in materials like metal or wood because their molecules are close together. The mountainous location of Sulong usually uses wood, cane, shell and metals in making instruments and tools for the harvesting of rice. Some of the instruments are bamboo, halo, pestle, flat wooden basket, metals and shells (*budyong*). Wood is a type of material, which allows molecules to immediately return to their original positions after a disturbance. These wood materials cause the sound waves to move and resonate the sound that creates music for the community. These materials can also be considered as the elastic medium that enables the sound waves to travel faster (Schmidt-Jones, 2013).

Moreover, the velocity of sound is influenced by air density and temperature. The speed of sound is slower at lower air temperatures where the air molecules are farther apart. In cooler air, sound is also diverted upward, away from listeners on the ground (Everest 2001). Since Sulong is located in a mountainous area, which is characterized by high altitude and lower temperature, sound waves transmit more slowly in the area, which in turn may affect the pitch and intensity of the sound produced, as perceived by the participants in the ritual and as notated in this study.

#### 4. *Bangian* tells about everyday life and reinforces communal bonds

The *bangian* lyrics talk about the daily lives of the people in Sitio Sulong. The topical content of the songs revolved around situations that everybody can relate to: teasing, planting, courting, working, and taking care of the children.

The songs are performed as part of showing *katuwaan* or *kasayahan* (merriment). The mood is always jovial. Teasing, in particular, has been a common content in the songs as shown in Table 1. Consider the song *Apuyan Biyogso* below:

*If the lime put in the containers are not equal, I don't like you anymore.*

The song talks about equality in the distribution of lime, an act that promotes fairness and harmony within the community. And yet it emphasizes this value by playfully threatening the other person with refusal of friendship or devotedness.

In the song *Singsingsa Sulo* below, we can see a generally positive tone despite a seeming loss. The ring may be lost, but its owner continues to look for it, still hopeful, undeterred by failures, and hopeful of the love that the ring represents.

*I lost the ring in my pointing figure. I searched for it three times but never found it. No worries, I'll find it on Saturday. I lost the ring in my pinky finger. I searched for it nine times. I'll find it later.*

Not only are the songs relatable to the community members, the teasing and encouraging messages of the songs as well as good-humored way they are performed helps create an atmosphere that strengthens the bonds among the participants (Gervais 2005, Lynch 2010).

## CONCLUSIONS

The previous discussion has shown that *bangian* as a musical tradition in the Alangan community has been performed as part of the *pamaguan* rice festival. Its execution is highly communal, requiring the spontaneous participation of members of the tribe. As such, *bangian* is shaped by its immediate milieu – the rice festival and the people participating in this socioeconomic activity, a world where the social and the natural converge and co-exist as one.

Its performance also involves the production of sounds from natural objects. The tone, timber, texture, and rhythm with which these sounds are produced makes musical sense in the acoustical condition of the natural environment, allowing community members located in considerable distances to hear the sounds and participate in the co-performance of the ritual, the sounds and narratives it carries, and social function it serves. The physical environment in which these sounds are transmitted also shape the way the *bangian* is performed and perceived. The stories and anecdotes that the *bangian* tells reflect the everyday concerns of the community. This and the jovial manner in which *bangian* is normally performed seem to reinforce the social ties that bind this community.

To understand *bangian* is to see and listen to it in its entirety – the stories it conveys, the sounds it creates, its musical features, its natural setting, the role it performs in agriculture, and the meanings attached to it by the people who participate in its production and reproduction. *Bangian* is an example of long tradition of human's preoccupation to express his/her relationship

**Ethnic Music, Rituals, and Nature: The Case of BANGIAN IN PAMAGUAN IN  
ALANGAN Tribe, Oriental Mindoro**

with nature (social/biophysical) – a source of both sustenance and danger -- through rituals, dance, and music. The study has contributed to this body of work that puts indigenous practices as worthy of scholarship and preservation.

While it is not the scope of this paper to examine the relationship between *bangian* and the ecological impacts of swidden farming by indigenous people, the study has shown that *bangian* perform a social bonding role in the performance of this agricultural activity. It has been argued that traditional music with its strong ties to nature can be a effective tool for promoting environmental consciousness. Perhaps future studies can also look into the possibilities of *bangian* and other traditional music in conveying the messages of environmentalism.

Lastly, the *bangian* as any traditional cultural expression, is a signifier of meaning for the Alangan tribe. By notating this traditional form of music, this paper has put into text a tradition that has bound a community for so long, and in the process contributed to its interpretation and even re-interpretation. Present and future generation can always refer to this notation as basis for performance, scholarship, or creative re-interpretation. In addition to this, members of the community also performed traditional songs and dances at a stage performance, which the first author organized in Laguna through the support of the church organization she belongs to. This performance has made this music accessible to a wider audience and hopefully contributed to its appreciation.

There is a host of initiatives that can be taken to preserve traditional cultural expressions like *bangian*, including staging of performances, incorporation of traditional music in basic education curriculum, audio-visual recording and archiving of these cultural forms, as well as popularization of traditional music. As mentioned, the first author has initiated one of these initiatives herself. Other scholars and organizations have also engaged in some of them in one way or another. While these externally initiated preservation interventions have a role to play, the larger issue here is the space

for self-determination that we -- the Alangan tribe's the Other - allow in the process of cultural preservation.

Different cultural communities have different perspectives on cultural preservation. For instance, some indigenous people may see popularization as commodification of traditional culture while others may see it as an acceptable means to sustain a tradition, albeit in a modified form. Just like any other social groups, indigenous communities are not fixed in time and also subject to social transformation. Even the idea of the "traditional" is subject to multiple interpretations over time and across communities.

We therefore take the view that any cultural preservation of the traditional music should be done in the context of the larger sphere of social interactions that we the "outsiders" have with the indigenous people. For instance, this research is just one part in the larger civic initiative undertaken in the community, which encompasses livelihood, scholarship, and mission components. In line with the participative method taken by the program, this research also involved several consultations with local leaders and other members of the community who, in turn, granted their informed consent to participate in this study. The stage performance that ensued after this was also forged with the local community through a process of negotiation. The first author is also discussing with the community her plan of submitting the audio-recording of the traditional songs, the audio-visual recording of the stage performance, and results of this study to the Mangyan museums in the province. Also included in the plan is another benefit concert to be participated in by members of the community and featuring their traditional songs and dances. In the future, the members of the community and the project partners can perhaps work together in coming up with a cultural preservation plan for the people's traditional cultural expressions.

## Rebutar & Garcia

The first author's experiences have shown that traditional music preservation is a partnership between the indigenous people and the larger community, with the former having a significant voice in the way the process of preservation shall unfold and materialize. Just as traditional musical expressions are just a part of the social lives of the people who perform them; we need to see traditional music preservation less as a stand-alone enterprise but more as part of a broader set of initiatives addressing the other concerns of the people – economic, political, social, religious, environmental, etc. Seeing cultural expression preservation as inherently linked to other issues and concerns meant engaging in a process of negotiation, consultation, and coordination to warrant that the preservation effort is compatible with the individual and communal needs and goals of the people involved. Adopting a holistic and context-specific approach will not only facilitate greater participation from all the partners involved but also create an environment where all participants are more motivated to contribute time, effort, and financial means in the belief that these efforts taken will not only lead to the preservation of the traditional cultural expressions but also the viability of the local community itself.

## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

The first author performed the data gathering and musical theoretical analysis. The second author provided the qualitative research methodological framework. The authors collaborated in the thematic analysis as well as writing up of the paper.

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**Ethnic Music, Rituals, and Nature: The Case of BANGIAN IN PAMAGUAN IN  
ALANGAN Tribe, Oriental Mindoro**

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## Rebutar & Garcia

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