

# ***Lagaylay* in Odang's Life: Retelling Oral Narratives on Faith and Local Traditions in Calabanga, Philippines**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Faith and religious practices have long been intertwined with the art of oral storytelling, transmitting sacred knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and cultural traditions across generations. The influence of retelling oral narratives on the development of a script for a stage play is important, as it improves various cognitive and linguistic skills that are crucial for effective storytelling and scriptwriting. In the Philippines, religious beliefs and cultural traditions are transmitted through oral narratives while being susceptible to transformation as a means to adapt to be relevant and respectful of its authenticity. The purpose of this research is to explore the retelling process of a religious heritage known as *Lagaylay*, practiced in Quipayo, a sitio in Calabanga composed of four (4) barangays. *Lagaylay* is an age-old Catholic tradition performed through singing and dancing to honor the Holy Cross. Given its significance to the town and its cultural heritage, the study documented this practice through actual observation and series of interviews with the devotees to understand its importance and significance and examine thereafter the transformation of oral narratives into a script for theatre production. The implication to education is that research on the *Lagaylay* tradition and the development of "Odang" may prove essential particularly in teaching and learning about local history and culture. An opportunity is provided for both teachers and students to engage in learning about the town's history and traditions and to appreciate and value its cultural heritage. It also offers a unique approach to learning, where students can engage in the process of documenting and showcasing their local culture through creative outputs such as plays or literature. By integrating local culture and history in the curriculum, it enhances the learning experience of students and promotes cultural diversity and understanding. The impact of oral narratives in faith communities is profound.

**Keywords:** Calabanga, faith, *Lagaylay*, oral narratives, retelling process

## **INTRODUCTION**

The influence of retelling oral narratives on the development of a script for a stage play is significant, as it enhances various cognitive and linguistic skills that are crucial for effective storytelling and scriptwriting. Retelling narratives allows children to engage deeply with the structure and elements of stories, which can be directly applied to the creation of scripts. Research indicates that narrative retelling is closely linked to children's language development, comprehension skills, and overall narrative competence [1],[2]. One of the primary benefits of retelling is that it helps children understand story structure, including elements such as plot, character development, and thematic coherence. This understanding is essential when developing a script, as it requires the writer to organize ideas logically and creatively. For instance, studies have shown that children who engage in narrative retelling demonstrate improved narrative skills, which are predictive of

their later academic performance, particularly in reading comprehension and writing [3],[4]. The cognitive processes involved in retelling—such as recalling details, making inferences, and organizing thoughts—mirror those required in scriptwriting, where coherence and clarity are paramount [5], [6]. Moreover, retelling narratives fosters creativity and imagination, which are vital for script development. When children retell stories, they often reinterpret and embellish the original content, allowing them to experiment with different narrative styles and perspectives. This creative engagement can lead to more innovative and compelling scripts. For example, research has highlighted that children's narrative elaboration—enhancing the original story with additional details—can significantly enrich their storytelling abilities [7],[8]. This elaboration is particularly relevant in scriptwriting, where character depth and plot intricacies are crucial for engaging an audience. Additionally, the social aspect of retelling narratives can enhance collaborative skills, which are important in script development, especially in a theatrical context. When children retell stories in groups, they learn to negotiate ideas, provide feedback, and build on each other's contributions, mirroring the collaborative nature of scriptwriting for stage plays [9]. This interaction not only improves their narrative skills but also fosters teamwork and communication abilities, which are essential in any creative endeavor.

Meanwhile, the realm of faith and religious practices has long been intertwined with the art of oral storytelling, serving as a conduit for transmitting sacred knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and cultural traditions across generations. Oral narratives hold a pivotal role in religious traditions by conveying foundational beliefs, moral teachings, and sacred stories [10],[11]. These narratives bridge the gap between religious doctrines and the lived experiences of communities, enabling the abstract tenets of faith to be contextualized and understood [12]. Through retelling, the essence of spiritual truths is internalized, fostering a deep sense of connection between individuals and their faith [13]. Oral narratives serve as repositories of sacred knowledge, encapsulating the teachings of religious leaders, prophets, and revered figures [14]. These narratives, often imbued with symbolism and metaphor, encapsulate profound truths that guide believers' ethical conduct, moral decisions, and spiritual growth [15]. Through retelling, the essence of these teachings is perpetuated, carrying the timeless wisdom of the faith across generations [16]. Oral narratives play a central role in cultivating a sense of cultural identity and fostering community cohesion within religious contexts [17]. By recounting historical events, miraculous interventions, and religious rituals, these narratives reinforce a shared history and strengthen communal bonds [18]. Rituals and festivals often involve the retelling of sacred narratives, grounding the community in a collective memory that reinforces their connection to the divine and to each other [19]. The retelling of oral narratives in the realm of faith and religious practices is not without its challenges. The fidelity of transmission is at times contested due to the dynamic nature of oral tradition [20]. Variations in language, cultural context, and individual interpretation can lead to divergent renditions of the same narrative [21]. Oral narratives have played a pivotal role in transmitting religious beliefs and cultural traditions across generations in the Philippines [22]. These narratives often encompass myths, legends, folktales, and religious rituals that are deeply intertwined with the diverse faith traditions found in the archipelago [23]. Oral narratives serve as a bridge between the metaphysical realm and the everyday lives of Filipinos, offering insights into the moral values, spiritual teachings, and historical experiences that shape their religious identities [24]. In the Filipino context, oral narratives serve as repositories of sacred knowledge, encompassing the teachings of spiritual leaders, myths of creation, and stories of divine interventions [25]. These narratives often revolve around revered figures, such as saints, religious icons, and local deities, whose actions exemplify moral virtues and offer guidance to believers [26]. Through retelling, these stories perpetuate not only religious teachings but also cultural heritage, passing down indigenous practices and indigenous wisdom [27]. Oral narratives about faith and religious practices foster community cohesion and reinforce cultural identity in the Philippines [28]. Many indigenous Filipino communities rely on oral narratives to recount the origins of their rituals, festivals, and sacred sites [29]. These narratives create a shared historical consciousness, reinforcing a sense of belonging and unity among community members [30]. In addition, festivals often involve the retelling of these narratives through performances, dances, and processions, solidifying the cultural bond among participants [31]. Adapting oral narratives about faith and religious practices in the Philippines presents challenges related to language variations, cultural nuances, and the influence of globalization [32]. With the shift towards digital media, there is a risk of these narratives being diluted or altered in an attempt to cater to

modern preferences [33]. Maintaining authenticity while ensuring the narratives remain relevant in contemporary contexts demands sensitivity and thoughtful adaptation [34].

As a research context, this paper explores *Lagaylay* in Calabanga practiced for more than a hundred years. *Lagaylay* is a unique cultural and religious practice found in the Bicol region of the Philippines, particularly in the towns of Canaman and Quipayo, Calabanga in Camarines Sur. This centuries-old tradition is primarily a form of devotional performance honoring the Holy Cross and the Virgin Mary, usually conducted during the month of May as part of the Flores de Mayo festival. *Lagaylay* blends elements of pre-colonial traditions with Catholic rituals introduced during the Spanish colonial period. Scholars have traced the origins of *Lagaylay* to the Spanish colonial period when Catholicism was widely propagated across the Philippines. The Jesuits and other religious orders played a major role in introducing Christian festivities such as Flores de Mayo and *Lagaylay* as part of the evangelization efforts. According to [35], *Lagaylay* was adapted by locals who integrated elements of their indigenous practices, such as community performances and song offerings, into the Catholic devotions introduced by the Spanish. This resulted in a hybrid form of religious observance, reflecting both colonial influence and indigenous creativity. The term *Lagaylay* itself derives from the Bicolano word “laylay,” meaning to praise or offer homage, reflecting the performance's primary intent to venerate religious figures. According to [36], the *Lagaylay* likely evolved from Spanish passion plays or *moro-moro*, theater forms that dramatized Christian themes and were adapted by local cultures across the archipelago. *Lagaylay* is usually performed in the form of a liturgical drama or song-and-dance sequence, featuring a variety of performers, often community members, who recite prayers, sing hymns, and perform rituals in honor of the Virgin Mary or the Holy Cross. The structure of the ritual varies from community to community, but typically, it involves a procession followed by a stage performance. The performance often includes poetic recitations, songs, and group dances (known as *tigsik* in Bicolano) that culminate in the offering of flowers or symbolic items to a religious icon. [37] notes that *Lagaylay* is primarily led by women, particularly the elderly, who pass down the traditions orally to the younger generation. This emphasis on oral tradition has enabled the practice to persist for generations despite the lack of formal documentation or written scripts. Over the years, the role of women in leading and preserving *Lagaylay* has also contributed to the practice being seen as a reflection of feminine devotion and piety in the region. *Lagaylay* serves multiple roles within the Bicolano community. Primarily, it is a religious offering, expressing devotion to the Virgin Mary and reaffirming the faith of the participants. As documented by [38], the religious dimension of *Lagaylay* emphasizes the participants' personal sacrifices and prayers for the community's well-being, health, and prosperity. The collective nature of the performance creates a sense of shared religious experience, reinforcing the social bonds of the community. In addition to its religious functions, *Lagaylay* also plays a significant cultural role. According to [39], it is a vital means of preserving Bicolano heritage and linguistic traditions, as the songs and prayers used in the performance are often conducted in the local Bicolano dialect. This use of the vernacular in religious and cultural performances strengthens regional identity and contributes to the resilience of Bicolano cultural expressions in the face of modernization and the spread of national languages such as Tagalog and English. Moreover, *Lagaylay* is considered a vehicle for moral instruction, teaching younger generations important values such as respect, gratitude, and communal solidarity. [40] highlights that the practice instills in participants a strong sense of cultural pride and spiritual responsibility, as they continue the traditions of their ancestors. While *Lagaylay* has remained a key part of local religious celebrations, there are challenges to its continued practice in the modern era. The rise of modern entertainment and changing social dynamics have contributed to the decline of community participation, especially among younger generations. As noted by [41], the younger population is increasingly disengaged from traditional cultural performances, which they may see as outdated or irrelevant in a contemporary context. This shift has led to concerns about the future of *Lagaylay*, particularly as many of its practitioners are elderly and there is a lack of formal documentation to ensure the tradition's preservation. However, there have been efforts to revitalize *Lagaylay* and adapt it to contemporary settings. Local governments, schools, and cultural organizations have initiated programs to promote and teach *Lagaylay* to younger generations. These initiatives aim to integrate *Lagaylay* into educational curricula, cultural festivals, and tourism programs to raise awareness of its historical and cultural

value. According to [42], the involvement of schools in promoting *Lagaylay* has been particularly effective, as students not only learn the performance but also gain a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage.

Research on the retelling of oral narratives within the context of faith and religious practice reveals several gaps that warrant further exploration. One significant area of interest is the intersection of narrative retelling and its impact on religious identity formation. While existing literature has explored how narratives shape individual and collective identities, there is a lack of empirical studies specifically examining how retelling religious narratives influences personal faith development and community belonging. For instance, narratives in religious contexts often serve to reinforce community values and beliefs, yet the mechanisms through which retelling these narratives affects individual identity remain under-researched [43]. Another gap lies in understanding the pedagogical implications of narrative retelling in religious education. Although narratives are widely used in teaching religious concepts, there is limited research on how the act of retelling these narratives can enhance comprehension and engagement among learners. Studies have shown that narrative retelling can improve language skills and cognitive development in children [44], [45] but similar investigations focusing on religious narratives and their educational outcomes are sparse. This presents an opportunity to explore how retelling can be integrated into religious education curricula to foster deeper understanding and retention of religious teachings [46]. Moreover, the emotional and psychological dimensions of retelling religious narratives are not thoroughly examined. Research indicates that narratives can play a crucial role in coping with emotional distress and fostering resilience [47]. However, the specific effects of retelling religious narratives on emotional well-being and spiritual growth remain largely unexplored. Understanding how individuals process and reinterpret their faith through narrative retelling could provide insights into the therapeutic potential of religious storytelling [48]. Additionally, the role of technology in the retelling of religious narratives presents another research gap. With the rise of digital platforms for sharing stories, it is essential to investigate how these new mediums influence the traditional practices of narrative retelling within religious communities. The impact of digital storytelling on community cohesion and individual faith experiences is an area ripe for exploration, particularly in light of the ongoing integration of technology in religious practices [49]. Finally, there is a need for comparative studies that examine the retelling of oral narratives across different faith traditions. While some research has focused on specific religious contexts, a broader comparative analysis could illuminate how various faiths utilize narrative retelling to convey teachings, values, and community identity. Such studies could enhance our understanding of the universal and unique aspects of religious narratives and their retelling [50], [51]. In summary, the exploration of retelling oral narratives in the context of faith and religious practice reveals several research gaps, including the influence on identity formation, educational outcomes, emotional well-being, the impact of technology, and comparative studies across faith traditions. Addressing these gaps could significantly contribute to the fields of religious studies, education, and narrative psychology.

Considering the gaps in the literature, let alone the intricacies in dealing with the retelling process of local oral narratives in the Philippines, it is clear that the retelling of faith-based tradition is an area worthy of further research. This research paper attempts to provide additional empirical evidence from a qualitative inquiry and process and ask, what is the retelling process of oral narratives about faith and spiritual practice in Calabanga? Specifically, (1) how does the process of transforming *Lagaylay* from an oral tradition to a scripted form affect its cultural and religious authenticity? This question investigates whether formalizing *Lagaylay* through a written script influences or alters the authenticity of its religious and cultural expressions. Subsequently, (2) what are the key challenges in translating oral narratives of *Lagaylay* into a script, and how do these challenges affect the preservation of local traditions? This question explores the difficulties in retaining the essence of oral storytelling—such as spontaneity, improvisation, and community participation—when converting it into a fixed script.

## METHODOLOGY

In addressing the research question, this investigation draws upon ethnographic research, textual analysis, and participant observation to examine the transformation of *Lagaylay* from an oral tradition to a scripted



form and its influence on cultural and religious authenticity. Cultural and religious authenticity in studying *Lagaylay*, requires an understanding of its significance within the local community and how it reflects their cultural identity and spirituality. Ethnographic approach allowed the researchers in capturing this authenticity through deep engagement with the participants through observation of the ritual's meaning, practice, and evolution within the context of the practitioners' daily lives. Through thick description, researchers grasp the cultural codes, religious symbolism, and communal values embedded in the *Lagaylay* ritual, beyond just observing the performance. Additionally, this research incorporates the challenges faced during this transition and its impact on the preservation of local traditions. Participant observation, interviews and focus group discussions informed the ethnographic stance of this research. Participant observation is a key method for understanding *Lagaylay* performances in their natural context. Observing live performances and documenting the differences in spontaneity, religious engagement, and community participation in both oral and scripted versions allows for an in-depth analysis of authenticity [52]. Field notes captured informal discussions and interactions, offering insights into the transformation of cultural and religious elements. Researchers observed participants of *Lagaylay* as they performed their ritual singing and dancing for more than one hour. The foci of observations were movements, songs and nuances that identify this tradition as faith-based even after generations of translation and transformations. Notable changes of *Lagaylay* over the years were included in field notes with performers citing the variations of the performance as to the intentions and purpose and also the improvement of aesthetics such as costumes and props used to conform to the contemporary context and availability of materials. After their performance, semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders—such as *Lagaylay* performers, religious leaders, and community elders—provided qualitative data on perceptions of the transformation [53]. For this research, 13 key informants shared insights during the interview and focus group discussion. Research participants from the *Lagaylay* performers were selected on the basis of their years of engagement with the practice. Majority of them have been doing *Lagaylay* for more than 20 years. Meanwhile, other actors and key informants were identified based on their first-hand experience as audience, as theater performers and writers of local history. Interviews explored themes of authenticity, challenges in translation, and the role of faith in both oral and scripted versions. Young audience members' perspectives were also explored to understand generational changes in engagement. Focus groups encouraged open discussion among different community members, including elders, women, and youth, to explore collective perceptions of the transition from oral to scripted forms [54]. These discussions shed light on how community identity and religious devotion are influenced by the scripted version. To assess changes in cultural and religious authenticity, a comparative textual analysis was conducted on oral transcriptions and existing *Lagaylay* scripts [55]. The analysis examined differences in language use, improvisation, and religious symbolism. As oral traditions are often flexible and adaptive, the rigid structure of a script may alter their spontaneity [56]. Thematic analysis identified core religious and cultural themes in both oral and scripted versions [57]. This analysis focus on how spiritual and communal values are preserved or transformed when narratives are fixed into scripts, and whether this impacts the overall cultural authenticity of the practice. Alongside, archival research provided historical context on earlier attempts to script *Lagaylay*. Reviewing local cultural records and previous documentation efforts reveal whether similar challenges regarding authenticity and cultural loss were faced [58]. This method also offers insights into the cultural motivations behind formalizing the oral tradition. A case study approach was adopted, focusing on communities where both oral and scripted versions of *Lagaylay* are practiced. This method facilitated an in-depth analysis of how the transition affects cultural preservation and community engagement over time [59]. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that their cultural and religious beliefs are respected throughout the research process [60]. The study collaborated with local cultural custodians to ensure that the research supports ongoing efforts to preserve *Lagaylay*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study focuses on the traditional practice of *Lagaylay* in Quipayo, a sitio in Calabanga composed of four (4) barangays, namely La Purisima, San Antonio, Sta. Cruz and Sto. Niño. All four barangays still observe the conduct of *Lagaylay* and *sulong-sulong* every month of May. *Lagaylay* is an age-old Catholic tradition

performed through singing and dancing to honor the Holy Cross. Given its significance to the town and its cultural heritage, the study aims to document this practice through actual observation and series of interviews with the devotees to understand its importance and significance. Performances of *para-Lagaylay* were documented including their songs and movements. This performance served as structure in understanding how the tradition reflects the devotion and ardent faith of performers. Repetitive forward and backward walking movements with swaying of body forward and backward while hands are placed on waist, on skirt and the other with implements such as castanets, and flaglets. An enriched storytelling and lively discussion session completed the narratives and experiences of those that perform *Lagaylay*. One of the key informants has practiced *Lagaylay* since her childhood. She is 65 years old now and the memories of her annual participation to *Lagaylay* still lingers and are vivid in her minds. She mentioned that doing *Lagaylay* for her is a form of prayer with the many intentions and prayer requests she had including good health, safety and progressive life. The playwright of *Odang* consulted with three prominent and prolific figures in Bikol history, theater actors and directors. With the conglomeration of narratives from the *para-Lagaylay*, local historian and theater actors and directors, came the story of a family challenged with a flu epidemic during the American period in the Philippines. During the discussion with the two consultants regarding the conceptualization of the creative output "*Odang*," one of consultants expressed that developing a play that features *Lagaylay* would be challenging since the tradition itself is too long. Thus, he recommended documenting how it is performed to preserve the tradition. He further suggested that a whole performance of the traditional *Lagaylay* at the church be done, which may be performed by the old devotees to show the nearest, if not the original, performance instead of transforming it into a play. He also recommended watching *Lagaylay* on YouTube to find the difference between *Lagaylay* in Calabanga and identify the type of traditional dance that it influenced Bicolanos. Lastly, he suggested finding an occasion where it can be used or performed. On the other hand, another consultant did not give a detailed comment but stated that making a play out of *Lagaylay* would be challenging. Upon reviewing the project proposal, the team agreed that developing a dance literature of the *Lagaylay*, including the notation of songs, is not part of the project. Thus, researchers decided to re-consider the first consultant's suggestion of finding an occasion where *Lagaylay* can be used or performed. Fortunately, during an interview with the Bicolano historian, he mentioned that *Lagaylay* was a ritual of faith worshiping the Holy Cross and started during the Spanish regime. It was just similar to or originated from the ritual of the ancient people of the place, which was a ritual for the moon to eradicate bad spirits that may cause sickness, calamity, and other negative events. This was done by a group of women murmuring the words "*haleya*," which means to remove or "*halia* or *halea*" in the Bikol dialect. The historian allowed the team to access his new history book "*Calabanga*," where it was noted that an epidemic spread out in the whole community, causing deaths, fears, and sufferings of people before the American period. The circumstances of the epidemic and the suggestion of the consultant to look for a situation where *Lagaylay* could be used gave the playwright an idea to write the script "*Odang*." The research participants agreed that the situations included in the story, including the use of *Lagaylay* as a safeguard against the epidemic, are similar to the stories they heard from their grandparents. The writer made a minor revision at the end part, highlighting the power of faith in God, which eventually surfaced at the end of the story. The script, *Odang* centers on the story of a young girl who was taught the *Lagaylay* by her mother and as would tragically happen was inflicted with the epidemic. As a period drama, *Odang* looks back to 1903 and narrates the situation of a family with devotion to the Holy Cross through the *Lagaylay* practice. Quipayo in Calabanga being considered one of the oldest civilizations inherited this tradition and until today, *Lagaylay* still breathes in the young people through some of the living inheritors of the practice.

The influence of retelling *Lagaylay* and transforming it a script for staging comes in different aspects. Oral traditions, like *Lagaylay*, are dynamic and adaptive, allowing for flexibility in storytelling and performance based on the immediate context, audience, and performers. Accordingly, oral traditions are inherently fluid [56], enabling communities to modify stories, songs, and performances to reflect current social realities and maintain relevance. This flexibility is a hallmark of authenticity in oral traditions because it reflects a living, evolving culture. This transformation in the story of *Odang*, although has the potential to reduce community engagement, as the oral tradition relies heavily on communal participation, where performers and audience members actively contribute to the performance through call-and-response patterns or impromptu

contributions [52] maintains the essence of the tradition by only taking *Lagaylay* as a foundation where the protagonist's faith is established. In addition to its cultural significance, *Lagaylay* holds deep religious meaning for the Bicolano community, particularly in its role as an act of devotion to the Virgin Mary or the Holy Cross. Oral performances of *Lagaylay* are often deeply intertwined with personal and communal expressions of faith, where the spontaneity of the performance allows participants to convey their religious fervor in real-time. As [35] explain, the performative aspect of *Lagaylay* in its oral form allows for an intimate expression of faith, in which each performance is a unique offering reflective of the spiritual state of the participants.

One of the key benefits of scripting *Lagaylay* is its potential to preserve a deeply rooted cultural and religious tradition that might otherwise fade over time due to the decreasing prevalence of oral transmission. Oral traditions, while rich in spontaneity and flexibility, are vulnerable to being lost as generational gaps widen or as younger members of the community lose interest in such practices. According to [56], the act of formalizing oral traditions into a written or scripted form provides a tangible record of the performance that can be passed down to future generations. For *Lagaylay*, this scripted form serves as a cultural repository, preserving the prayers, songs, and rituals that are integral to the Bicolano's devotion to the Virgin Mary and the Holy Cross. Moreover, by transforming *Lagaylay* into a scripted format, educators, cultural workers, and religious leaders can use the script as a teaching tool, introducing the younger generation to the rich narratives and values embedded within the tradition [41]. The script can act as a guide, ensuring that the original structure and meaning of the performance are maintained, while also making it easier for modern audiences to engage with the practice. The shift to a scripted version of *Lagaylay* can also make the tradition more accessible to a wider audience, both within and beyond the Bicol region. When *Lagaylay* exists solely in oral form, participation and understanding may be limited to those who are already familiar with the local dialect, cultural codes, and religious nuances. However, scripting allows the tradition to be translated, disseminated, and performed in a variety of contexts, including schools, community festivals, and even national cultural events. This broader dissemination fosters a greater appreciation for the cultural richness of *Lagaylay* and helps introduce non-local audiences to Bicolano devotional practices [39].

Scripting also facilitates the standardization of certain elements of the performance, making it easier for performers to rehearse and deliver a cohesive presentation. In turn, this structured format can enhance the performance quality, providing a more polished and engaging experience for both participants and audiences [35]. By crafting a more vibrant and accessible performance, the scripted version of *Lagaylay* helps ensure that its messages of faith, community, and devotion continue to resonate with new audiences. Transforming *Lagaylay* into a scripted form can enhance the way stories of devotion are conveyed, allowing the tradition to become a more powerful and unified expression of Bicolano faith. While oral traditions thrive on flexibility, scripting allows for the careful crafting of a narrative that highlights key themes of sacrifice, prayer, and devotion to the Virgin Mary, thereby reinforcing the spiritual messages that are central to the practice. As [38] notes, when religious stories are given structure and clarity, they often become more impactful, providing a cohesive storyline that deepens the community's collective understanding of faith. Moreover, scripting *Lagaylay* can also provide a platform for incorporating modern themes and issues into the narrative, allowing the tradition to evolve while still maintaining its core religious and cultural elements. This adaptation can serve to strengthen communal identity, as it shows that *Lagaylay* is not a static relic of the past but a living tradition that remains relevant to contemporary life [40]. By framing *Lagaylay* as a vibrant story of devotion in a scripted form, the performance can offer new interpretations of age-old narratives, encouraging participants to engage with their faith in fresh, meaningful ways. In addition to enhancing spiritual devotion, scripting *Lagaylay* also promotes cultural pride among Bicolanos. As a documented cultural practice, *Lagaylay* becomes more visible in regional and national cultural landscapes, contributing to the recognition of Bicolano heritage. As [41] points out, the formalization of local traditions through scripts and performances can lead to greater recognition of regional identities, helping marginalized cultures preserve and celebrate their unique contributions to the broader Filipino cultural mosaic. When *Lagaylay* is performed as a scripted, vibrant narrative, it showcases the depth of Bicolano cultural traditions and their connection to religious faith. This visibility can foster pride within the community, as participants see their

local practices being recognized and appreciated in a broader context. Furthermore, the recognition of *Lagaylay* as a significant cultural and religious practice can attract support from cultural institutions and the government, which can lead to further preservation efforts and funding for performances [39].

Furthermore, one of the major themes identified in the translation of *Lagaylay* from an oral tradition to a script is the loss of flexibility and spontaneity. Oral traditions thrive on their ability to adapt to the immediate context of the performance, often changing according to the audience, the occasion, or the performer's improvisation. According to [56], oral traditions are fluid by nature, allowing for variations in content and delivery that keep the tradition relevant and alive. In contrast, a scripted performance tends to be fixed, limiting opportunities for improvisation and dynamic interaction during the performance. This rigidity can lead to a diminished sense of authenticity, as the scripted form may not fully reflect the organic, evolving nature of the original oral practice. The spontaneity in oral *Lagaylay* allows for personal expressions of faith and community involvement, which are difficult to capture in a written script. As [35] suggest, when oral traditions are translated into fixed scripts, there is a risk of standardizing the performance to the point where its original vitality and adaptability are lost. This loss of flexibility can affect the tradition's relevance to contemporary audiences, especially those who are familiar with its more fluid, oral roots.

Another prominent theme from the thematic analysis is the challenge of preserving cultural nuances, including the use of local dialects and idiomatic expressions, in a scripted version of *Lagaylay*. Oral performances often make use of regional dialects, which carry cultural meaning that may not translate well into a written or standardized form. [56] emphasizes the importance of language in oral traditions, noting that the specific use of dialects, rhythms, and metaphors plays a crucial role in maintaining the cultural integrity of a performance. In the case of *Lagaylay*, the Bicolano dialect is a vital aspect of the tradition, as it connects the performance to the local community and its history. When translating *Lagaylay* into a script, some of these linguistic elements may be altered or simplified to make the performance more accessible to non-local audiences, which can dilute the tradition's cultural depth [39]. This risk is particularly high when the script prioritizes clarity and broad comprehension over the preservation of linguistic authenticity. The loss of regional language and expressions can result in a "flattening" of the cultural identity embedded within the oral tradition, thus weakening the connection between the performance and its community of origin.

A key challenge identified in the thematic analysis is the potential erosion of community participation that comes with scripting oral traditions like *Lagaylay*. Traditionally, *Lagaylay* is a communal performance, with roles often distributed among various community members, including impromptu participation from the audience. [52] argue that community engagement is a core element of oral traditions, where the boundary between performer and audience is fluid, allowing for a participatory cultural experience. However, when *Lagaylay* is scripted, the performance tends to become more formalized, with distinct performers and rehearsed roles, reducing the opportunity for spontaneous community involvement. This shift can alienate members of the community who were once active participants in the oral performance. According to [41], scripted performances often professionalize the roles within the tradition, making it less accessible to everyday community members who may feel excluded from the more formalized setting. This exclusion can weaken the collective sense of ownership and responsibility for the tradition, which is crucial for its preservation.

Religious expression is a core component of *Lagaylay*, which is performed as a devotional act honoring the Virgin Mary or the Holy Cross. In its oral form, *Lagaylay* allows for personal and communal expressions of faith that are often spontaneous and deeply intertwined with the performers' spiritual lives. As [38] points out, the oral tradition enables participants to convey their religious fervor in real-time, responding to the emotional and spiritual needs of the moment. The transition to a scripted format can alter the nature of this religious expression. When religious narratives are fixed into a script, the emotional and spiritual fluidity that comes from unscripted devotion may be lost. Scripted performances may emphasize artistic or theatrical elements over religious ones, leading to a shift in focus from the tradition's spiritual roots to its aesthetic presentation [40]. This shift can diminish the devotional impact of the performance, as it becomes more of a



cultural spectacle than a genuine expression of faith. For the Bicolano community, this change in religious expression can weaken the spiritual connection to *Lagaylay*, thereby affecting its role as a living religious practice.

The challenges identified in the thematic analysis—loss of flexibility, difficulties with language preservation, reduced community participation, and changes in religious expression—all have a significant impact on the preservation of *Lagaylay* as a local tradition. Oral traditions are highly dependent on active, communal transmission, where cultural knowledge is passed down through participation and engagement [60]. When *Lagaylay* is translated into a scripted form, it risks becoming a static cultural artifact rather than a living, evolving practice. To mitigate these challenges, it is essential to strike a balance between preserving the key elements of *Lagaylay* and allowing room for its dynamic, participatory nature to continue. This can be achieved by incorporating some degree of flexibility within the scripted format, such as allowing for local dialects and improvisational segments that reflect the tradition's oral roots. Additionally, efforts to engage the community in the scripting process, ensuring that the performance remains a reflection of their cultural and religious values, are crucial for its continued relevance and authenticity.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research on the tradition of *Lagaylay* and the development of the creative output "*Odang*" has important implications for the town of Calabanga. It highlights the rich cultural heritage of the town and contributes to the preservation and promotion of its traditions. By documenting and showcasing the *Lagaylay* tradition through creative output, the town is able to attract tourists and promote its cultural tourism industry. It also raises awareness among the younger generation about the importance of preserving and valuing their cultural heritage. The implication to education is that research on the *Lagaylay* tradition and the development of "*Odang*" may prove essential particularly in teaching and learning about local history and culture. An opportunity is provided for both teachers and students to engage in learning about the town's history and traditions and to appreciate and value its cultural heritage. It also offers a unique approach to learning, where students can engage in the process of documenting and showcasing their local culture through creative outputs such as plays or literature. By integrating local culture and history in the curriculum, it enhances the learning experience of students and promotes cultural diversity and understanding. The impact of oral narratives in faith communities is profound. Through the retelling of sacred stories, believers find solace, guidance, and a sense of purpose [61]. Oral narratives foster a communal memory that binds individuals together and encourages them to uphold the tenets of their faith [62]. Additionally, the act of listening to and retelling narratives can be an embodied spiritual practice, leading to personal transformation and a deeper connection with the divine [63]. Oral narratives about faith, religious practices, and traditions serve as the spiritual heartbeat of communities, transmitting sacred knowledge, cultural traditions, and moral teachings. Community may benefit from the creative output – a literary piece unraveling situations and challenges testing faith and devotion. The researchers therefore propose and recommend that the retelling process be shared through community extension and observe the text to theater transformation as one way of actively re-introducing the practice to this generation. These narratives bridge the gap between the sacred and the everyday, offering a dynamic means of connecting with the divine and cultivating communal bonds. Through creative methodologies and adaptative strategies, oral narratives continue to flourish in the digital age, ensuring the enduring transmission of faith and its transformative impact on individuals and communities.

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