

Kaamulan, magtipok tang tanan!': A Cross-cultural Study on the Indigeneity of Festival in Bukidnon

***¹ Alican M. Pandapatan, ¹ Sittie Aina T. Pandapatan, ² Basmah S. Hussain**

¹ Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Marawi City, Philippines

² Mindanao State University-General Santos City, Philippines

*Corresponding Author e-mail: alican.pandapatan@msumain.edu.ph

Received: April 2026; Revised: July 2026; Published: July 2026

Abstract

This study investigates the indigeneity of the seven tribes of Bukidnon province through the Kaamulan Festival 2025. The festive celebration brings not only entertainment but also an exploration to know about the indigenous people and their culture. To carry out the study, the researcher employed the ethnographic research method to describe the observed activities. A casual interview was done to few locals encountered. The immersion involved the use of field notes, cameras, and audio/video records. The findings discovered the participation from the seven tribes gathering in Malaybalay City is equally given importance in the celebration. Their presence through showcasing their practices, rituals, dances, and songs through performances helped to understand the Kaamulan festival. The festival is comprised of various events and exhibitions signifying unity. Primarily, the highlights of the Kaamulan is centered to 'piniliyapan', 'pamalabag', 'pangampo', etc. in branding its event. Authentic experience is engrained in the performances due to the real members of the indigenous people. They are performing their usual daily activities back home in their village. However, the authenticity of few and well-choreographed movements might eradicate the original and naturalness of particular cultural performance. This implies a dilemma on authenticity. Hence to explore this, it is recommended to fully validate movements and actions to the people themselves. Their authority entails respect and establishing orientation to the multiple stakeholders who organize the Kaamulan.

Keywords: Indigeneity; Culture; Authenticity; Festival; Local Knowledge

How to Cite: Pandapatan, A. M., Pandapatan, S. A. T., & Hussain, B. S. (2026). Kaamulan, magtipok tang tanan!': A Cross-cultural Study on the Indigeneity of Festival in Bukidnon. *International Journal of Linguistics and Indigenous Culture*, 4(2), 101-115. <https://doi.org/10.36312/ijlic.v4i2.4878>



<https://doi.org/10.36312/ijlic.v4i2.4878>

Copyright© 2026, Pandapatan et al.

This is an open-access article under the CC-BY-SA License.



INTRODUCTION

The Philippines has several festivities which give colors to different regions and ethnolinguistic communities. Various regions or certain provinces and even cities celebrate their festivals in a particular month. Moreover, festivals have been part of the tourism industry while promoting the local culture. It has an economic advantage to the locals and engage visitors in how festivals are celebrated in a particular place (Gonzales, 2017).

Kaamulan is a major festival in the country recognized by Department of Tourism. It is big because it involves all the municipalities and cities of the Province in Bukidnon. It means a celebration altogether by the people of Bukidnon. In simply put, it is the tribespeople's gathering. The saliences of the festival are to present the

dataship rituals, cultural wedding ceremony, thanksgiving for a fruitful harvest, promotion of peace amidst differences, etc. The vibrant festival is a recognition of the customs and traditions of the seven tribespeople, namely: Bukidnon, Higaonon, Talaandig, Manobo, Matigsalug, Tigwahanon and Umayamnon. As exclaimed, the unique experience in Kaamulan would be the authentic rituals performed by the indigenous people (Bukidnon Province, 2025). Additionally, whilst most of the festivals in the country associate the celebration to honor particular saints or devotion to the blessed Virgin Mary, Kaamulan is bound to indigeneity and culture of the tribespeople delienating the absence of external influences such as religion, economy, politics, etc. Hence, indigeneity is a concept pertains to the worldview of local people of how they described themselves. It is an identity, their truth about, and expressions of their culture, existence, origins, and positionality in determining their membership in a country (Walker, 2019).

Kaamulan signifies indigeneity as claimed by the local government due to the performances inspired and believed authentic from the people themselves. Apparently, the indigeneity could be politicalized through the lens of the collaborators. Innovation can occur with the expense of the reality of indigency. Albeit the innovation, the motive to add spice to the traditional performances seems a form of invented traditions. Hobsbawm and Ranger (2000) clarifies that invented tradition does not necessarily mean similar to innovation. In fact, it is the development of the tradition from a custom. The technicalities of the tradition by adapting to the social needs are the consequence. The Kaamulan itself might be part of the invented traditions based on its development as festival. Another similar note, while it is believed that politics can influence in the declaration of authenticity. It is a quest to the festival being studied at which sides decides and claim the performances authentic. Bruner (2005) explains that the big contention relies on to whom authority validates the authenticity. This suggests power dynamics in the system (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). An idealistic perspective would clearly accedes to the locals themselves, it is also illogical to debunk the validation of the so called experts in culture. This pressures the argument on authenticity but not on the indigeneity. To investigate and aligned the indigeneity and authenticity, Hall (1997) works on representation pertains to shared knowledge and worldview of the culture through the language most especially culture. It denotes elements that are shared by the same group to express or communicate their thought.

Moreover, the indigeneity through an etic-emic perspective through the performances benefits the description and the contention on authenticity. It sheds light on some critical discussions in order to represent indigent people's culture fairly in the discourse. It offers a consideration to cultural paradigm as festival serves as data source. This is more relevant to indigenous people (IP) because they are understood as the 'other' of mainstream society; thus marginalization persists (Pagulayan, 2018; Eduardo and Gabriel, 2021). More than the description of the culture, the world today has changed since time immemorial and social factors such as migration, access to hinterland areas, language contact, and the inevitable modernity has influenced the society to value things based on the mainstream society. Apparently, neglecting the IP. Due to this global pressure, the mainstream society subjects the minority groups into corner and abolishing their self-identity. Hence, the description of the Kaamulan

Festival stresses the essence of critically position the people into the rightful pedestal representing their worldviews as IP. Furthermore, it deepens the discussions on understanding the indigeneity vis-a-vis authentic experience through performance of the tribespeople of Bukidnon. It attracts attention to the concerned authority to further create policies that support them to thrive at the same time a representation. To further realize the thesis of this study, the following statements are inquired:

1. What are the indigenous groups included in the Kaamulan Festival?
2. What are the confounding details observed in the Kaamulan Festival?
3. What are the essential details obtained from the actual performances of Kaamulan Festival as deemed authentic?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the Philippines, the festivals are the means of sharing history, culture, and traditions of the place and the people. It determines the identity of the town or province where it originated. Tourism industry includes festivals as part of promoting the local culture. During the seasons of festivals, a surge of spectators come by to join the celebration. Whilst it is understated its deeper functions, it plays significant role in the amplification of culture and its people.

Festival is a medium for communication. It conveys messages. Jaeger and Mykletun (2013) mentioned that festivals as a form of communication influence spectators understand about the tribespeople. Both locals and visitors come to witness the festive performances. In the work of Ladanga et al. (2018), they states the participation of outsiders are due to the internet. Technology reaches various people. The information is driven with the technology usage. With this, festival plays significance in the visibility of local culture. Telling a story through performance is also a way of communicating the culture. Trujillo (2022) focused on the narrative approach. The acts through performances notify spectators what means indigenous lives therein and how uniquely differ their worldviews may be.

While visitors benefits from the immersion through first hand observation, attending a festival is uncovering the myth about the people. Udtujan (2025) pointed the role of the teachers on the promotion of festival and heritage. They become bearers of knowledge amplifying it to the audience. Hence, keeping the culture commensurate to the idea of the true heritage. Moreover, Owano and Nyamanga (2024) offers an insightful discussions on this. Accordingly, cultural festivals offer advantages to the local and tourists such as learning, fun activities, economic gains, etc. However, poor promotion affects the economic gain of the local, misconceptions deceive tourists, monotony undermines the colorful acts, and flawless execution neglects indigeneity. These put the festival in a disadvantage position.

On the examination of the authenticity of the festival and its possible effect in imaging people and place, Li and Lee (2020) highlights that the festival gives a positive and valuable learning to the tourists. The relationship of authentic experience and identity through image, values, satisfaction allows cultural justice. Hence, the festival organizers enhance the cultural experience to make the festival as entertainment rather than a culturally oriented acts. However, Rivetti et al. (2024) put emphasis on the knowledge of the spectators. The construct of knowledge relies from what is known and what is learned in the performances. Both prior knowledge and acquired

knowledge bring positive influence to the loyalty. The perceived authenticity of the performances becomes the mediator of such relationships. Thereby, authenticity is believed to be the prime goal why people come. It can lead to deception wherein the authenticity is a mask of its true nature. The work of Luna et al. (2022) related to authenticity discussed the commercialization and commoditization of festivals. Positive and negative impacts occur. The extension of the supposed one-day festival into week or month long celebration is seen positive. In contrast, the invitation of the non-local artists and hiring designers who are ignorant to the local traditions invent tradition which derogate from its origin is perceived negative. Reconsidering two sides of the developing festivals weigh the decisions of sustaining indigeneity and authentic experiences of the spectators.

Logically, these works meet at one section which argues that festivals might be taken disadvantaged in favor of interest and sacrificing the authenticity and indigeneity of the acts. Modification or innovation on the practices through festival violates the right of the very people who are commodified economically and tarnish the culture of the tribespeople.

METHOD

Research Design

This qualitative study employed an ethnographic research design. The researchers conducted an immersive field study during the 2025 Kaamulan Festival to observe and describe the people, cultural practices, and geographical setting represented through the festival. The ethnographic approach enabled the researchers to examine the intersection of emic and etic perspectives in presenting the indigeneity of Bukidnon's tribal communities.

The Kaamulan Festival was described by local community members and festival organizers as an authentic representation of Indigenous cultural practices. Therefore, an ethnographic approach was considered appropriate for examining how authenticity and indigeneity were expressed through the festival's activities and performances.

Study Site and Cultural Groups

The study was conducted in Malaybalay City, Province of Bukidnon, Philippines. The research focused on the seven recognized Indigenous tribes of the province represented during the Kaamulan Festival. In addition to the tribal communities, the researchers considered the geographical landscape because of its relationship with the cultural identity, practices, and experiences of the people.

Researcher Preparation and Positionality

Before the field immersion, the researchers completed a cultural anthropology course to develop the knowledge and skills required for conducting ethnographic research. This preparation helped them interact respectfully with the participating communities and interpret cultural practices within their appropriate social and cultural contexts.

One researcher had also previously taught Indigenous students at a university for one semester. This experience provided additional insights into the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous students. However, the researchers critically reflected

on this prior engagement to minimize its potential influence on data collection and interpretation.

Participant Selection

Participants were selected during the festival events based on their availability and willingness to share relevant information. Eight individuals participated in casual, informal interviews. The researchers did not collect personally identifiable information from the participants.

Data Collection

Data were collected over three days through participant observation, direct observation, informal interviews, and field immersion. The researchers participated in festival activities and interacted with local community members to document naturally occurring behaviors, cultural performances, and perceived innovations or additions to the festival.

Field notes, photographs, and audio recordings were used to document observations and participants' accounts while the researchers explored the study site and interacted with community members. The researchers also considered their prior contextual knowledge when recording and interpreting observations.

Data Analysis

The study employed descriptive analysis to organize and present the data collected from observations, interviews, field notes, photographs, and recordings. The analysis emphasized detailed descriptions of the festival, the participating communities, and the cultural landscape.

The findings were interpreted through an emic-etic framework. The emic perspective reflected the meanings and interpretations expressed by community members, while the etic perspective represented the researchers' analytical interpretations. Integrating these perspectives allowed the researchers to examine how indigeneity and cultural authenticity were represented during the festival.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers obtained consent from individuals who contributed information to the study. Consent was sought as a demonstration of respect for the participants, their communities, and their cultural knowledge. No personal identifying information was collected or reported.

Researcher Reflexivity and Management of Bias

To preserve an open interpretation of the Kaamulan Festival, the researchers avoided relying exclusively on theoretical frameworks that might rigidly categorize cultural authenticity. Instead, theoretical concepts were used cautiously to support, rather than determine, the interpretation of indigeneity.

The researchers also practiced reflexivity by considering how their academic preparation, prior knowledge, cultural assumptions, and previous interactions with Indigenous students could influence the study. These experiences were treated as contextual references while the researchers remained attentive to possible biases throughout data collection and analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussions are presented simultaneously. It explains the festival as descriptive and critical.

The indigenous groups included in the Kaamulan Festival: Cross-cultural Lens

The seven tribes of Bukidnon are the highlight of the Kaamulan Festival. It empowers the culture within the province and allows the tribespeople to showcase their cultural identity through performances such as dances, songs, enactment or play, exhibits of material culture, wearing tribal attire, etc. These various aspects of their lives as cultural identities are expressed (Abbasova, 2024). The month-long celebration also promotes the traditional games that reflect values, sportsmanship, determination, unity, and strength. The traditional games are actually related to their day to day activities such as hunting and archery. Such activities add to the concept of nation-building and regional identity formation (Tri, 2025). The provincial government encourages the participation of the different tribes in various events to symbolize inclusion and celebration of their inhabitation of the place.

Tri (2025) notes that these activities and expressions is a cultural capital. It does not only preserve the heritage and culture, but it is also a promotion of the culture and origin. Through this, the culture is being communicated. Comprise with various acts as signifiers for their representation and identity most especially in Kaamulan, Jaeger and Mykletun (2013) mentioned that festivals serve to communicate the local culture of a particular group. It influences the identity they build through their performance. Every acts of culture in the festival gives an impression to others or the outsiders of the community. For the audience, a perception is created about people e.g. indigenous people of who they are. Understanding this leads to construct an image which illustrates their way of living. Interestingly, it allows every ethnic group to display their notions of self. Nonetheless, it is their rights as Indigenous People for self-determination as in recognition to their existence to the society (Baird, 2019). In fact, Zhang et al. (2019) called this cultural identity through performance as collective memory which signifies continuity of their historical accounts.

Meanwhile, diversity is manifested in the interactions among them which strengthens the coexistence as masterpiece of harmonious relationships. Hence, as Kaamulan dubbed as gathering of tribespeople of Bukidnon, people thrives despite the differences. Respect within one geographical location is essentially noted for cross-cultural connections. The next table presents the seven tribespeople:

Table 1. The Seven Tribes of Bukidnon Province

Tribe (Ethnolinguistic Group)	Cultural Descriptions
Bukidnon (language: Binukid)	The Bukidnon practices arranged marriage as early as seven. Polygamy is allowed in the culture. The traditional wedding usually involves the rituals of betel nut with rice. Their rich expression of arts is through dance, poetry, songs, making a mat and basket.
Higaonon (language: Higaonon)	The Higaonon are called the people of wilderness. The ethno-legal aspect of their culture is influenced by

Tribe (Ethnolinguistic Group)	Cultural Descriptions
	their tribal leader called 'datu' which is a cognate term for most of the ethnic tribes in the Philippines.
Manobo (language: Manobo)	The Manobo's name origin is 'mansuba'. It literally means people who are living near the river. However, they can also be found in mountains, hills, or plateaus. Their livelihood is primarily on planting rice and corn. Their costume is made from abaca.
Matigsalug (language: Matigsalug)	The Matigsalug means the people of the river in Salug, a place in one of the municipalities of the province. Men usually are wearing short and tight lower garment and folded cloth around the head with beads and hair of horse or goat.
Talaandig (language: Talaandig)	The Talaandig are commonly resided in the Mount Kitanglad. They are known for their painting color using soil of different colors. This natural approach gives unique tapestry to the arts and at the same time helps them economically.
Tigwahanon (language: Tigwahanon)	The Tigwahanon are people scattered in the river of Tigwa. They are living in different areas of the Municipality of San Fernando. Though they have low numbers in terms of population, they thrive and preserve their cultural heritage.
Umayamnon (language: Umayamnon)	The Umayamnon people live in the watershed of the Umaran river. Their physical attributes like average skin tone, average height, and most especially the prominent cheekbones is distinct to them. They are known as shy, decision-maker and expert in the wild. They make beadworks, handbags, and bangles.

*Source: *bukidnon.gov.ph*

The seven tribes have their own aesthetic features that can be described in their own right. It can be noticed that shared cultural acts and values have a lot in common among them due to continuous interactions or language contacts. The shared unifying values are rooted to the worldviews of these people or Lumads (Paredes, 2013). Other signifying characteristic among them is their sacredness of the environment and maintain ecological knowledge (Matuan, 2015). However, what strongly holds them to retain their cultural identity is valuing their own heritage amidst the possibility of cultural adoption.

Their identification is commonly based on their cultural attire specifically its patterns, colors, weaving techniques, and motifs (Salvador-Amores, 2013). They have designs that would determine their identity from the rest of the group. Dominant colors are red, black, and blue but other color combinations can also be seen such as yellow, green, and white. The patterns are geometrical shapes. Moreover, they have headdresses or head garments used. Each detail has philosophical meaning from the

perspective of the tribespeople. Tan (2025) explains the traditional attire is a cultural signifier that determines the identity, status, and tribal affiliation.

The presence of the tribes serves as a vivid expression of cultural awareness, offering both locals and visitors—regardless of their prior knowledge—an opportunity to learn from their performances and detailed descriptions. Audiences are encouraged to engage with the tribespeople, asking questions about the cultural artifacts, such as traditional costumes, on display. Observers are asked to put attention to observable nuances, as some tribes may appear similar to another, and even within a single tribe, subtle variations exist. The active participation of the tribespeople not only strengthens the cultural identity of the province but also enhances its image through the sharing of authentic traditions. A culture that is originated within. Additionally, the month-long celebration provides a platform for the tribes to exhibit their cultural materials at accessible prices, offering both economic benefits and opportunities for meaningful interaction with the public. Hall (1997) asserts the conventional view on the marking of meaning through the cultural materials. It constitutes the people, of their identity, of their views on their surrounding, and of their understanding. To say this, the seven tribe people share their own cultural identity through their materials and production of performances that communicate outsiders of their perspective of their own world.

The Kaamulan Festival: Etic Perspective

The Kaamulan Festival comes alive each year from March to April, creating a cultural vibrant atmosphere rich event. This month-long celebration unites people in appreciating the distinct traditions and characteristics of the seven indigenous tribes of Bukidnon. Similar to other festivals, Kaamulan features displays and preparations throughout the community of Malaybalay as the capital of the province, offering visitors a visually and culturally immersive experience; yet, educational and informative about their indigence. Schechner (2013) elaborates the cultural performance as immersive experience links spectators directly to authorized community. Beyond written texts, meanings are communicated in a multisensory channel. Bauman and Briggs (1990) stresses the transmission of local knowledge, worldviews, and values through the performances as educational space. Meanwhile, Turner (1982) contends it as informative due to historical background of the people including their daily activities and practices. Comparing to most Philippine festivals, Kaamulan is non-religious; instead of honoring patron saints, the tribes pay homage to their ancestors through traditional rituals.

As a pure expression of indigenous culture, the festival reflects the history, heritage, and lived experiences of Bukidnon's tribes, rooted deeply from the sense of existence. Interactions among tribe members underpins the social dynamics that strengthen their collective identity. While occasional inter-clan conflicts occur, as a common systemic friction among groups, they underscore the tribes' resilience and respect for communal living. Social cohesion and mutual support come together to set boundaries between the maintenance of distinct identity (Anderson, 2018). Beyond preserving cultural traditions and fostering unity among the seven tribes, the festival empowers its people from external pressures and overwhelming demands, including dominant cultural influences and encroachment on ancestral lands. Ultimately, the festival exists for the tribes themselves—their heritage, values, and identity form the

core of Kaamulan, making the event a living celebration of their spirit. As Tsing (2005) posits the social dynamics are continuous at the same time negotiated constantly. The relevance of the transmission of the culture and the sense of identity leads to meaningful acceptance among generations the traditions that have been evolved throughout time. This negotiation as mentioned is beyond and within the people who are authorized to their own culture. Its development and innovations of the perceived indigenous are still natural. Hence, culture changes across time and generations.

Since then inception of the festival in 1974, the Kaamulan celebration has evolved into a dynamic celebration anchored in the founding of Bukidnon province, reflecting the pillars of the geographical composition of the province which is the ethnolinguistic groups. The culmination of the month-long event occurs on April 12, marking the peak period to observe and experience the festival's full cultural depth. Locals and tourists flock to the capital city to witness the rich traditions ranging from displays to performances. Of course, this has been a cultural tradition anticipating the messages of understanding the indigenous lives. The celebration is organized into distinct phases: the pre-event known as *Piniliyapan* (**prelude activity of performances to festival**), the main event called *Pamalabag ha Pangampo* (Requesting and Praying) featuring sunrise street dances, and the post-event period offering opportunities to socialize with the indigenous tribes. Moreover, these (*Pamalabag ha Pangampo*) are rituals that bless the beginning of the display and performances, offering an authentic process of sacrifice and chants.

During *Piniliyapan*, the seven tribes are formally introduced through vibrant cultural presentations, complemented by a social evening that fosters interaction among tribespeople, locals, and visitors. Each tribe takes the spotlight to perform, sharing stories of their values, traditions, and daily life. For instance, they inform the culture of farming. Prosperity and abundance in harvest is communicated. They want the process of planting up until harvest season goes smoothly so they pray for it (Tri, 2025). The performances are narratives of their being. It tells people the simplicity of living in their communities. In the early morning ritual that precedes the street dances, representatives from all seven tribes participate under the guidance of a single **baylan** (priest or shaman), who leads the ceremonial preparations. She mediates people and *Magbabaya* (God) to seek divine approval when doing activities (Demetrio, 1991). As the sun rises, the streets come alive with the Kaamulan street dance festival. Four tribes are selected to compete in the dance and float categories due to budget limitations, yet every tribe still takes to the streets, using the parade as a stage to express their identity and showcase their culture through artistry, performance, and meaningful interaction.

The festival's significance implies far beyond competition. It is a celebration of language, culture, and identity which prestige themselves with pride and honor in bringing it to the public. The presence, dedication, and active participation of the tribes reveal their identity, highlighting both the cultural and social fabric of their community. Afterwards, visitors and cultural researchers took the opportunity to engage directly with the tribespeople—an experience that would involve extensive and ethical socializations. Interactions offer invaluable insight into the heritage, traditions, and daily life of Bukidnon's indigenous communities, deepening appreciation for the richness and vibrancy of their culture. On the other hand,

researchers situate themselves into immersive role as outsiders while grasping important codes of culture.

Both material and non-material culture present in the performances, stressing cultural meanings are constructed and communicates through the display of arts and performances. Defining more nuanced culture of Bukidnon entails strong relationship between people and its ecology affecting the social behavior and convictions. It is moving beyond generalizations about indigenous communities as origin settlers of a particular geographic setting, yet they are people with their own share of world. Looking into this outsider perspective, the study contributes to decolonizing perceptions, encouraging a reconstruction of understanding based on the messages and narratives conveyed through the performances. Performances becomes tool in decolonizing the embedded thought. It reclaims the narrative authority, articulating cultural memory, and changing the circulated misconceptions (Taylor, 2003). It suggests that every ethnolinguistic groups or tribes have unique experiences and interpretations of the space they are into. Primitive beliefs are the propeller of the festival. Without it, there can be no festivals (Tri, 2025). The increasing discourse on indigeneity in the region is undeniably a progress of its relevance and importance not only to the tribespeople themselves, but this matters to all (Baird, 2019).

Authenticity in the Kaamulan Festival

Most of the time, discussing cultural heritage and real people are associated with authentic experience. It allows both members and visitors to engage in the cultural discourses (Taylor, 2001). The Kaamulan 2025 exhibited important cultural materials that reflect daily activity. The narrative play showing *bekag* (basket), *hinabel* (hand woven fabric), and *ikam* (woven mat) are symbols of the nativity of the tribespeople. These objects embody the aesthetic principles, environmental adaptation, and technological ideas that function as markers of tribal heritage (Tilley et al., 2006). These material objects reflect the communities' everyday domestic practices and their functional roles across various social contexts. For example, the basket serves purposes beyond simple storage; its form and size enable diverse applications in subsistence activities. Such multifunctionality contributes to the efficiency and convenience of daily life, enhancing both productivity and cultural continuity.

The prayer that was performed through a song is a power. Although the language may not be understood, the act of listening to and observing the performers conveys deeper layers of meaning. Their melody and prayerful chanting draw the audience into the emotional depth embodied in the performance. Lyrical content of the prayer songs reflect the cultural environment and enable the enactment of social relationships and cohesion among group members (Nettl, 2005).

The vibrant colors associated with the seven tribes significantly enhance the visual richness of the event. Audiences are captivated by the understated yet dignified appearance of their attire, which is distinguished by geometric motifs. While seemingly simple, these designs strongly shows the identity of the people and their environment. The display of traditional weaving accentuates the importance of sustaining local knowledge systems, as these crafts reflects authenticity and the immeasurable labor invested by the artisans. Indigenous materials used in these textiles also exemplify high quality. Likewise, the musical instruments featured in the

festival immerse spectators in the communal life of the tribes, conveying the joy and vitality expressed in their songs. The dance movements follow established patterns informed by specific cultural actions; nevertheless, the performers do not rely on counting steps, as their movements flow intuitively, with footwork seamlessly aligned with bodily rhythm. It is not merely a movement, however, it symbolizes cultural knowledge and the practice of the community who lives it. Risner (2009) argues that the original and authentic foot stepping of the dances are faithful in the original choreography rather than artistically perfecting the actions. The narratives portrayed in the performances depict themes such as warfare, courtship, harvest, traditional games, and child-rearing—social realities that mirror the lived experiences of the seven tribes. Ecological elements are also pronounced, reflecting the communities' strong orientation toward nature and their enduring connection to the environment. Animals such as frogs, monkeys, and snakes—species commonly found in their surroundings or forested areas—are represented in their dances. The cultural expressions displayed in these performances appear naturally embodied on the faces and movements of the tribespeople. Such expressions arise from their deep internalization of their cultural heritage and a profound understanding of their communal identity.

Despite the intention to provide spectators with an authentic experience, critical observations suggest aspects of the performances warrant careful review regarding their claimed authenticity. While tribesmen are permitted to perform, the extent of freedom allowed by the organizers raises questions. Elements of cultural innovation may appear in the performances, as some steps executed by certain performers are noticeably synchronized. When compared to the traditionally recognized steps of other performers, these coordinated movements appear practiced or rehearsed rather than spontaneous. Hobsbawm and Ranger (2000) argues that invented traditions are politically driven and it deceives people by presenting a particular culture an old. In contrast, groups considered more authentic exhibit movements that do not require perfect simultaneity; natural coordination and execution without exaggeration characterize their performance style. This principle also applies to authoritative movements of the body and hands wherein when overly stylized, exceed the graceful naturalism typically observed among the tribespeople. Dramatized exhibition of culture distorts the image and significance of the ethnolinguistic group (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2000). Notably, some movements are inspired by the behavior of animals, such as chickens, reflecting a natural source of cultural expression. Another critical aspect for evaluation is the interpretation of the performances—whether they lean toward theatricality or maintain cultural fidelity. Attention should also be given to clothing: while most indigenous designs feature geometric patterns, the presence of floral motifs in some performers' lower garments is questionable, as traditional textiles of the tribes rarely include such designs.

Lin and Lee (2020) asserted that authenticity (of the festival performances) gives positive effect on the building of image of particular people. This could also mean that the authenticity is relative to the indigeneity because it presents the social realities of the subjects in the discourse. Amidst the general perceptions and social marginalization among people who are not dominant in the society, stressing the importance of authentic experience from the performances showcased by the real

people can fill the misleading information about them. Rivetti et al. (2024) linked the prior knowledge and acquired knowledge in the festivals that it can bring positive outcome. First, it helps in correcting the previous knowledge to be corrected if misconceptions are what stored in the mindset of the spectators. Second, it deepens the understanding that can bring more appreciation among different cultures.

Meanwhile, Luna et al. (2022) study emphasized the commodification and commercialization could lead to either good and bad effects or both. It seems that the commodifying and commercializing bring positive outcome to the tribespeople and locals because of its promotion that makes the festival longer. Hence, it can be a positive to the economy of the locale. On the other hand, the negative side is the innovation that requires artistry rather than authenticity. This forfeits the core goal of the festival and what it is made for.

There could be factors that affect these observations. First, the influence of the organizers to modernize the natural dance movements. Second, the lack of understanding regarding the authentic nature of the culture within the community. Third, to heighten tourism for entertainment. Fourth, to reconstruct the image of the people of Bukidnon which might not be appropriate in the first place.

CONCLUSION

The Kaamulan Festival is a salient festival in the country its nonreligious aspect. It pays tribute to the rich culture and heritage of the thriving and coexisting tribes, especially it honors their ancestors through their deity. The indigeneity of the tribespeople can be problematic when it is facilitated by non-member of the community due to reinterpretations of the cultural meanings. Furthermore, the organizing body may aim economic benefit in the festival rather than cementing the image of true and authentic culture of Indigenous People. Hence, it deceives people who do not have critical lens. Destroying the primitive beliefs that have been transmitted through generations. Power play of hegemonic society is a factor influencing the native in sustaining sharing their material and non-material cultures. Violating the authenticity and worldviews of the rightful people on their own identity and culture. Thereby, it is highly needed to secure authenticity over the force of innovation which perpetuates destruction of identity. Regardless of the notion that without innovation in the performances becomes dull, the main point of preservation of culture is what is sought after all in defining indigeneity. To strengthen the festivals commercialization and/or commodification, the strong cooperation of the people to the indigenous people is strictly necessary yet unnegotiable.

This study recognizes several limitations, particularly the absence of extensive interviews and multi-stakeholder consultations that could have provided deeper insights into the observed performances in Kaamulan. These gaps may have brought problems in ensuring the identification of inconsistencies in distinguishing authentic cultural materials and movements from those that are adapted or reconstructed. Future research on expanding the scope of inquiry is suggested by critically examining potentially contested claims of authenticity within the Kaamulan Festival and conducting in-depth interviews to strengthen the validity of findings. Furthermore, this study insinuates the need for another ethnographic investigations on Philippine

festivals to more comprehensively explore and understand contemporary expressions of indigeneity in the context of Philippines, most especially in Mindanao.

Author Contributions

Alican M. Pandapatan: Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, fieldwork, data collection, formal analysis, interpretation of findings, project administration, and writing of the original draft. **Sittie Aina T. Pandapatan:** Investigation, field documentation, data organization, validation, literature review, and review and editing of the manuscript. **Basmah S. Hussain:** Methodology, validation, interpretation of findings, and critical review and editing of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Funding

This research received no external funding

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Abbasovna, A. (2024). Southeast Asian culture: Dynamics, diversity, and integration in the context of globalization. *Perfect Education Fairy*, 2(1), 62-66.
- Anderson, B. (2018). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso.
- Baird, I. (2019). Introduction: Indigeneity in 'Southeast Asia': Challenging identities and geographies. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 50(1), 2-6. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246341900002X>
- Bauman, R., and Briggs, C. (1990). Poetics and performance as critical perspectives on language and social life. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 19(1), 59-88.
- Bukidnon Province (2025). *Kaamulan*. Retrieved on 25th May 2025 from <https://bukidnon.gov.ph/kaamulan-festival/>
- Bruner, E. (2005). *Abraham Lincoln as authentic reproduction*. In E. Bruner (Ed.), *Culture on tour*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cohen, E. and Cohen, S.A. (2012). Authentication: Hot and Cool. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(3), 1295-1314. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2012.03.004>
- Demetrio, F. (1991). *Myths and rites of the Philippines*. Xavier University Press.
- Eduardo, J. and Gabriel, A. (2021). Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Education: The Dumagat Experience in the Provinces of Nueva Ecija and Aurora, in the Philippines. *SAGE Open*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211009491>
- Gonzales, V. (2017). Cultural and Economic Benefits of Festivals to Community Residents of Batangas, Philippines. *Asia Pacific of Education, Arts and Sciences*, 4(2), 14-22.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications: United Kingdom.
- Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (2000). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press: United Kingdom.
- Jaeger, K. and Mykletun, R. (2013). Festivals, Identities, and Belonging. *Event Management*, 17, 213-226. <http://10.3727/152599513X13708863377791>

- Ladanga, J., Padrigalan, M., and Muya, G. (2018). Model of participation in a Filipino Festival. *LPU-Laguna Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 3(1).
- Li, Y. and Lee, T. (2020). How the authentic experience of a traditional cultural festival affects the attendee's perception of festival identity and place identity. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 11(3), 357-373. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-12-2019-0061>
- Luna, A., Dizon, J., Paunlagui, M., Bacongus, R., and Quimbo, M. (2022). Commercialization and Commoditization of Festivals in Calabarzon, Philippines. *Res Militaris*, 12(4), 477-498.
- Matuan, A. (2015). *The Lumad of Mindanao: Traditions, struggles, and cultural resilience*. Ateneo de Davao University Press.
- Nettl, B. (2005). *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concepts*. University of Illinois Press.
- Owano, A. & Nyamanga, P. (2024). *The role of cultural festivals in enhancing indigenous knowledge for sustainable development in Kenya*. Indigenous Knowledge and Sustainable Development: The Technical University of Kenya.
- Pagulayan, R. (2018). "I am Filipino": Dissecting Filipinoness in the Indigenous Itawis Ethnolinguistic Community of Northern Luzon, Philippines. *Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 28-68. <https://sites.nd.edu/ujournal>
- Paredes, O. (2013). *A Mountain of Difference: The Lumad in Early Colonial Mindanao*. Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Risner, D. (2009). *Dance studies: The basics*. Routledge
- Rivetti, F., Rossi, C., & Lucadamo, A. (2024). The formation of attendee loyalty at cultural festivals. What role for knowledge and authenticity? *Socio-economic Planning Sciences*, 95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2024.102002>
- Salvador-Amores, A. (2013). *Tapping Ink, Tattooing Identities*. University of the Philippines Press.
- Schechner, R. (2013). *Performance studies: An introduction (3rd ed.)*. Routledge.
- Tan, L. (2025). Threads of Identity: An Ethnographic Study on the Costumes and Cultural Signifiers of the Bukidnon and Menuvu Indigenous Communities in Mindanao, Philippines. *International Journal on Science and Technology*, 16(3), <https://doi.org/10.71097/IJSAT.v16.i3.7348>
- Taylor, D. (2003). *The archive and the repertoire: Performing cultural memory in the Americas*. Duke University Press.
- Taylor, J. (2001). Authenticity and sincerity in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28(1), 7-26.
- Tilley, C., Keanne, W., Kuechler, S., Rowlands, M. & Spyer, P. (2006). *Handbook of Material Culture*. SAGE Publications.
- Trujillo, J. (2022). Performed cultural narrative of Kadalag-an Festival: The representation of Victoriana Identity. *International Journal of Management Studies and Social Science Research*, 4(2), 64-76.
- Tsing, A. L. (2005). *Friction: An ethnography of global connection*. Princeton University Press.

- Turner, V. (1982). *From ritual to theatre: The human seriousness of play*. PAJ Publications.
- Udtujan, G. (2025). Festival traditions and cultural heritage: A study of community practices and teachers' perspectives in eastern Visayas. *International Journal of Research in Economics and Social Sciences*, 15(1), 19-33.
- Walker, D. (2019). What is indigeneity?. *Te Kaharoa*, 12(1).
<https://doi.org/10.24135/tekaharoa.v12i1.260>
- Zhang, C., Fong, L. , Li, S., & Ly, P. (2019). National identity and cultural festivals in postcolonial destinations. *Tourism Management*, 73, 94-104.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.01.013>