

# Ethnocide and The Indigenous Aeta Magbukon

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## **Abstract**

This ethnographic study aimed to assess the facts and reasons for ethnocide on the part of the participants. It results from but is not limited to acculturation, assimilation, development, colonial mentality, and geography. The study found that while a significant number of participants have a good understanding of their material culture, their perception of how it is practiced is concerning. Their knowledge of their intangible culture is still sufficient for their continued creativity and existence, and such practice must be considered. Overall, the participants' practice is torn between being kept and discarded. The participant's perception of what causes ethnocide is dominated by a preference for a modern lifestyle, inability to speak the native dialect, non-speaking of the native dialect, and ethnic culture is not taught in-home or school. The majority of participants believe that their ethnic culture should be modified, preserved, or not practiced, particularly in terms of beliefs and practices. Most of the participants strongly agree on the importance of preserving ethnic culture for identity and solidarity.

**Keywords:** Aeta Magbukon, ethnocide, ethnicity, indigenous people, ethnography

## Introduction

How many cultures are already inexistent at present? Where are the offspring of these cultures? Do they have anywhere to see and remember their cultural heritage? How do they feel about their true cultural or ethnic identity? And, how is their cultural heritage significance to their lives? Trying to answer these questions raised the issue of ethnocide.

Nickel (1994) defines ethnocide as a method of eliminating people, similar to genocide. He elaborated, saying that genocide involves the physical eradication of people, whereas ethnocide is the preference of majority culture to force indigenous people to abandon their distinctive ways of life and assimilate rapidly into the majority culture. Nickel further explained that ethnocide can happen through the gradual assimilation of distinctive minorities to the culture of a larger surrounding society over the long term.

The United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous people (Bellier, 2005; Charters & Stavenhagen, 2009; Gilbert, 2012; Pruim, 2014; UN General Assembly, 2007) states that "indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional artistic expressions as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies, and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literature, designs, sports, traditional games, visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect, and develop their property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and regular artistic expressions".

In the Philippines, Republic ACT 7722, known as the Higher Education Act of 1994 has the following pertinent provisions that may help in protecting the culture of the indigenous people if adequately implemented:

"...that the state shall protect, foster, and promote the right of all citizens to affordable quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to ensure that education shall be accessible to all. The State shall likewise ensure and protect academic freedom and shall promote its exercise and observance for the continuing intellectual growth; the advancement of learning and research, the development of responsible and effective leadership, the education of high level and middle-level professionals, and the enrichment of our historical and cultural heritage..."

The Act is clear in its support for the preservation of our historical and cultural heritage. The governing authorities should have been very keen on its enactment, and policymakers should have considered enforcing its observance. Furthermore, the educators must have complied with carrying it out satisfactorily. Texts may include references to culture and cultural minorities and primers go into detail about native peoples' lives and ways of life, but they do not address the issue of preserving their cultural heritage, ethnicity, and identity.

Due to over-assimilation, the Aeta Magbukon are on the point of extinction (David, 2014). However, I noticed that they are not simply losing their distinctiveness, as they continue to encourage the younger generation to revive and preserve their unique ways of life. Nonetheless, their continued integration into the non-Aeta community may eventually lead to the extinction of their culture and traditions.

As can literature tell us, many studies and intervention programs from different nations and the Philippines were carried out to eradicate ethnocide as countries see the explicit meaning of cultural diversity (Czermak et al., 2003; Matsuura, 2005; Grattan, 2006; Baker, 2007; Council of Ministers of Education, 2010; Salang, 2012; Vecaldo, 2013; Rimando, 2013; Valdez, 2013; Jocson, 2013). It has been the primary concern of UNESCO and its counterpart around the globe.

One might ask why I am focused on the Indigenous People (IP). The goal is simple: indigenous peoples are the most vulnerable to ethnocide due to their numbers, educational backgrounds, and political and socio-economic instability, as evidenced by related literature and studies.

For purposes of clarity, shared understanding, and working definition of ethnocide, the researcher used the description developed by Basco et al. (2005) in their study of the Igorot students in Baguio City, Philippines. It stated that ethnocide “is the process of gradual change in ethnic culture of indigenous peoples that eventually culminates to the death of ethnicity or loss of identity as a consequence of but not limited to acculturation, assimilation, development, colonial mentality, including geography”.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This research was carried out to determine whether there are sufficient facts and reasons to believe that Aeta Magbukon has committed ethnocide, particularly in recent generations. It aimed to assess the existence of ethnocide through responses of Aeta Magbukon students through a survey based on the working definition of this research and to identify and enumerate the factors that may contribute to ethnocide based on participants' responses.

### **Methodology**

#### **Participants of the Study**

The participants in this study were 107 Aeta College and High School students from the five major Aeta Magbukon concentrations in Bataan, Philippines: Bangkal in Abucay (25), Bian in Mariveles (21), Kinaragan in Limay (19), Kanawan in Morong (22) and Bayan-Bayanan in Orani (20). They were chosen based on their willingness to support the study, as well as the approval of their Tribal leaders, Elders, and parents.

The three key informants are from the Bangkal community, who currently works at the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). The five Tribal Leaders and ten elders are from the five communities earlier stated in this study. During the study's validation and triangulation, these informants were interviewed employing focus group discussions. The Tribal Council chose them to participate because of their knowledge about their culture and their experience as Cultural Masters in the "School for Living Traditions (SLT) Program" of the National Commission for Culture in the Arts (NCCA).

### **Methods and Techniques of the Study**

This study employed the ethnography research method. Ethnography (Curry; Nembhard; Bradley, 2009; Trimmer & Wood, 2016) is a type of field research that aims to learn about the culture of a specific setting or environment. It frequently relies on participant observation through extended fieldwork and may include other qualitative and quantitative methods. Participant observation was used as part of ethnography because it is necessary to connect the researcher to the most basic of human experiences, discovering the how's and why's of human behavior in a specific context through immersion and participation (Guest et al., 2013; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1992). This method relies on linguistic rather than numerical data and employs meaning-based rather than statistical forms of data analysis. The quantitative method was used only for the percentage and rankings of the responses of the participants on the given questionnaire, but no statistical analysis was done.

### **Research Instrument**

The questionnaire developed by Basco et al. (2005) in their study of the Igorot students was used in this study with minor revision about the objectives of the study. In the administration of questionnaires, the participants were asked to rate the survey form based on their observations and actual experiences. The knowledge on ethnic culture was rated VW for very well, WE for well enough, AL for a little, and DK for do not know. For the practice of ethnic culture, it was rated as A for always, O for often, R for rarely, and D for do not do. For the perceptions on the preservation of ethnic culture, the participants picked from the list which of the tangible and intangible cultures should not be used, modified, used, preserved, and taught to the younger generations. For the perceptions on the causes of ethnocide, the participants selected from among the list which they thought is the reason for ethnocide. For the degree of agreement on the necessity of preserving ethnic culture the following scale was used; SA for strongly agree, A for agree, AL for agree a little, and D for disagree.

### Data Collection

Three types of data are collected in ethnographic research: interviews, observations, and documents. This results in three types of data: quotations, descriptions, and document excerpts. Before collecting the necessary data, the ethnographic method must begin with the selection of culture and the identification of variables of interest that are commonly perceived as significant by members of the culture (Genzuk, 2003).

The questionnaire was used to assess the participants' knowledge of their tangible and intangible heritage. Participant observation was used to validate the participants' responses in their natural environment. I live with the tribal group long enough to secure and validate the participant's responses. The research began in June 2015, and the preliminary findings were presented at the 6th PAIR International Conference on June 7 – 9, 2017 in Taiwan. The research was completed in May of 2018.

### Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using percentages for their knowledge and practice on tangible and intangible ethnic culture; for their perception on the preservation of tangible and intangible ethnic culture; and for their degree of agreement on the necessity of preserving ethnic culture. The ranking was used in the Aetas' perception of what contributes to ethnocide.

It was subjected to triangulation and cross-validation processes. During the cross-validation and triangulation of participant and informant responses, open-ended questions were asked. I used an unstructured interview (Zhang & Wildermuth, 2009) that includes a conversation with varying levels of form and ranges from small talk to long meetings. I also used focus group discussions (Kitzinger, 1995) to collect information and data for the study, and the triangulation of the responses.

### Research Ethics

I observed the importance of research ethics (National Committees for Research Ethics in Norway, 2006). I obtained permission from the elders, tribal council, and tribal chieftains of each community I visited. Some of them do not want to be identified, and in some communities, photography and videotaping are prohibited. The tribal chieftains let me wander around their communities and participate in some activities. The elders who spoke ill of some Aetas' embarrassing deeds want to remain anonymous, as well as those who spoke ill of some Aetas' embarrassing deeds.

## Results and Discussion

### The knowledge of the Aetas on Tangible Ethnic Culture

According to UNESCO (2003), Tangible Cultural Heritage refers to physical artifacts created, maintained, and passed down through generations in society. It includes artistic creations, built heritage such as buildings and monuments, and other tangible products of human creativity that have societal cultural significance. Interestingly, many of the Aeta participants have well enough knowledge of their indigenous medicinal plants. Remarkably, 75% percent said they knew the names and uses of various plants used as herbal remedies.

Their knowledge of indigenous food plants is also impressive. Fascinating to know that 82% said they are knowledgeable about their ethnic food plants. They are most accustomed to root crops (forest yams) such as ubing anito and lima-lima. They are also very knowledgeable about edible leaves such as babayan, pako, and binucao. A higher percentage of the participants (69%) have sufficient knowledge about the indigenous house although they only saw one in books.

On the item of their knowledge of indigenous farm tools, utensils, and instruments, 51% of the participants have little or no knowledge of this particular tangible culture. Participant "A" from Bangkal claimed that they were not exposed to it and that they have not seen one except for big a knife in their homes. It suffices the account of the elders that their children and grandchildren are already exposed to better living conditions.

When asked about their ethnic clothing and accessories, they all smile, 4.67% of the students do not know about it, did not even say a thing, and shrugged off. Others say they only have seen one in books and magazines. For the rest, they said that their grandparents have one in their home, which is worn on festive occasions and when visitors arrive. But they doubt if that was an original ethnic custom because it was already made of fine linen.

Overall, it was worth noting that a greater proportion of the participants have well enough knowledge of their tangible culture. From the various tangible cultures presented, 27% said they knew it very well and 39 % said they knew it well enough. It is a good indication that many are still aware and mindful of their tangible culture. The remaining 34%, with around 30 out of the 107 participants who know a little and at least 5 participants who do not know about it could pose a significant threat to the awareness of the tangible culture of the Aeta community as a whole. The elders always told them old stories, but they are not sure if it is exactly what their great ancestors have experienced. Furthermore, elder "A" from Bangkal stated that they were unable to provide them with proofs such as old objects or artifacts. Many of them do not know much, and some do not know anything about the tangible culture at all.

Objects are important in the study of human history because they provide a solid foundation for ideas and can be used to corroborate them (UNESCO, 2017). According to Scarpaci (2016), these artifacts are the foundations of a tangible culture that demonstrates not only what we like, dislike, and desire, but also serves as portals to past perceptions and behaviors. Another question arises as a result of this statement. If some of the participants have not enough knowledge about their ethnic cultures because of lack of evidence, then how much more on the usage or practice of such since much of these tangible cultures no longer exist?

### **The practice of the Aetas on Tangible Ethnic Culture**

Foremost is their use of medicinal plants. It can be noted that 72% of them always apply their knowledge and use these plants in their life. Participant "B" from Kinaragan community stated that their mother would usually go out to find an herbal plant when they have fever and colds. Other students agree that medicinal plants are still used when a family member is ill, either to drink the extracted juice or to use as a bath wash. When asked if they use medicinal plants on their own, Bayan-Bayanan participant "C" replied that they do when they have a cough and are feverish.

In terms of indigenous food plant practices, 56% of participants frequently use or consume indigenous food plants. It is already a part of their daily meals, according to Kinaragan participant "D". During my stay in Bangkal, participant "E" prepared Imbuu kamoteng baging (sweet potato root in bamboo), which was served as dessert. While on my stay in Kanawan, I have the bulanglang na babayan cooked by participant "F". The rest of the participants have few words only about the indigenous plants because they already buy vegetables in the market, which is always ready to be cooked right away.

As to animal protein, they have for their meals baboy-ramo (wild pig), musang (wild cat), and bayawak (forest lizard) for a specified occasion. Unanimously, elder informants supported this evidence by saying that they still hunt for these animals as part of their livelihood and in many instances, for occasional purposes.

Concerning the ethnic abode, it is important to note that all of the participants no longer live in an indigenous home. Their homes are all made of concrete and cement. According to tribal leader "A", Aetas prefer to build permanent homes, but temporary houses are still built on the thick and deep forest for those who go hunting.

Notable is their use of ethnic farm tools or utensils, with 72% of participants using them only occasionally or not at all. It is because their parents were eager to send them to school that is why they were never sent to their gasak (farm area). Because of these factors, the participants are no longer exposed to traditional farming tools and do not use any of them.

When asked if they wear indigenous clothing and accessories, 48% said they rarely do, and 52% said they have never done so. Those who have worn ethnic clothing have presented the group on a festive occasion. It is undeniable from this point that many of the participants do not wear any of their ethnic clothing. Participant "G" from Bangkal honestly expressed that it is awful.

The participant's perception of the practice of Tangible Ethnic Culture is somewhat alarming. While many of them continue to use indigenous medicinal and food plants, the continuous incursion and wrongdoing of the non-Aeta community on their habitat may lead to the destruction of environmental resources, wiping out the source of their knowledge.

Although there are still a few indigenous houses, tools, utensils, clothing, and accessories, they have long been extinct. The participants have no reservations about it because they were raised with no firsthand knowledge of it.

### **The knowledge of the Aetas on Intangible Ethnic Culture**

The term 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' refers to practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated with communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals (UNESCO, 2003).

The knowledge of the Aeta students about their dialect is to be examined here in consideration for language. Language is endangered when the children are no longer learning it (Headland, 2019). It is very alarming because much indigenous knowledge is hidden in their mother tongue. The study discovered that almost half of the students have little knowledge (23%) and no knowledge at all (25%) about their dialect. Kanawan participant "H" stated that they know a little about their dialect but do not know or understand any other Aeta dialects. According to Bangkal participant "I", their knowledge is not limited to the dialect of the surrounding non-Aeta community. Participant "J" from Bian specified that they are well-versed in their Magbukon dialect as well as the language of their non-Aeta neighbors. If this is the case, there is a good chance that their dialect will survive into the next generation. But what about the participants who do not even speak the language of their birth? Participant "K" from Bian stated that because everyone speaks Tagalog and communicates in Tagalog, they no longer understand the Magbukon language.

Two entries for their ideas about their ethnic literature, dances, music, livelihood, and crafts appear alarming because 75% of the participants have little or no knowledge about it. It is all about their knowledge of literature and their craft. I asked if they had any books or reading materials with stories about them or written by them on hand. Participant "L" from Kanawan stated that they do not have one at home and have only read one. They did admit, however, that they are aware of their dances. At least 19% of the student participants said that they were once cultural dancers, and some of them still perform during festivities and on special occasions.

In terms of indigenous beliefs and practices, a higher proportion of participants rated very well or well enough for eight of the eleven items presented, namely: beliefs and practices in the family, in planting, in the environment, in animals, an individual's actions, when there is a death in the family, during wake, and in traditional healing. My observations of the various Aeta communities corroborated this evidence about their knowledge of the aforementioned items. Their elders stated that they will continue to practice their traditional culture, particularly when a family member dies.

What many of them does not know or have little knowledge about it is their ethnic practices on marriage, rituals, and paganism. The participants expressed that they rarely hear a story about the old way of marriage. Participants "M" from Kanawan have witnessed weddings of their kin, and they have also seen weddings of non-Aeta neighbors, especially in their community, they said that it is practically the same.

Paganism is somewhat new to many of the participants. I have observed that when they reach answering this item, many would whisper to one another, perceptibly in wonder what is the meaning of it. I have elaborated on its definition and that is the only time they would understand. Paganism is not widely known among them because they were raised in the community's religion, such as Roman Catholics, Iglesia ni Cristo, Protestants, and Methodists. Elders' "B" and "C" stated that they are unaware of anyone in the community who is not a Christian.

Another aspect of the Aetas' intangible culture worth noting is their values. The participants are still aware of their ethnic customs of honoring elders, particularly their leaders. They know a lot about unity and cooperation because their elders always reminded them to look out for one another in the community.

In terms of their Customary Laws concerning marriage, misdemeanors, family disputes, and the like, 29 % know a little and 34 % know nothing at all. In terms of customary laws governing criminal acts and family disputes, half of the participants (53%) have no idea what their existing decrees are.

### **The practice of the Aetas on Intangible Ethnic Culture**

It is quite disturbing to realize that 29% rarely speak their dialect, and 26% do not speak it at all. It means that more than half of this generation is in danger of losing their identity. Zimmerman (2016) asserted that when we lose a language, we lose the worldview, culture, and knowledge of the people who spoke it, constituting a loss to all humanity. Montiel, United Nations DESA's Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development said that the importance of languages could not be undervalued because it is the preservation of invaluable wisdom, traditional knowledge, and expressions of art and beauty (United Nations, 2016).

Furthermore, people's history is passed down through their language, so when the language disappears, it may take with it relevant information about the community's early history (Woodbury, 2009). In the case of these Aeta students, if half of them rarely or do not even speak their native tongue, their offspring or the next generation will have no identification anymore as to what tribe they belong to. Although a number still speak their native dialect, it can never be denied that these participants consider more the language used by the larger population.

It is also necessary to reflect on the item concerning their literature, dance, and music. Sixty-four percent of the participants rarely or never heard original folktales or legends. Participant "P2" from Bangkal stated that they had just heard some stories but could not recall the details, so they could not share them.

When asked about their chants, they expressed that it is hard to learn, and they criticize it when they were younger. Others also admitted this fact, but humbly reacted saying when they will be older, they can do that.

Oral tradition is messages or testimony transmitted from one generation to another. The words are verbally transmitted in speech or song or may take the form of folktales, legends, riddles, sayings, or chants. These account for the way things are and often the way they should be and assist the people in educating the young and teaching valuable lessons about the past and life.

The values of cultural expressions and practices have opened the door to new approaches to the understanding, protection, and respect of the cultural heritage of humanity (UMAS, 2001). The bearer of such expression is the tool for its continuity and recreation. They are the driving force for cultural diversity and uniqueness. Among the beliefs and practices, it is important to note that on the topic of individual actions and gestures, all of the participants believed they were performing movements and gestures unique to them. It is one of the cultural heritages that is not in jeopardy of extinction.

Another essential item to note is their practice of paganism. Participants do not practice religious beliefs outside Christianity. From the viewpoint of ethnicity, this may look as if one of their unique traditions was already concluded. But on the Christian perspective, and the educational angle, this may be a good positive change.

Few of the participants (19%) still practice other traditional beliefs. But much of them hardly ever do, especially on the aspect of planting crops, their views on the environment and the animals, and other rituals.

In terms of values, it manifest that they upheld and practiced what their forefathers began. Aetas are known for their coherence, commonality, and cooperation. Members of a communal unit assist one another in their work and frequently share food. It is demonstrated by the statement of the

Bayan-bayanan participants “Q7, R, and S” that no one goes hungry because they share what they have.

They have high regard for their tribal leaders. They believe that they became leaders because they are brave, self-assured, and capable of protecting themselves. Their customary law practices are based on what they have observed in their community – what their kin practice and live out. Others see that their community still implements and practices traditional ways of marriage, misdemeanors, criminal acts, family disputes, and the like, but they believe it is the same as what non-Aeta do. According to elder “E”, there is already confusion in this area because the younger generations are no longer accustomed to the ethnic ways; they are unaware of the Aeta community's long-established laws.

Overall, the practice of the participants struggles between being retained or thrust aside. Summing up the percentages of those who always practice (20%), and those who often practice (30%), evenly balance to those who rarely practice (25%) and those who do not practice at all (25%). If those who still practice is resilient enough to thrust on their ethnic cultures, then, the heritage will live on and if those who rarely practice it will ultimately give in to the culture of the non-Aeta community, then I can state that the death of a culture is a matter of time.

#### **Perception of the Aetas on the Preservation of Tangible Ethnic Culture**

It was unanimously agreed that indigenous houses should no longer be used. My discussion with the participants about this specific item has been somewhat enjoyable. The answers are the same for the various Aeta communities. They prefer large and concrete houses. They are all of the opinions that traditional houses should not be used anymore, but rather preserved so that the next generation can get a close look at them.

Twenty-three percent of the participants believed that indigenous clothing and accessories should no longer be worn. They did, however, emphasize that accessories, rather than their traditional clothing, can still be worn at times. Thirty-five percent agreed that it should be changed and improved to be more comfortable and well-made. Forty-two percent, however, rationalized those ethnic clothes must be preserved so that there will still be pieces of evidence of what their past looks like.

Remarkably, 100% of the participants established their perception that indigenous medicinal and food plants should be modified and improved to be utilized, preserved, and taught to the younger generation. Going back to their answers on the previous topic about their knowledge and practice of tangible indigenous culture, more than half of them confirmed that they still practice this. It is then satisfactory to believe that their ethnic customs and traditions on medicinal and food plants are still necessary. They insist that improving or modifying it is not altering the original appearance, but the way it is being handled must be taken into consideration.

Seventy-five percent of the participants also stated their support for modifying and preserving indigenous farm tools and utensils to make them more useful and dependable. Although many of them do not use these traditional tools, they believe there is value in preserving them. The elders stated that they always share the value of farm tools and equipment with their children, especially the young because these are the tools for survival.

I was able to conclude the elders' traits and values based on their statements, as well as my observations and constant communication with them. They are people who value peace. They adore children and treat them with tenderness and affection. Similarly, the children repay it by having a deep and lasting respect for their parents and grandparents.

### **Perception of the Aetas on the Preservation of Intangible Ethnic Culture**

There are a few key points worth discussing and delving into. In response to the question of what intangible culture should not be used or practiced, the participants unanimously chose paganism. The majority of participants (64%) see it as not being a part of their community; they are unaware of it and appear to not influence their being. Fifteen percent thought it should be changed, while 21% thought it should be kept the same. While we were discussing this, participant "T" from Bangkal stated that if the elders want to protect their anitos (deities) beliefs, which they had heard once, they will not interfere with the elders' decisions.

As for the dialect, the majority (89%) still choose to use and preserve it and to be taught to the younger generation. Also, ethnic literature, dance, music, and crafts were considered by the majority as a cultural heritage to be bestowed to the following age band, except for the livelihood (hunting and gathering) which only half of them believe is still useful and to be preserved. The other half suggested it be modified (40%) and not to be practiced anymore (10%).

Other beliefs and traditions, according to the majority, should continue to be practiced, except ethnic practices in marriage, which fall short (46 %). Ten percent believe that the oldest marriage culture and beliefs they have heard should be abandoned. Traditional marriage practices were not the same as what they are witnessing now. The remaining 44% thought it should be changed or improved. They stated that it is acceptable if they must not go through a lengthy and difficult process that is not dishonoring or humiliating to both male and female couples.

As for the values like respect to elders, unity and cooperation, and helpfulness, these were perceived to be precisely essential to be used, preserved, and to be taught to the younger generation. More than half of the participants suggested that customary laws on marriage, ownership, criminal acts, and family disputes be modified and improved. However, 74% of respondents emphasized the importance of environmental protection being used, preserved, and taught to the next generation.

The remaining 26% thought it should be changed. Bringing to mind the discussion about the Aeta community's environmental law, it calls for the conservation and protection of all its natural resources, including the land and all living things on it, as well as all its reserves.

Overall, the Aeta Magbukon believe that much of their intangible ethnic cultures should be preserved because they are part of their identity and heritage. They are to be used and taught to the next generation so that they will be valued not only as a part of history but also as an essential part of their lives. This inference is supported by the following discussion.

### **The Aetas Perception of What Contributes to Ethnocide**

The participant's perception of what causes ethnocide is dominated by three factors. Preference for modern lifestyle comes primarily along with the inability to speak the native dialect and non-speaking of native dialect, followed by their assurance that ethnic culture is not taught in the school.

One of the reasons for the gradual changes in their ethnicity was their preference for a modern lifestyle. The participants are so certain that they prefer a modern life within themselves. They clarified, however, that it was not about their clothes or their homes. It is more of who they are when they are with the non-Aeta community. They revealed that they aspire to be like them in terms of physical appearance, speech style, and interests. Bangkal participant "S" has had her hair straightened to look like the "unats" (non-Aeta, straight hair). The females admitted to experimenting with body creams to improve the color of their skin. While others have no issue with their skin color, they all agreed to succumb to fashionable clothing and accessories. Participant "U" from Bian revealed that they have the desire, but they prefer to be themselves. Others agree that they are happy with their appearance. Participant "V" from Kanawan adds that they want to enjoy what the "unats" have, such as new gadgets, and that many of them just want to be able to freely roam the cities without fear of being humiliated.

The participants also perceive non-speaking and the inability to speak the native dialect as the topmost reasons for ethnocide. Based on the previous discussion about their perception and practice of their intangible cultures, the study found that a higher percentage (56%) admitted that they rarely or never speak their native dialect any longer. It backs up their belief that one cause of ethnocide is the inability and refusal to speak their native language.

The participants believe that when they stop using their dialect, they lose track of which tribe they belong to, although they can easily distinguish their fellow Aeta based on their physical characteristics. They also believe that they will lose a significant portion of, if not the entire, ethnic culture. For the participants, it is like a missing piece; not that the culture is dead, but it is incomplete.

However, their declaration is merely their perception, as they also believe that not speaking the native dialect will result in ethnocide. It is further elaborated by Kinaragan participant "X",

who stated that the tribe will vanish in the coming years when they will have their own family; and when they will marry a non-Aeta; and bear a child with dominant physical characteristics of a non-Aeta, and communicate with their child in Filipino language.

The perception that ethnic culture is not taught at home or school is next on the list of causes of ethnocide. Participants have all stated unequivocally that their parents never mentioned anything about their cultures. What they do know is that they are Aeta and that they are different in color and hair from other people. Participant “Y” from Bayan-bayanan recalled hearing their parents sing a song in Aeta dialect, but it was never taught to them.

The fact that Aeta’s cultural heritage is not taught in school raises many questions, doubts, and skepticism about the school’s and educational system’s position. They explained that at school, they have lectures about the world’s indigenous peoples and the Philippines. They have also learned about the characteristics, appearance, way of life, and current location of indigenous peoples. However, the true culture or practices of these people are not taught or addressed. The study of cultures in schools is limited to information dissemination and does not focus on the values of these indigenous people’s cultural heritage. It was regarded solely as history, a relic of the past, rather than as a genuine treasure that must be preserved and safeguarded to ensure its survival.

Another important factor to consider is the participants’ perception of the cause of ethnocide, which is the non-use of indigenous materials. This reinforces the participant’s response to the previous question about their knowledge and practices of material indigenous culture. The Aetas are aware that they have not been using indigenous materials, but they are also aware that doing so leads to ethnocide.

I am somewhat speculative about another possible cause of ethnocide on the participants’ perception - the shameful acts of the tribal folks. It has taken me a long time to discern what they mean by these shameful acts. Until one time, while I join them in cooking indigenous food, participant “Z” from Bangkal narrated almost inaudibly to her/his older sister that he/she passed by the plaza of a specific town and he/she saw tribal folks begging meals and money to the passersby. I saw the expression of dismay on her/his sister’s face. On another time, I was with chief informant “A” to visit a community in Kanawan; we drove our way, passing the heavy traffic because it is the town’s market day. There we saw tribal folks, with their young on their arms, begging alms to pedestrians. My chief informant “A” utters in dismay that he/she is displeased by what they are doing. I was able to confirm my thoughts and prove right my speculation from therein.

What accounts for the perception of ethnocide by the shameful acts of the tribe is the fact that the tribal people have territorial land to till, flourish, and to live therein. They have their life in a place they can call their own and not in the town centers as vagrants. It is from this point that I was able to cut in a word to my chief informant “A”. I asked if all Aetas were given a place to settle, and he/she

confirmed that they were granted lands and settlements, but that some tribal folks were already content with dole-outs and believed that living in town was much easier than tilling their lands. Participant “Z” from Bian exclaimed that they are no longer known as Aeta; instead, they are labeled as beggars by city dwellers, particularly children. I was able to deduce that ethnocide occurs because they are willing to give up their identity as Aeta if their people continue to beg and live as beggars.

Non-observance of intangible cultural components is also seen as a cause of ethnocide. As previously discussed, the participants are aware of this fact due to their practices of intangible aspects of their cultures, such as their values and customary laws. Because more than half of the participants are no longer practicing their ethnic traditions, they are concerned that they will lose their distinctiveness and peculiarity as Aeta soon.

I was swayed by the participants' final selection over the others because it speaks to nationalism and patriotism. The Philippine government has actively promoted a strong attachment to the country and its culture and traditions. With the school as its central agency and the media as its weapons, nationalism flourishes, and its spirit pervades every Filipino's heart. For the participants in this study, it is not a choice between promoting nationalism or ethnicity, because once ethnicity is encouraged, nationalism is maintained. They perceive and believe that this item is the least likely to cause ethnocide.

### **Aetas Degree of Agreement on the Necessity of Preserving Ethnic Culture**

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage require distinct approaches to preservation and safeguarding, which fueled the creation and ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Dimitropoulos et al., 2018; UNESCO, 2009). The Convention recognizes Intangible Cultural Heritage as a source of cultural diversity and a driver of sustainable development, and it specifies the interdependence of intangible cultural heritage and tangible cultural and natural heritage.

The participants strongly agree that preserving their ethnic culture is preserving their identity. Seventy-nine percent of them are now able to accept who they are and what are their unique marks as persons and Filipinos. Participant “A1” from Bangkal stated that there were struggles before when they were younger, but when they were growing and developing, they felt that their schoolmates accepted them and they felt happy for themselves.

Little is known about their unity in combating enemies because they are more peaceful people. The elders then clarified that fighting the enemies entails remaining silent and refusing to engage in conflict. They would rather stand together for peace rather than engage in physical and verbal conflict. The Aetas continue to value their cultural heritage. Despite the many encroachments since time

immemorial — meddling in their faith and beliefs; imposing on their economic and political life; invasion of their peaceful life in the forest; and persistent influence in their daily lives — the majority of them have continued to value their ethnicity.

The participants, like everyone else, spend at least eight hours a day, five days a week, in school. They are indeed striving for resiliency and feistiness. They are almost ready for the challenges of school, and one of their first endeavors is their ethnic identity. We cannot deny that the Aetas face numerous challenges and ordeals, but the most difficult, in their opinion, is their stance about their ethnicity.

### Conclusions

The term 'ethnocide' appears simple to define because it denotes the death of ethnicity, but as in the work of Basco et al. (2005), this is not the case in this study. It is difficult to assume that ethnicity has died because there are Aeta descendants who do not know their cultural heritage. The same reality would lead us to believe that this is an indication of the slow and possibly eventual death of ethnic culture, particularly when elders do not teach traditions to the youth. Thus, ethnocide is regarded here as a process that culminates in the death of ethnicity if the warning signs are not prevented quickly.

The Aetas' ethnicity is still visible in their lives, as evidenced by their knowledge and practice of their indigenous culture, particularly their indigenous customs, beliefs, and values. Their recognition of the preservation of their cultural heritage exemplifies that they are proud of their tribe affiliation. Although many of their tangible cultures are no longer used, they believe it is important to preserve them so the younger generation will have a comprehensive knowledge of the culture.

Their tangible cultures are on the verge of extinction as a result of their preference for modern lifestyles and technologies. It is the most natural path for acculturation and assimilation, as influenced by development. The modern way of life, according to the participants, also contributes to the other primary causes of ethnocide. Because it is not taught in the home or school, intangible culture, particularly dialects and ideas, is in danger of extinction. Furthermore, the presence of participants who claim to be unaware of certain aspects of their ethnic culture suggests that the process of ethnocide has begun.

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