

Cross-Generational Preservation of Ritual Practices Among the *Mansakas* in Davao De Oro: A Multi-Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative multiple-case study examined how Mansaka ritual practices in Davao de Oro were preserved, transformed, and negotiated across Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Six information-rich participants—two from each generational case—were selected through maximum-variation purposive sampling. Data were generated through validated semi-structured interviews, field notes, contextual observations, and supporting documentary materials. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed through Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis, followed by within-case interpretation and cross-case synthesis. Trustworthiness was supported through triangulation, member checking, an audit trail, reflexive journaling, and thick description. The findings showed that Generation X functioned as cultural anchors and spiritual models,

Millennials as administrative and logistical mediators, and Generation Z as active witnesses, performers, and emerging advocates. Across the cases, ritual transmission occurred through observation, storytelling, guided participation, communal gatherings, and repeated practice. Major challenges included the erosion of sacredness and identity, modernization and Western influence, digital distraction, cultural stigma, language loss, migration, and restrictions surrounding sacred knowledge. Participants responded through legal protection, culturally grounded education, organized workshops, government-supported cultural activities, communal leadership, ethical digital documentation, and the reinforcement of shared values. Cross-case analysis indicated that all generations valued communal coherence and cultural continuity, although Generation X favored traditional spiritual transmission while Millennials and Generation Z were more open to structured educational and digital approaches. The study concludes that Mansaka ritual preservation is an active and negotiated intergenerational process rather than passive inheritance. Educational institutions and cultural agencies should support elder-led experiential learning, mother-tongue transmission, community-controlled documentation, and Indigenous-led policy and preservation initiatives.

Keywords: *Mansaka, ritual practices, cultural preservation, intergenerational transmission, Indigenous traditions, multiple-case study*

INTRODUCTION

Ritual practices are living repositories of Indigenous identity, spirituality, moral order, ecological knowledge, and collective memory. Their performance links community members with ancestors, sacred places, and shared social responsibilities, allowing cultural knowledge to remain embodied rather than merely recorded. International safeguarding frameworks consequently recognize that intangible cultural heritage survives through community participation, intergenerational learning, and the continued practice of culturally meaningful traditions (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022, 2023).

The continuity of Indigenous rituals is increasingly challenged by modernization, migration, language shift, global media, environmental change, and the pressure to adopt dominant cultural norms. Younger people may gain educational and technological opportunities while simultaneously becoming less exposed to oral instruction, ritual preparation, and the Indigenous language through which sacred meanings are communicated. Studies of Indigenous communities have therefore emphasized that cultural preservation requires active mentoring, experiential participation, and culturally affirming spaces where youth can learn without shame or discrimination (Babag, 2022; Lunda et al., 2024; Viscogliosi et al., 2020).

Among the Mansaka of Davao de Oro, ritual practices remain deeply connected to spirituality, communal life, and relationships with the natural environment. Elders and ritual leaders traditionally transmit knowledge through observation, storytelling, apprenticeship, and participation in ceremonies. However, changes in livelihood, schooling, migration, religion, and digital media have altered the conditions under which this knowledge is learned and practiced. Existing research has documented Mansaka beliefs and cultural transmission, but localized evidence comparing the perspectives of different generations remains limited (Gallardo & Marquez, 2024; Macusi et al., 2023).

Intergenerational analysis is important because cultural preservation is not experienced uniformly. Elders may prioritize ritual purity and spiritual authority; middle generations may mediate between ancestral practice and institutional requirements; and youth may approach heritage through performance, formal education, or digital media. These differences can produce tension, but they can also create complementary roles that strengthen continuity. Cultural transmission is therefore best understood as a dynamic process of learning, negotiation, adaptation, and collective responsibility (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman, 1981; D'Andrea & D'Ulizia, 2023).

This study addressed this gap through a qualitative multiple-case inquiry involving Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z within one Mansaka community in Davao de Oro. It examined the experiences and roles of the three generations, the challenges they encountered, the adaptive strategies they used, and the similarities and differences in their reflections on effective ritual preservation. The findings were intended to inform culturally responsive education, community-led documentation, Indigenous rights advocacy, and local cultural policy without treating sacred traditions as static displays or commodities.

Literature Review

Ritual Practices as Living Cultural Knowledge

Indigenous rituals are structured symbolic actions through which communities' express identity, spirituality, social relationships, and responsibility toward the natural world. Their value lies not only in ceremonial form but also in the ethical, linguistic, ecological, and historical knowledge embedded in performance. Rituals therefore function as living archives that carry collective memory through chants, offerings, dance, music, storytelling, and communal participation (Oyelude, 2023; Victor & Lambek, 2023).

The preservation of ritual knowledge depends on maintaining the contexts that give it meaning. Sacred landscapes, Indigenous languages, kinship structures, and community authority cannot be separated from the practices themselves. Environmental degradation, displacement, and language loss may alter or interrupt ceremonies because the symbolic meanings of rituals are tied to particular places, words, and relationships (Gallardo & Marquez, 2024; Yellow Cloud & Redvers, 2023).

Ritual continuity is thus different from simple documentation. Video, photographs, and written records can support cultural memory, but they cannot fully replace embodied participation. Sustainable safeguarding requires the community to determine what may be shared, who may perform or teach it, and how adaptations can occur without weakening sacred meaning (Oyelude, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

Intergenerational Learning and Cultural Transmission

Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory explains how behaviors and values are acquired through attention, observation, retention, reproduction, and motivation. In Indigenous communities, elders and ritual leaders act as influential models, while younger members learn by watching preparations, assisting in ceremonies, listening to narratives, and gradually taking on more complex roles. This form of apprenticeship allows procedural, emotional, and ethical dimensions of culture to be learned together.

Cultural Transmission Theory distinguishes vertical transmission from parents, horizontal transmission among peers, and oblique transmission from older non-parental community members (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman, 1981). These channels are visible in ritual communities where knowledge moves through families, youth groups, cultural leaders, and communal gatherings. Atchley's (1989) Continuity Theory further explains how individuals and communities preserve internal values and external roles while adapting to change.

Research across Indigenous contexts demonstrates that elder participation, community-based learning, and youth engagement can strengthen identity and cultural continuity. Ritual workshops, storytelling, mother-tongue instruction, and culturally affirming educational activities create opportunities for young people to develop knowledge, confidence, and responsibility for heritage preservation (Abatayo & Gumapang, 2024; Balestin et al., 2025; Lunda et al., 2024).

Modernization, Digital Media, and Cultural Erosion

Modernization creates both opportunities and risks for Indigenous cultural continuity. Migration and economic pressures may reduce participation in communal rituals, while formal education and dominant languages can weaken daily exposure to Indigenous knowledge. Cultural stigma and discrimination may also cause younger members to distance themselves from traditional identity to avoid being perceived as backward or socially inferior (Causadias et al., 2022; Mayo, 2023).

Digital media intensify this tension. Social platforms can distract youth and amplify global cultural influences, but they can also support cultural advocacy, networking, and documentation. The preservation value of technology depends on whether the community controls the process, grants consent, and retains authority over sacred information. Ethical digital preservation should complement lived practice and protect Indigenous intellectual and cultural autonomy (Pradhan & Goswami, 2025; Reginio et al., 2025).

Adaptive preservation does not necessarily signify cultural loss. Communities may modify the timing, format, or public presentation of rituals while retaining their spiritual and ethical core. Cultural resilience is strengthened when elders, adults, and youth negotiate which elements must remain protected and which tools may be used to sustain participation in changing social conditions (D'Andrea & D'Ulizia, 2023; Mayo, 2023).

Community-Led and Educational Approaches to Preservation

Community authority is fundamental in research and cultural preservation involving Indigenous peoples. Ethical engagement requires relational accountability, informed consent, respect for customary leadership, and recognition that community members are knowledge holders and co-creators rather than passive research subjects (Billan et al., 2020; National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, 2024).

Educational institutions can support preservation by integrating Indigenous knowledge into culturally responsive curricula and by recognizing elders as legitimate educators. Experiential activities, community immersion, cultural mapping, mother-tongue storytelling, and ritual observation can bridge formal education and Indigenous ways of knowing. Such approaches strengthen cultural pride while avoiding the assimilationist treatment of heritage as peripheral content (Babag, 2022; Hipolito, 2024).

The literature indicates that preservation is most sustainable when legal protection, education, community participation, and ethical documentation reinforce one another. However, limited research has compared how Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z within the Mansaka community understand and negotiate these approaches. The present study therefore used a cross-generational multiple-case design to examine both shared cultural commitments and distinctive generational pathways.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative multiple-case design. Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z were treated as three bounded generational cases. Within-case analysis was first conducted to preserve the distinct narratives, roles, and experiences of each cohort; cross-case synthesis was then used to identify shared themes and meaningful differences across the generational timeline (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Ridder, 2020).

Research Locale

The study was conducted within one selected Mansaka community in Davao de Oro, Philippines. The setting was chosen because ritual practices remained observable or culturally remembered and because recognized cultural leaders could guide the researchers in following community protocols. The inquiry was bounded to the selected community and did not include rituals considered confidential or inappropriate for public documentation.

Participants and Sampling Technique

Maximum-variation purposive sampling was used to select six information-rich participants, with two participants representing each generational case. Eligibility required verified Mansaka membership, experiential or active involvement in ritual practices, the ability to articulate relevant experiences, and voluntary consent. Recruitment was coordinated with the community chieftain or recognized cultural custodian. The source manuscript classified the participants according to their community roles and designated generational cases; these classifications were retained in the article.

Table 1. *Profile of the participants*

Pseudonym	Generational Case	Age	Gender	Key Role
Liyang	Generation X	63	Female	Balyan
Sinag	Generation X	54	Female	Barangay Tribal Chieftain
Bagani	Millennial	39	Male	Barangay Tribal Chieftain and son of a Balyan
Aman	Millennial	37	Male	Ancestral Domain Management Officer
Magiting	Generation Z	20	Male	Youth Federation President
Lakan	Generation Z	18	Male	Barangay Tribal Youth President

Research Instrument and Data Sources

A validated semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions served as the primary instrument. Interviews explored participants' roles, experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and reflections regarding ritual preservation. Supporting data included field notes on non-verbal and contextual cues, relevant cultural artifacts, photographs or audiovisual materials available from authorized sources, and published materials that helped situate the narratives historically and culturally.

Data Gathering Procedure

The research protocol was submitted to the Arriesgado College Foundation Inc. Research Ethics Committee before field engagement. Administrative approval and cultural authorization were secured from institutional officials and the Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representative. The interview guide underwent expert validation for clarity, relevance, neutrality, and cultural sensitivity. Participants received an orientation and signed informed-consent forms translated into Bisaya. Interviews were conducted in private settings, audio-recorded with permission, and supported by field notes. Recordings were transcribed verbatim, translated when necessary while preserving intended meaning, and stored in a password-protected repository.

Data Analysis

The researchers followed Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic-analysis process: familiarization with the transcripts; generation of initial codes; development of potential themes; review and refinement of themes; definition and naming of themes; and construction of the analytic narrative. Each generational case was interpreted independently before the themes were compared across cases. The cross-case synthesis identified convergences, divergences, and complementary generational roles in ritual preservation.

Trustworthiness

Credibility was supported through triangulation of participants, interviews, field observations, and supporting sources; member checking allowed participants to verify or clarify their accounts. Dependability and confirmability were strengthened through reflexive journaling, a documented audit trail, organized code development, and transparent analytic decisions. Transferability was supported through thick description of the community context, participants, roles, and research procedures (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Soysal & Türkmen, 2024).

Ethical Consideration

The study followed the National Ethical Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants and received institutional ethics review. Participation was voluntary, and participants could decline questions or withdraw without penalty. Community leaders were consulted to ensure cultural appropriateness and to protect sacred or restricted knowledge. Pseudonyms were used; digital data were password protected and physical records were secured. Tokens of appreciation and access to the study results were provided without treating participation as a commercial transaction. The findings were shared with community representatives to support local relevance and Indigenous autonomy (Billan et al., 2020; National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Generational Experiences and Roles in Preserving Mansaka Rituals

Table 2. *Themes on experiences and preservation roles*

Theme	Cross-Generational Core Ideas
Acting as cultural initiators and spiritual models	Generation X provided spiritual authority and ritual precision; Millennials connected spiritual principles with administration and logistical coordination; Generation Z modeled contemporary pride and participation for peers.
Evolving from curiosity to active advocacy	Generation X moved from recipients of ancestral wisdom to defenders; Millennials transformed experiences of shame and distance into pride and guardianship; Generation Z moved from surprised spectators to purposeful participants.
Purposeful participation through observation and performance	Generation X performed and modeled authentic practices; Millennials organized materials and social preparation; Generation Z learned through witnessing, dance, music, and auxiliary roles.

The three generations performed complementary roles in a generational relay. Generation X participants, represented by a Balyan and a tribal chieftain, served as cultural anchors who guarded spiritual integrity and modeled the ritual process. Millennials acted as mediators and organizers who prepared materials, coordinated activities, and interpreted ancestral practices within contemporary institutions. Generation Z initially engaged through observation, dance, music, and logistical assistance, but these secondary roles developed into cultural advocacy and emerging leadership.

"We are the ones who have the potential to pass on our cultural education... because this is our identity."
 (Aman, Millennial)

These findings support Social Learning Theory because participation developed through observation, imitation, guided practice, and motivation (Bandura, 1977). The roles also reflect vertical and oblique cultural transmission: elders and ritual leaders provided models, Millennials interpreted and organized the learning environment, and youth reproduced and recontextualized cultural practices (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman, 1981). Rather than receiving culture passively, participants progressively claimed responsibility for maintaining it.

Challenges in Intergenerational Ritual Preservation

Table 3. *Themes on preservation challenges*

Theme	Cross-Generational Core Ideas
Erosion of sacredness and identity	Generation X observed a disbelief gap and weakening respect for spiritual authority; Millennials described Westernization and cultural stigma; Generation Z identified language loss and fragmented ritual understanding.
Socio-technological and Western influences	Digital entertainment reduced attention; formal education, migration, and economic demands interrupted hands-on learning; foreign trends competed with tribal identity.
Digital, social, and structural barriers	Cellphone culture distracted youth; shame discouraged participation; sacred knowledge restrictions limited access; elders feared commodification and hollow public performance.

Participants described cultural erosion as spiritual, linguistic, social, and technological. Generation X was particularly concerned that rituals might lose sacred authority or become performances for outsiders. Millennials described the pressure to appear modern and the pain of being looked down upon as Indigenous. Generation Z reported that cellphones, entertainment, and declining attention made it difficult to follow the sequence and meaning of ceremonies. Language shift further weakened access to chants, prayers, and culturally specific concepts.

“We are greatly affected by social media... we promote what belongs to foreigners, and we forget our own culture.” (Bagani, Millennial)

The findings illustrate that modernization is not a single external force but a set of interconnected pressures involving migration, schooling, livelihood, media, stigma, and language. Similar research has shown that cultural shame and globalized media can weaken youth attachment, while the loss of Indigenous language reduces the depth of ritual understanding (Babag, 2022; Causadias et al., 2022). At the same time, the restriction of sacred knowledge reflects the community’s legitimate need to protect ritual authority, creating a delicate balance between wider transmission and cultural confidentiality.

Adaptive Strategies and Communal Resilience

Table 4. *Themes on coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies*

Theme	Cross-Generational Core Ideas
Legal and educational protection	Generation X advocated recognized documentation and Indigenous-rights protection; Millennials supported curriculum integration and cultural education; Generation Z valued formal representation and government-recognized cultural spaces.
Institutionalized and group-led preservation	Elders provided cultural authority; Millennials coordinated workshops and organized teaching; youth joined school-, barangay-, and government-supported cultural groups and performances.
Adaptive strategies and communal resilience	Generation X relied on spiritual fortitude and traditional consultation; Millennials used advocacy and repeated education; Generation Z used role modeling and ethically governed digital documentation.

The Mansaka participants did not respond to modernization by abandoning their heritage. Instead, they developed adaptive strategies that combined ancestral authority with modern legal, educational, organizational, and digital tools. Generation X emphasized Indigenous rights, formal resolutions, authorized documentation, and strict protection of the sacred core. Millennials favored organized cultural education, workshops, regular meetings, and the integration of tribal knowledge into formal settings. Generation Z used youth leadership, public cultural activities, and digital tools to make participation visible and relevant.

“In this time, to continue our culture, we need gatherings so we can share knowledge.” (Lakan, Generation Z)

These strategies indicate that adaptive preservation can strengthen rather than dilute cultural continuity when the community retains authority over the process. Government recognition and educational inclusion provided external protection, while spiritual discipline, family values, and communal gatherings maintained internal meaning. This combination is consistent with community-led approaches that treat digital documentation, formal education, and policy as supports for living practice rather than replacements for it (Balestin et al., 2025; Pradhan & Goswami, 2025; Reginio et al., 2025).

Generational Insights for Sustaining Ritual Knowledge

Table 5. *Themes on insights for long-term preservation*

Theme	Cross-Generational Core Ideas
Communal coherence and the Mansaka image	All generations viewed unity, family participation, transparent leadership, and shared responsibility as necessary for cultural survival.
Shared ethical values	Respect, discipline, forgiveness, spiritual integrity, love of identity, and commitment to teaching were viewed as the moral foundation of ritual continuity.
Bridging knowledge gaps while protecting authenticity	Generation Z and Millennials preferred structured or academic learning to improve accuracy; Generation X defended non-formal spiritual transmission and ritual purity.

Across the cases, participants agreed that rituals could not survive through technical instruction alone. Shared ethical values—respect, discipline, forgiveness, spiritual integrity, love of culture, and responsibility to teach—were described as the invisible foundation of preservation. Communal coherence allowed knowledge to be transmitted in a context of trust, while family and tribal gatherings reinforced belonging and collective accountability.

“Constant practice is what will keep it alive until the next generation... constant education, teaching and teaching.” (Aman, Millennial)

A meaningful difference concerned the preferred mode of transmission. Millennials and Generation Z supported more structured educational approaches, organized workshops, and careful digital documentation. Generation X remained more conservative, emphasizing spiritual selection, oral teaching, and strict adherence to ancestral procedure. The difference was not simply a conflict between old and new; it represented a negotiation between accessibility and authenticity. Cultural continuity therefore depended on creating learning pathways that widened participation without exposing restricted knowledge or weakening community authority.

Cross-Case Synthesis

Table 6. *Similarities and differences across the three generational cases*

Analytic Focus	Shared Pattern	Distinctive Generational Pattern
Experiences and roles	All generations became active models and advocates.	Generation X led spiritually; Millennials mediated and organized; Generation Z witnessed, performed, and mobilized peers.

Preservation challenges	All identified erosion caused by modernization and Western influence.	Generation X stressed sacredness and commodification; Millennials stressed stigma and identity erasure; Generation Z stressed digital distraction and language loss.
Adaptive strategies	All applied proactive strategies and valued communal gatherings.	Generation X used spiritual and legal authority; Millennials used organized education and advocacy; Generation Z used youth leadership and digital tools.
Long-term preservation	All valued unity, ethics, and authentic knowledge.	Generation X preferred traditional transmission; Millennials and Generation Z favored structured learning and contemporary platforms under community guidance.

The cross-case analysis showed that cultural preservation had evolved from passive inheritance into a negotiated, rights-based, and relational process. Generation X supplied the spiritual and moral blueprint, Millennials functioned as the administrative and pedagogical bridge, and Generation Z converted participation into contemporary pride and public representation. The survival of Mansaka rituals therefore depended not on a single generation or method but on intergenerational complementarity.

The findings extend Continuity Theory by showing that cultural continuity can involve changes in external methods while internal values remain stable (Atchley, 1989). Legal resolutions, school programs, microphones, digital records, and youth organizations represented new external forms, but participants consistently returned to ancestral identity, spiritual integrity, respect, family belonging, and communal responsibility. Adaptation was viewed as acceptable when it strengthened participation and remained governed by the community.

CONCLUSION

Mansaka ritual preservation in Davao de Oro was an active, negotiated, and relational process shaped by complementary generational roles. Generation X functioned as cultural anchors and moral authorities who protected ritual integrity and ancestral wisdom. Millennials acted as cultural mediators who translated heritage into administrative, educational, and logistical action. Generation Z moved from observation and auxiliary participation toward advocacy, performance, peer influence, and emerging leadership.

The principal threats were not limited to declining participation. They included the erosion of sacredness, cultural stigma, Western influence, digital distraction, language loss, migration, economic pressures, and structural restrictions surrounding sacred knowledge. These pressures affected each generation differently, but all participants recognized the need to protect the Mansaka identity from becoming fragmented, commercialized, or reduced to public performance without spiritual meaning.

The community responded through legal protection, formal cultural representation, elder-led education, communal gatherings, repeated practice, youth organizations, values formation, and ethically governed digital documentation. The study concludes that preservation is strongest when adaptation remains community-led, when youth have meaningful experiential roles, and when modern tools support rather than replace Indigenous language, spiritual authority, and lived ritual practice. The research contributes a cross-generational understanding of how Indigenous heritage can remain resilient amid contemporary change.

Recommendation

Mansaka leaders, elders, and Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representatives should establish community-approved protocols identifying which ritual knowledge may be taught, documented, or publicly presented. Elder-led mentoring, apprenticeship, and intergenerational gatherings should be scheduled regularly so

that young members can move from observation to guided participation while sacred and restricted knowledge remains protected.

Schools implementing Indigenous Peoples Education should integrate Mansaka language, values, oral histories, music, dance, ecological knowledge, and community-authorized ritual learning through experiential and place-based activities. Elders and cultural bearers should be recognized as resource persons and co-educators, while teachers should receive preparation in culturally responsive and Indigenous-led pedagogy.

Local government units, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, and cultural agencies should support community-controlled documentation, protection of sacred sites, cultural workshops, youth leadership activities, and legally recognized heritage initiatives. Digital documentation should follow Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, community ownership, access restrictions, and clear rules preventing distortion, unauthorized commercialization, or decontextualized circulation.

Future studies should include additional Mansaka communities and employ longitudinal, participatory, or mixed-methods designs. Research may examine the effectiveness of elder-led education, mother-tongue programs, youth digital-heritage initiatives, and community consent models. Scholars should continue to prioritize Indigenous authority, reciprocity, and community benefit throughout research design, interpretation, and dissemination.

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