



UNIT 4: Music of Cordillera

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GRADE 7

UNIT 4

Music of Cordillera



Fig. 1. The mountains of Luzon hold some of the country's oldest known forms of music.

Photo from pixabay.com

Introduction

Cordillera is found in central Luzon—a mountainous area with rich soil perfect for planting, as well as a place rich with history and culture. Consisting of the provinces of Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Mountain Province, Kalinga, and Ifugao, Cordillera is home to some of the last few groups of indigenous people who have maintained their culture and traditions, like the **Ifugao** and **Kalinga**.

Their music, which is rooted in folk beliefs, is also what sets them apart from other groups in the Philippines, which have been influenced by Islam and Christianity. Their rituals, like the



healing of the sick and honoring the dead, are considered sacred and are accompanied by singing, chanting, dancing, and the playing of musical instruments, like gongs and various bamboo instruments.

In this unit, we will learn about vocal and instrumental music that comes from the Cordilleras. We will also learn about where this music is used and how it is performed.



Essential Questions

- What are the different vocal music forms in Cordillera?
- What are the different instruments from the Cordilleras?
- What are the different ensembles formed by the instruments from Cordillera?



Review

- Cordillera is comprised of six provinces: **Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Mountain Province, Kalinga, Ifugao,** and **Benguet**.
- They use a **wet-rice system** of agriculture, wherein rice is planted in flooded fields.
- Their traditions are rooted in **folk beliefs**, wherein nature is worshipped as a divine being.



Lesson 1: Vocal Music of Cordillera



Learning Targets

In this lesson, you should be able to:

- identify the different vocal music forms from Cordillera;
- describe how these are performed; and
- identify the distinguishing characteristics of selected musical examples.

Much of Cordillera's music is considered sacred and is reserved for certain rituals. **What are some examples of this ritual music, and how are they performed?**



Let's Warm Up!

1. Listen to a performance of an excerpt of the *Hudhud* epic of the Ifugao in Youtube, entitled "Hudhud Chants of Ifugao Children."
2. Study the song and sing the melody.



Learn about It!

There is little written about Cordillera vocal music. This is because these are merely passed on to the next generation through **oral tradition**. However, there are some that are known outside Cordillera. Let's talk about a few examples below.

Epics

Cordillera is known for its **epics**, which are songs praising famous heroes. These chants are usually done during harvesting in the fields and at wakes. The text of these epics involves many figurative expressions, which make transcribing the text more difficult.

Ifugao women sing the Ifugao epic **Hudhud** at **weddings, wakes, and harvest time**. It tells about the story of the warrior *Aliguyon* and his wife, *Bugan*. The lines vary between six and fourteen syllables, and a choral response follows the ends of the lines. It is comprised of about **200 chants**, and complete recitation of the epic can last between three and four days.

In southern Kalinga, the epic **Ullalim** tells the story of the adventures of three heroes—*Dulliyaw*, *Dullawan*, and *Banna*--who all belong to the same family. The epics of Kalinga usually have seven syllables per line.

Another Kalinga epic, called **Gasumbi**, tells about the courting and headhunting exploits of the hero *Gawan*. Like *Ullalim*, it also has seven syllables per line.

Women in Cordillera are held at a higher regard and are given the responsibility of **leading chants**. They also serve as **mediums** between the physical and the spiritual world. Chanters hold a special place in the community and serve as **historians** and **preachers**.



Bontoc Vocal Music

In Bontoc, responsorial music, known as **ayyeng**, **sowe-ey**, and **chaing**, are sung in wedding feasts. Burial songs called **agar** or **garey** praise the dead person, and recall their contributions to the community. At wakes, the body is sat upright and strapped to a chair, and men and women take turns sitting in front of the body of the deceased. This ritual is a practice to honor the dead before their burial.

Kalinga Vocal Music

In pacts of peace, solo songs called **dango** or **ading** are sung by representatives from the opposing parties. These contain improvised text and have simple melodies meant to welcome guests.

The Kalinga also have lullabies called **wiyawi**. The sound of the word “wiyawi” is said to put babies to sleep especially in the hot afternoon.



Try It Yourself

Look for an online video performance of Ifugao *Hudhud* chanters, entitled “Chanted Journeys” and describe how the chant is performed. Is there a call & response happening?



Try It Yourself

The Bontoc honor the dead by recalling the contributions of the deceased to the community before the burial. How similar is this to how wakes are done in our urban areas? Give an example of this similarity.



Check Your Understanding

Fill in the blanks with the correct answers.

1. Cordillera is famous for its vocal chants about heroes, called _____.
2. The _____ from Ifugao tells the story of the courtship and marriage of *Aliguyon* and *Bugan*.
3. The *Hudhud* is sung by elderly women during _____ and _____.
4. The lines of the *Hudhud* can have between six and _____ syllables.
5. The Kalinga epic _____ tells the story of *Gawan's* heroic exploits.
6. *Ullalim* tells the story of _____, _____, and _____ who are heroes who belong to the same family.
7. Bontoc burial songs, called _____ or _____, recall the deceased's contributions to the community.
8. Bontoc responsorial music is called *ayyeng*, *sowe-ey*, or _____.
9. Women in Cordillera serve as _____, aside from leading chants.
10. Kalinga pacts of peace songs are called *dango* or _____.



Challenge Yourself!

Write **True** if the statement is correct and **False** if the statement is incorrect

- _____ 1. Epics are songs praising heroes.
- _____ 2. Cordillera men lead the chants.
- _____ 3. The *Hudhud* of Ifugao tells about the story of *Aliguyon* and *Bugan*.
- _____ 4. Bontoc burial songs called *dango* praise the dead's contribution to the community.
- _____ 5. The Kalinga epic *Gasumbi* tells about the courting and headhunting exploits of *Gawan*.



Let's Jam!

Activity 1: Listen to “Three Kalinga Chants” arranged by Nilo Alcala and read up on the history behind the three chants. Based on your research, create a skit that shows the meaning of the three chants.



Lesson 2: Instrumental Music of Cordillera



Learning Targets

In this lesson, you should be able to:

- discuss the different instruments from the Cordilleras;
- enumerate what instruments make up the different instrumental ensembles;
- identify the different instrumental forms from Cordillera; and
- describe the performance practices of these ensembles.

In urban and modernized areas, music is used and consumed more for entertainment. However, in Cordillera, music serves a more sacred role. **What are the instruments that the people of Cordillera use and how are they used in different rituals?**



Let's Warm Up!

1. Gather objects made from different materials such as metal, wood, plastic, and rubber.
2. Strike an object using your hands, then using a stick.

Did you notice any difference in the sound created?

3. Now switch to another object and repeat the same process.

How does the material of an object affect the sound it produces?



Learn about It!

The resources available in that place influences the instruments produced in a specific area. Most of the instruments in Cordillera are made of **metal** and **bamboo**.

Like their vocal traditions, there is very little written about instrumental music from Cordillera, because it is also passed on to the next generation through oral tradition.

Gong Traditions

Some of the most common instruments in Cordillera are gongs called **gangsa**. The *gangsa* is flat and is played by striking with sticks or by slapping with the palm. Gongs are usually played in **ceremonies** like weddings, rice-harvesting, and pacts of peace. Often, gongs are also used in welcoming warriors returning from raids.

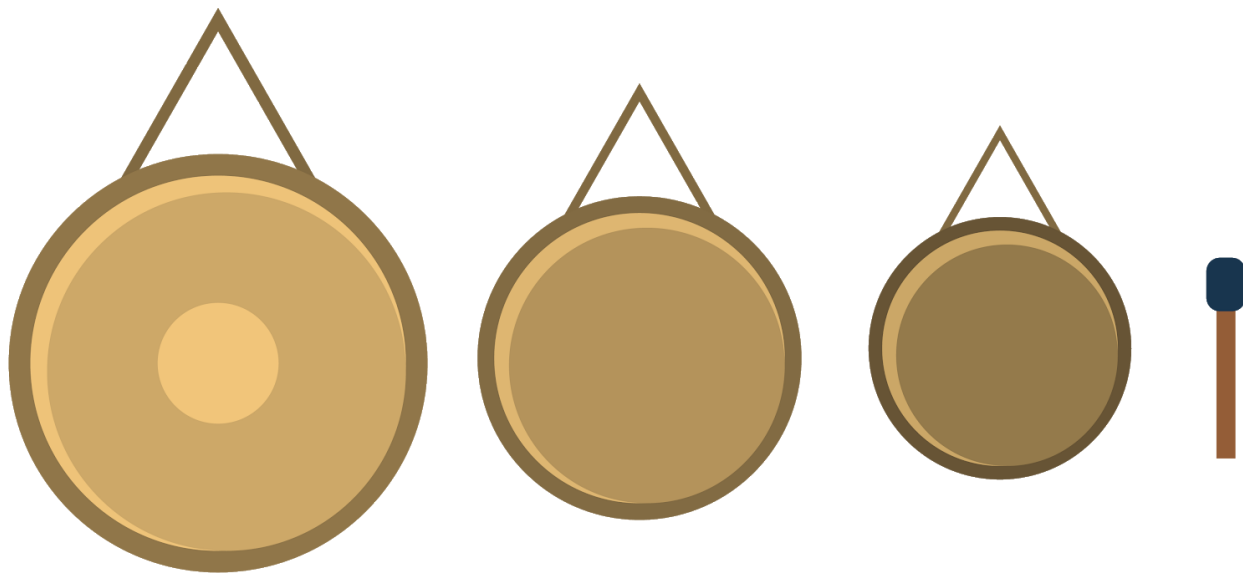


Fig. 2.1 A set of gangsa



- The Bontoc have two styles of gong performance called *falliwes* and *takik*.
In *falliwes*, the men hit the *gangsa* with wooden sticks while dancing in a circle. The gongs are suspended from a wooden handle held by the left hand and are held waist-high.
During the dance, the men crouch toward the ground, also decreasing the volume of the hits, then as they arise the gong is held above the head and is hit loudly. The women then join the dance, encircling the men.
The *takik* is a bit similar. The only difference is that it is played by two people—either two men or a girl and a boy. Compared to the *falliwes*, the *takik* is played with freer and faster rhythms.
- The Kalinga also have their gong ensemble called the *ini-la-ud*. It consists of three gongs and a drum called *tabul*.
Here, three male performers kneel and place the gongs on their lap. They use a stick on their left hand to strike the gong, while the right hand dampens the sound and taps its beat.
- The Ibaloi from Benguet has the *sulibao* ensemble. It consists of two slim drums shaped like tubes (called *sulibao* and *kimbal*), two flat *gangsa*, and two metal bars. The two drums differ slightly in pitch, with one higher than the other. The *gangsa* is struck with sticks and alternate between loud and muffled beats.

Try It Yourself

What objects can you use as alternatives to the *gangsa*? Look for one and apply the techniques of playing the *gangsa* to your chosen object. How is the sound different when the object is struck with a stick compared to when struck with the palm?

Try It Yourself

Form a group of five. Using your chosen objects, create a performance similar to those of gong ensembles from Cordillera.



Bamboo Instruments

Aside from gongs, the music of Cordillera also makes use of various bamboo instruments like flutes and percussion instruments.

- The Kalinga use a bamboo buzzer called ***balingbing***. This is a thin bamboo rod which is split at the end. When the rod is struck against the palm, the split vibrates. The *balingbing* is usually played in an ensemble of six.

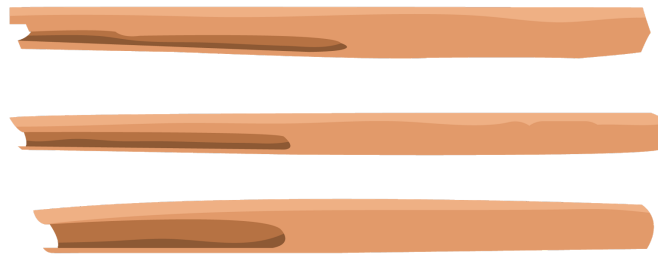


Fig. 2.2 *Balingbing*

- The Bontoc have a set of panpipes called ***diwdiw-as***.
The Kalinga have a version of this wherein five men play five individual pipes called ***saggeypo***. Together, they can play repeating melodies.

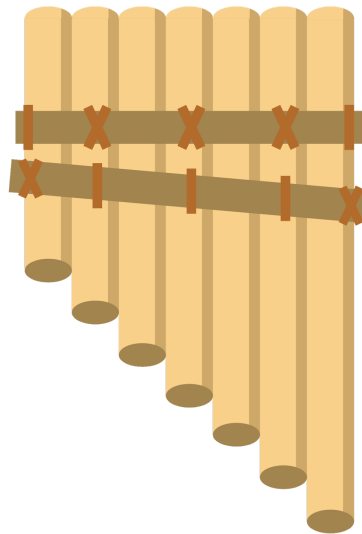


Fig. 2.3 *Diwdiw-as*



- Chanting priests from Ifugao use a bamboo clapper called a **palipal** in long ritual songs called **lewlewa**, to inaugurate new houses or rice fields. The priests sing and mark their chants with regular strokes of the clapper on a pig carcass.

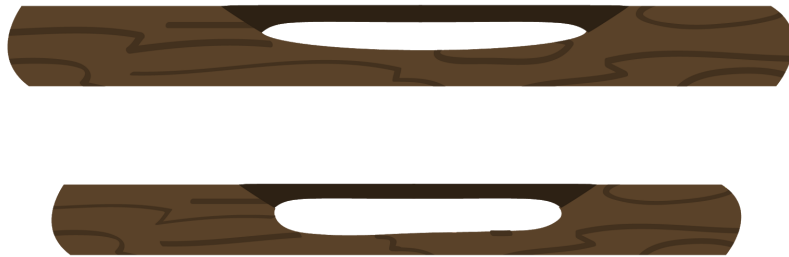


Fig. 2.4 Palipal

- The **bangibang** of the Ifugao is a wooden bar shaped like a yoke and is struck with a stick. It is only played by groups of men when a member of their community has died violently. Each member of the ensemble strikes the **bangibang** in various rhythms as they parade along mountain trails to the center of town.



Fig. 2.5 Bangibang



Check Your Understanding

Fill in the blanks with the correct answers.

1. Most of the instruments of Cordillera are made of _____, _____, and _____.
2. The _____ is a flat gong played in different ceremonies.
3. The two styles of gong performance of the Bontoc are _____ and _____.
4. The Kalinga gong ensemble is called _____ and consists of three gongs and a drum.
5. In a *sulibao* ensemble, the two drums are called _____ and _____.
6. The *gangsa* can be played by striking with sticks or by slapping with the _____.
7. The Kalinga bamboo buzzer is called _____ and is played in an ensemble of six.
8. Ifugao chanting priests sing ritual songs called _____.
9. The Bontoc use a set of panpipes called _____.
10. The Kalinga version of the *diwdiw-as* has five men playing individual pipes called _____.



Challenge Yourself!

Write **True** if the statement is correct and **False** if the statement is incorrect

- _____ 1. The instruments and sounds produced are directly influenced by what kind of materials are available in a specific place.
- _____ 2. The *gangsa* is hung on tree branches and played using sticks.
- _____ 3. The Kalinga bamboo buzzer is called *balingbing*.
- _____ 4. The Bontoc has two gong performances called *falliwes* and *takik*.
- _____ 5. The long ritual songs sung by Ifugao priests are called *lewlewa*.



Let's Jam!

Activity 1: Look for an online performance of a *gangsa* ensemble entitled, "Gangsa," and watch how they move their hands. Try to replicate the hand motions of the performers.



Did You Know?

The Ifugao view rice as ritual products rather than just food to be consumed, so their planting and harvesting are also rituals wherein they perform gong music, songs, and epics.



Web Links

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJ4t865-3v4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJiq6pdEZSs>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDImhwTKMOk>
- <http://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-the-arts-sca/music/traditional-forms-of-music/>
- <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/hudhud-chants-of-the-ifugao-00015>



Performance Task

Improvised Gangsa Ensemble

Purpose:

At the end of this activity, the students should be able to:

- apply what they've learned about Cordillera *gangsa* ensembles;
- make use of different objects to replicate the *gangsa*;
- create their own original *gangsa* performance based on existing performances; and
- perform their original routine with the correct rhythm and coordination between performers.

Role: You are performers who have been selected to perform in a *gangsa* ensemble, but have to improvise due to the rarity of the instrument.

Competence: You must gather objects that can replicate the sound of a *gangsa* and prove that it can replicate the sound through a performance.

Procedure:

1. Group yourselves into 6.
2. Look up some examples of *gangsa* performances online. Pay attention to the sounds produced, how they are produced, and what hand motions the players make use of.
3. Pick objects that can replicate the sounds of the *gangsa*. The closer the sound and physical appearance, the better.
4. Based on the performances you've seen, create your own routine.
5. Practice your routine as a group.
6. Perform the routine in front of the class.
7. After all the groups have performed, have a sharing of insights facilitated by your teacher.



Key Guide Questions

1. What objects did you make use of to replicate the sound of the *gangsa*?
2. What are the different ways of playing the *gangsa*, based on the performances you watched? How do these affect the sound?
3. Was it easy or difficult to play the instrument?
4. Was it easy or difficult to keep the rhythm and coordination between the players?



Reflective Questions

1. How was your experience working as a group in creating your own routine?
2. Do you think playing in a group is a good way to develop bonds between you and your classmates?
3. Did this activity deepen your appreciation for the music of Cordillera?



Self-Check

Reflect

I find _____ the most interesting because _____.

I got ___ checks because _____.

I need to improve on _____ because _____.

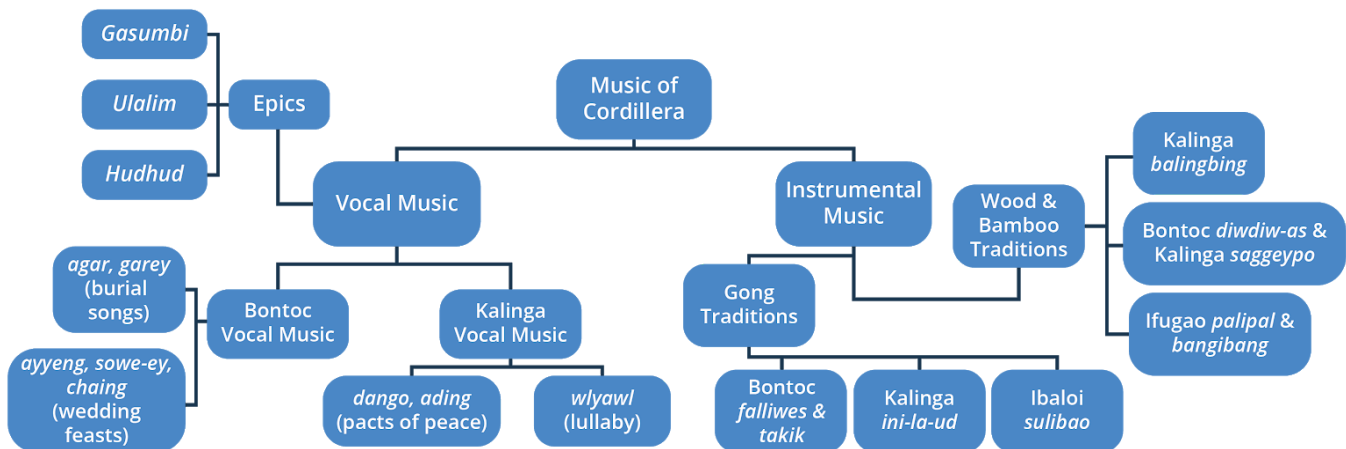
I need to practice _____ because _____.

I plan to _____

_____.



Wrap Up





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Glossary

The **chant** refers to the act of speaking or singing words and sounds.

Epics refer to stories about heroes that are chanted by a group.

Mediums refer to people who serve as a bridge between the physical and spiritual world.

Oral tradition refers to the passing on of traditions through word of mouth.

Ritual refers to a solemn ceremony that consists of a series of actions performed in a specific order.