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## SAFEGUARDING TRADITION: THE SIGNIFICANT FEATURES AND GAMEPLAY OF KAKUYA

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### ABSTRACT

This study explored and documented the significant features and gameplay of Kakuya, a traditional Meranaw game, to preserve it as part of the community's intangible cultural heritage. Using a qualitative ethnographic design, the research was conducted in Piagapo, Marawi City, and Pantar, Lanao del Sur, involving ten purposively selected participants: elders, players, community members, PE teachers, and students. Data were gathered through interviews, observations, and visual documentation, and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis with NVivo software. Findings revealed two major themes: Significant Features and Mechanics and Gameplay, further elaborated into eight sub-themes. Results showed that Kakuya has evolved from a minimally equipped activity into a structured game incorporating tools such as the Tomatik (winner indicator), Rimbo (signal marker), and rope for lane division, promoting fairness and safety. Traditionally played during gatherings, Kakuya reflects cooperation, discipline, and resilience. Its rules, scoring systems, and officiating roles highlight competitiveness while preserving cultural authenticity. Beyond recreation, the game transmits identity, values, and intergenerational connections. By systematically documenting its materials, rules, and meanings, this study provides an authentic reference for educators and cultural advocates, ensuring the appreciation and continuity of Kakuya for future generations.

**Keywords:** Kakuya, Meranaw, Indigenous Games, Gameplay, Cultural Heritage

### INTRODUCTION

Traditional sports and games (TSG) are vital cultural treasures that connect generations and communities. The UNESCO Berlin Declaration (2013) recognized their role in education, social inclusion, and cultural continuity. However, modern lifestyles and digital entertainment threaten their survival.

In the Meranaw community, Kakuya is one such game—rich in tradition but undocumented. Without written records, its mechanics and meanings risk fading as oral bearers age. This study addresses that gap by systematically recording Kakuya's features, rules, and cultural value. In doing so, it contributes to heritage preservation and provides educators and advocates with authentic material to sustain the game's legacy.

### METHODOLOGY

A qualitative ethnographic design was employed to document the features and gameplay of Kakuya. The study was conducted in Piagapo, Marawi City, and Pantar, where the game is still practiced.

**Participants.** Ten purposively selected informants included elders, active players, community members, PE teachers, and students.

**Data Collection.** Semi-structured interviews, observations, and visual documentation captured gameplay, materials, and cultural context.

**Analysis.** Data were coded and thematically analyzed using NVivo following Braun and Clarke's framework. Two main themes and eight sub-themes emerged, reflecting Kakuya's distinctive features and cultural significance.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Two central themes were identified: (1) Significant Features and (2) Mechanics and Gameplay, further divided into eight sub-themes.

### 1. Significant Features

#### 1.1 Equipment and Materials.

Kakuya evolved from a simple foot race on bare ground into a structured activity with equipment such as the Tomatik (winner's flag indicator), Rimbo (starting signal marker), and ropes for lane divisions. These additions ensure fairness, organization, and safety while preserving the game's essence of speed and discipline.

#### 1.2 Dress Code.

Historically, players wore traditional garments like malong and scarves, reflecting respect and identity. Today, participants use shorts and T-shirts for comfort and safety. This shift illustrates cultural adaptation—balancing heritage with practicality.

#### 1.3 Game Location.

Traditionally played near significant community sites like the sultan's residence, the game now occurs in open fields for visibility and safety. The choice of venue reinforces both practical and cultural values.

#### 1.4 Timing and Occasions.

Kakuya was historically tied to ceremonial events and festivals, symbolizing unity and identity. It is now played more flexibly—during school activities or local events—making it accessible while retaining cultural meaning.

### 1. Mechanics and Gameplay

#### 2.1 Objectives.

The main objective is to reach the Tomatik first, raising the victor's flag. Winning embodies not just personal success but community pride, blending competition with cultural symbolism.

#### 2.2 Rules and Mechanics.

Structured starting procedures with the Rimbo, lane assignments, and the Tomatik finish line ensure fairness and prevent disputes. These features make the game suitable for both cultural celebrations and PE programs.

#### 2.3 Officials.

Traditionally officiated by respected leaders such as the datu or sultan, officiating is now entrusted to elders or trusted community figures. Officials serve as referees and cultural stewards, preserving integrity and values.

#### 2.4 Player Eligibility.

Participation was historically open to all, but recent practices show selective participation based on physical ability and competitive skill. While inclusivity remains valued, the growing emphasis on competitiveness reflects broader changes in traditional games.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study documented the significant features and gameplay of Kakuya, a traditional Meranaw game, through ethnographic inquiry.

Findings revealed that its features—equipment, attire, venues, and timing—carry both practical and cultural meaning, balancing tradition with adaptation. Its mechanics—objectives, rules, officiating, and eligibility—ensure fairness and discipline while preserving authenticity.

Kakuya is more than recreation: it embodies Meranaw values of cooperation, resilience, and cultural pride. By recording its essential elements, this research safeguards a vital intangible heritage, provides a reference for educators and cultural advocates, and ensures the continuity of Kakuya as a living tradition for future generations.

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