

Narratives of Buri Weavers in Ilocos Region, Philippines: A Phenomenology

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Abstract

Assuming a phenomenological stance that adopted an inductive approach (Creswell, 1998) and descriptive phenomenology (Christensen et al. (2017), this study explored and described the lived experiences of the resident-buri weavers of San Juan, Ilocos Sur, Philippines, determined the participants' view of buri weaving, the Ilocano identity mirrored by the industry, and lexical items associated with the cultural practice. The analysis of their lived experiences revealed that the weavers have both positive and negative views of the panaglaga ti silag, representing their view of the industry and reflecting the defining Ilokano traits. Also, the narratives of the Buri weavers reflect the dynamics of their engagement in this treasured cultural practice and mirror the Ilokano traits. Government agencies and educational institutions should provide financial and technical assistance for the buri industry to continue thriving and for the weavers to keep improving their artistry and weaving skills. Through it, the silag weaving industry will continue to serve as a bridge that provides the missing link between the past, present, and future of the people in this part of the Province of Ilocos Sur. Also, 50 Ilokano buri weaving-related terminologies surfaced and were compiled in a supplementary material called Buri: Preserved Language.

Keywords: narratives, culture, buri industry, experiences, Philippines/Asia

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Introduction

An individual's culture shapes who they are. A person's actions, beliefs, and worldview are significantly influenced by the common values, traditions, and histories that define their culture. Then, cultural identity includes everything related to oneself, belonging, belief systems, and feelings of self-worth. It is the collection of lifestyles developed by a group of people and passed down from one generation to the next.

In light of this, cultural heritage encourages sustainability through cultural tourism, cultural and creative industries, and culture-based urban rejuvenation, which also supports growth inclusivity and produces economic advantages through job creation, local development stimulation, and entrepreneurship. It also provides non-monetary benefits, such as promoting social ideals and the growth of cultural capital. (Nocca, 2017).

Due to the way it affects and connects with many social groups and sectors, Culture is a particularly dynamic and multifaceted component of development. Beyond these points of confluence, the past and present also interact to shape how individuals move into the future. It is societies' characteristic way of life, whose identities are shaped by their respective histories, narratives, experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and customs. Language, religion, food, social customs, music, and the arts are all but a few forms of culture.

Aguda et al. (2013) noted that while the government is a crucial institution that enables people to live in a socially and economically developed state, culture is people's distinctive and important mark. In the beginning of history, humans coexisted with animals and adjusted to their surroundings in accordance with the rule of the jungle. They thrived by accepting difficulties, and they created culture by practicing harmony and community life. They imposed discipline and order while establishing guiding principles. This implies that if culture is eliminated from a person's life, they would quickly revert to a primitive lifestyle and that only cultural identity can help individuals live like humans and provide a decent existence (Barthel-Bouchier, 2016).

The importance of preserving heritage, which is defined as the "traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festival events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts for them, was emphasized by Rabang & Martinez (2021) in their study.

In addition, to live like an Ilokano, according to Avila, Jaramilla, and Mata (2020), one must be an Ilokano. It implies that in order to see or understand the idea, one must be familiar with and experience Ilokano life, clothes, and traditions. They went on to say that life is focused not just on one's own fulfillment but also on the happiness of society. Riputola et al. (2021) also shared that the Ilokano people are proud of their cultural arts and crafts, including furniture, zarzuela, comedia, literature, music, and monuments. The remembrance of their heroic past, which included their wars, wins, and lives, gave the Ilokano culture and people a unique hue and magnificence.

A feeling of national identity developed as a result of the protracted independence fight. It is challenging to pin down precisely what constitutes Filipino culture given the variety of the Philippines. The notion of national identity is flimsy; devotion is initially felt toward one's family, community, or region. Because of the collectivist culture of the Philippines, people have a tendency to identify as members of a group. Filipinos generally prioritize the interests of the group over those of the individual. Filipinos sometimes take great pleasure in their hometowns and share this pride with others by sharing anecdotes or historical information about their families, barangays, or towns.

Different topographies, languages, and cultures may be found in the Republic of the Philippines. Between the Philippine Sea and the South China Sea, it is located. Spain, China, and the United States are just a few of the countries that have had interactions with and affected Filipino culture. The struggle for Philippine independence gave people a sense of pride in their country. Still, loyalty remains essentially owed to one's family and country of origin. Many Filipinos have a kind and welcoming disposition, and friendliness, respect, and acceptance are fundamental aspects of Filipino culture.

Filipino culture is characterized by blending many traditions brought about by colonial influences. For instance, Filipinos are Asian in family, Chinese in business, and American in aspirations, according to Castillo, Bansil, Garcia, Castillo, & Peyra (2015). This may help explain why most Filipinos feel disconnected from their heritage. The intangible and physical components of the Philippines' cultural legacy may be divided into two groups. The intangible component of culture is made up of the oral and written customs, rituals, representations, artistic manifestations, knowledge, and skills to which the Filipino people cling. The intangible component of culture is made up of the oral and written customs, rituals, representations, artistic manifestations, knowledge, and skills to which the Filipino people cling. According to Indera and Yahaya (2016), tangible cultural property comprises constructed objects of historical, archival, anthropological, archaeological, aesthetic, and architectural significance. The Philippine government currently lacks sufficient information on the

ethnic minorities and groupings that make up the country (Refworld, 2015).

Similarly, Futag (2015) agrees that the Philippines is a country that has varied cultural influences. The majority of these effects are byproducts of earlier colonialism, mostly coming from Spanish and American cultures. Despite all of these influences, the Filipinos have maintained their traditional Asian culture, which is evident in their way of life, beliefs, and rituals.

Nepomuceno (2021) claims that in the Philippines, both the national government and local government units (LGUs) are thought to be responsible for promoting culture. It is a state policy that is guaranteed by the Philippine Constitution and is one of the priorities: "Education shall be prioritized by the state, science and technology, arts, culture, and sports; patriotism and nationalism shall be encouraged, accelerate social progress, and promote total human liberation and development" (Sec. 17, Art. II). Among the many Ilokano material forms of culture worth preserving and promoting is Buri Weaving or Panaglaga ti Silag in the Ilokano vernacular.

The annual Buri Festival, which is typically held in January, attracts tens of thousands of Ilocano peasants, balikbayans (returning migrant Filipinos), and visitors to SAN JUAN, Ilocos Sur. A century-old plant called Buri, which yields three different types of fibers (raffia, buntal, and buri) is the focus of this event. Locally, it is called as silag. The buri palm has thick petioles that are two to three meters long and have huge, fan-shaped leaves. The palm grows to a height of 20 to 40 meters, and its trunk is one to 1.5 meters in diameter.

The official product of San Juan under the One Town, One Product (OTOP) initiative of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is buri. As the centerpiece of Basey town's Banigan-Kawayan Festival on September 20, 2000, hundreds of people marched a more than one-kilometer-long mat. For several weeks, the one-meter-wide mat was woven. But no entry for the achievement was made in the Guinness Book of World Records.

San Juan allocated an initial investment of P200,000 (\$4,095, depending on an exchange rate of P48.84 to the US dollar) for the sector to enhance the quality of buri products and preserve the supply of raw materials. It was claimed that the money was utilized to pay for ongoing training programs and seminars for weavers as well as the purchase of new buri manufacturing technology. To prepare for the potential shortage of raw materials in the future owing to the rising demand for buri goods, a Buri plant nursery was even built in conjunction with San Juan's initiative on the extensive buri plantation.

DAR (2021) defines panaglaga ti silag (Buri Weaving) as the art of making items like bags, fashion hats, fans, placemats, wine bags,

packaging of soaps, table accessories, pen holders, coin purses, and other novelty items. The municipality of San Juan is home to the buri weaving industry and creative people. The abundance of the buri tree (*Coryphaelata Roxb*) has enabled people to produce woven items for personal and commercial use. However, the *panaglaga ti silag* indicates a distinct Ilocano weaving tradition beyond the production method. The cultural products - the various woven buri items - will be shown here as familiar and valuable crafts and items that embody a profound cultural significance.

Called *Silag* in the vernacular, Buri has become synonymous with *Lapoguenos*, and the Buri industry has become their reflection, the site of their identity as Ilocanos. Buri weaving is not only a form of art for the natives of San Juan but a part of their way of life that may be traced back to the Spanish colonization. From Buri, they extract fibers from the petiole with utmost diligence and care, then deftly and seamlessly roll and weave them into mats, bags, holiday decor/ornaments, shoes, slippers, and screen dividers or lampshades, and much other stuff used in everyday life.

The buri industry manifests the locals' non-material culture, including habits, traditions, characters, values, feelings, and aspirations. The buri crafts collectively serve as a *ladaon* (an Ilokano term for image) of Ilocano identity in the material culture – an image of a people characterized by specific historical, social, and cultural contexts. Today, the *silag* and the *panaglaga ti silag* represent everything that is Ilokano. At the same time, Filipino as the buri crafts trade provides a venue for interdependence among the different ethnic groups in the province of the entire archipelago (Rodriguez, 2009).

This paper attempts to represent this distinct material culture as a site of Ilocano identity and an integral part of the larger national culture and identity. By pursuing this study, the investigators will compile local terms derived from Buri weaving reflective of Ilocano culture and identity. Through this, they can contribute to preserving vernacular terms that young people of today and tomorrow could use to reconnect with their age-long local culture and tradition.

Literature Review

The Theory of Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl provided the primary theoretical underpinnings as this study assumes that the participants' conscious experiences have unique features based on how they experience them, live through them, or perform them. Others may not observe the unfolding of the experience and much less engage in the experience. However, phenomenologists are only able to provide a meaningful and correct interpretation of the experience because of the experiential or first-person characteristic of the theory,

which is a crucial component of the nature or structure of conscious experience. For Husserl, phenomenology would study consciousness without reducing the objective and shareable meanings that inhabit experience to merely subjective coincidences (Tassone, 2017).

The Ilocos Region and the Ilocanos

On the 11,447.5 square kilometer island of Luzon's northwest coast, Abra, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, and La Union provinces are home to an estimated 1,453,000 industrious Ilocanos. With rice as its main crop, just a small portion of the plain is productive and arable. Foods are frequently insufficient since there is little room for cultivation.

The physical surroundings of Ilocandia have an effect on the Ilocano way of life. Ilocanos are tenacious and accustomed to difficulties. Every centavo matters to the Ilocanos since they struggle to make a living. Agriculture is not viable because of the area's long provinces. As a result, the Ilocano family has a variety of occupations. Both sexes can spin and dye yarn. On their traditional, rudimentary hand looms, women weave blankets, towels, napkins, tablecloths, handbags, and jackets. Along with weaving, the Ilocanos also work in the bagoong and tuba manufacturing industries.

The Ilocanos are the most courageous and diligent people. During harvest season, they move to other provinces like Pangasinan, Nueva Ecija, and Cagayan for employment. After the harvest, they take their winnings home with them. Others relocate as settlers to remote areas like Cotabato, Davao, Bukidnon, and other parts of Mindanao. As they effortlessly adapt wherever they go, numerous Ilocanos also have jobs in Saudi Arabia, Okinawa, Guam, Hawaii, and other places.

On "Ilocaneness"

Two questions are put forward in discussing "Ilocaneness" as the underlying principle in analyzing the panaglaga ti silag as an Ilocano cultural heritage. First, how do the Ilocanos identify their identity concerning their physical world? Second, how is this identity, with its accompanying worldview, reflect on their material culture, particularly on the panaglaga ti silag? Despite the dearth of literature, the current study used data gathered from available sources to investigate the abovementioned queries.

"Ilokandia": The Ilokano Worldview, the Geographical and Socio-cultural Milieu

San Juan, formally known as the Municipality of San Juan and formerly known as Lapog, is a third-class municipality in the Philippine province of Ilocos Sur. San Juan developed into a flourishing city. 32 barangays make up San Juan's political divisions. In the majority of barangays, silag trees are a common sight.

Rodriguez (2009), in her study, said, "A harsh land, an intrepid people" was how the Ilocanos described their environment and themselves. Ilocano writers thought the same way, too. Foronda et al. (1971) share collective Ilocano observations regarding how the Ilocanos interact with their environment. Accordingly, the Ilocanos formed their renowned qualities and refined their talents "by interacting with this harsh and forbidding country." They were able to overcome the difficulty. Despite the difficulties, they learnt how to cultivate the land. Their numerous different enterprises, including commerce, basi and vinegar production, weaving, pottery, and many more, speak favorably of their ability to survive and adapt to their surroundings. They put forth a lot of effort and have austere lives.

Additionally, he claimed that because of the difficult physical conditions and high population density, the people would either need to intensify their agricultural practices, develop new businesses, or leave for locations where they could scratch out a livelihood. The Ilocanos have executed both. To supplement agriculture and fishing, they developed industries like weaving, manufacturing, smithing, mining, and all others. A large number of them have also migrated to other areas, according to Yabes (n.d.). They have planted maguey on barren lands and cultivated the arable land, even on the sides of hills and mountains.

How is the Ilocano identity reflected in their material culture with the preceding worldview, particularly on the panaglaga ti silag? The panaglaga ti silag tradition, as an image of the culture-bearers and a key to understanding their culture, also requires a closer look.

History of the Ilocanos

English (2023) mentioned that only archaeological evidence was available to depict the history of the Ilocano people before the advent of the Spanish in 1521. According to scholars, the Ilocano area of the Philippines was populated by 5,000 BCE.

On the other hand, the Ilocano people are a Malay tribe, and the Malay tribes first appeared in the Philippines later, roughly between 300 and 200 BCE, when people moved north from the southern areas. The Ilocano and other ethnic groups in the Philippines traded with people in China, Japan, and Indonesia during the following decades.

Buddhism was never generally embraced through these relationships with other Southeast Asian countries, unlike many other tribes in the area. However, the Ilocano people adopted the Baybayin script of Kur-itan or Kurdita, a writing system with Sanskrit roots. Kur-itan/Kurdita script has been replaced with the Latin script in modern times.

English 2023 added: The Spanish conquerors, commanded by Salcedo in 1571, learnt Samtoy since it was spoken by the inhabitants from Bangui to Agoo, the Augustinian Andres Carro reported in his book

from 1792. Samtoy, a contraction of *sao mi'toy* meaning "our language here," was used to connect the maritime trade posts in Ilocos at the early stage of Spanish colonization. The Ilocano language was eventually given that name by the locals.

On Ilocano Culture

A person's identity is shaped by their culture. A person's behavior, thoughts, and worldview are influenced by the common values, traditions, and histories that are distinctive of their culture. Therefore, cultural identity includes everything related to oneself, belonging, belief systems, and feelings of self-worth. It is the collection of lifestyles developed by a population of people and passed down from one generation to the next.

The following article by Ilocano author Fernando Leanio, which Yabes (n.d.) cited, contrasts the qualities of Tagalogs, Visayans, and Ilocos people. It should be fascinating and educational. So, the Tagalog is a poet, the Ilocano is a handyman, and the Visayan is a troubadour. The Tagalog, the Ilocano, and the Visayan all have different ways of viewing life; the Ilocano sees it as utilitarian, the Tagalog as beautiful, and the Visayan as emotional. As a result, one may find the Ilocano to be reticent and orthodox, the Tagalog to be creative and intellectual, and the Visayan to be loving and effusive.

Leanio, who was further cited by Yabes, asserted that the Tagalog observes life distantly, the Visayan lets life flow through him, and the Ilocano suppresses and hides his emotions. The Tagalog is a person of intelligence, the Visayan is an emotional being, and the Ilocano is a man of action. He cites several occasions where members of all groups exhibit traits common to the three categories, yet these distinctions do not change as a result of population growth. He continues, "The Tagalog is a product of cities and schools, fastidious, academic; the Ilocano is a creature evolved by harsh economic laws." The Visayan is a kid of the tropics, colorful, virginal, and volcanic. The Tagalog thinks and dreams, the Ilocano toils and works, and the Visayan appears unconcerned with his or her life.

Yabes also agrees that the Ilocano thinks while working and performs best in circumstances requiring rapid judgments. When engaged in activity, he is rational but typically worthless. He claims that Ilocano heroes like Luna, Aglipay, Ricarte, and Silang are men of action who make snap judgments. The key to Ilocano's success is his patience, perseverance, and capacity to persist with and focus on everything he accomplishes. His development is not very impressive; he struggles to finish. Finally, he explains that whereas Ilocanos do not care where he travels since they can feel at home anywhere, Visayans have strong attachments to their homes and, especially the females, suffer homesick when they are away from their families (Yabes, n.d.).

The Ilokano's Customs and Traditions

Ilocanos put in a lot of effort to maintain themselves; adversity never prevents them from succeeding. Ilocanos are capable of overcoming hardships. Every Ilocano family pushes their children to attend school and gain the skills they need to secure better jobs and, as a result, enjoy better lives because they value education, hard effort, and patience. The austerity of the Ilocanos has an impact on the majority of their customs and ceremonies.

Yasounme (2017) concurred that the Ilocanos are notorious for being stingy, or "kuripot" in their native tongue, yet hardworking, resolute, straightforward, and grateful. However, for them, this is only a running joke among all Filipinos and not a derogatory term for their race. Our nation has come to appreciate them because of their traits.

Most individuals mistake their value of money with being stingy, but their desire to spend their income properly only makes them thrifty. This is all because of where they are from, in the Ilocos Region, sandwiched between the South China Sea and the desolate Cordillera Mountain ranges. Ilocos is an extremely challenging place to live while being a highly blessed agricultural region.

Their motherland cannot hold them due to the rapid population expansion. As a result, their surroundings made them warriors and survival. Furthermore, mostly concentrate on leading a better life. Additionally, given their distance from the hub of the trade business, it is difficult for them to generate money due to all of this. Their duties are made much more difficult by the lengthy travel times required to get their products, primarily fruits, and vegetables, to the capital. Additionally, the items lose their freshness once they arrive, which makes commerce difficult. As a result of everything, Ilocanos are known for being frugal people.

Panaglaga: the method of making buri products

As material objects, there are two ways to look at the buri products: one, procedural, and two, cultural. At this juncture, it is first logical and vital to look into the procedural aspect and clarify specific terminologies used in the panaglagaan ti silag.

Buri crafts require a laborious, two-part procedure for processing before weaving. The males of the community use long bamboo poles with pointed hooks connected to the upper end to cut the huge petiole of the buri as the first step in the process. The knife then separates the leaf strand from the midrib. The leaflet and spine are separated (panagiit) after the leaf strands have been dried for three days. The leaflets/buri fibers are bleached by boiling them for one and a half hours in a big kettle with plenty of water, salt, vinegar, and commercial acetic acid. After a thorough water wash, the bleached fibers are let out to dry in the sun. If not completely dry before sunset, they must

be taken inside to prevent dew and moisture-related discolorations from occurring. When the fibers need to be colored, the desired color or colors are used to dye the fibers.

Therefore, it is better to process buri leaves during the hot and dry seasons because doing so before the rainy season arrives would be detrimental to their health. They are rolled up in huge rolls after drying to prevent wrinkles from forming. The fibers are then pulled through a wooden device with sharp blade attachments to create the required width. The buri fibers' width range for weaving is 5 mm, 7-8 mm, 1 cm, 2 cm, and 2 1/2 cm wide.

After the cutting comes the second part of the process, the panaglagaan (weaving proper); during this phase, apprentice weavers may need the sukugan (molder) to be able to weave the buri fibers/leaves into the desired product or item. Those who have mastered the craft can do the task without using the sukugan (molder). Weavers use various weaving styles to come up with different product designs. The general style of weaving Buri is by the "Sal-itan" or the alternate method exemplified by the traditional "Sintas." However, there are other methods, such as the "Eyelet," "Pito-han," "Siko- Siko," "Rumba," and the "Apatan." Finally, the panagsinit (torching). Here, to polish the woven item, the weaver uses a torch to remove the snags protruding from its surface (<https://www.facebook.com/sariayanas/posts/the-processing-and-eventual-weaving-of-the-buri-leavesaccording-to-mrs-guillerma/500900446625329/>)

Research Objectives

This study explored the experiences of the Buri weavers of San Juan, Ilocos Sur. Specifically, it aimed to determine the participants' view on buri weaving, the Ilocano identity mirrored by the industry, and lexical items typically used in the aforesaid cultural practice.

Research Methodology

This study used an interpretive, inductive methodology while taking a phenomenological position. Through careful reading of the participant narratives in the transcript, the meaning of the data was made clear (Creswell, 1998). It was focused with understanding experience in a certain setting with individuals who had similar experiences. The study followed the steps in Creswell's data analysis spiral to make sense of the experience, the weaving of buri by the participant weavers: organizing the data or transcribing, reading the transcription and noting emerging ideas, describing and categorizing codes into themes,

developing and assessing interpretations, and finally writing the report.

The participants are the resident-weavers of San Juan, Ilocos Sur. They were purposely selected to provide specific insight into the experience central to the study (Smith et al., 2010). They have been weaving since they were young. Overall, five weavers participated in the study.

The study used a semi-structured questionnaire. An in-depth interview lasting at least 30 minutes per participant was used to invite participants to offer a rich, first-person account of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Prior to the interviews, a plan was created that included an agenda for subjects from the literature study but was also fairly flexible to allow for the emergence of new topics. The interviews happened where the participants were located and were digitally recorded to enable for subsequent transcription.

Questions asked were the following:

1. How is your typical daily activity as a weaver?
2. What are the common tasks in buri weaving?
3. What are the lessons, beliefs, and values of the Lapoguenos in the buri industry?
4. Why did you manage to stay long in buri weaving?
5. What language can be extracted from the buri weaving?

Results and Discussions

The way people see themselves and the organizations they identify with is influenced by their culture, which is a distinguishing characteristic of their identity. Understanding of one's own and other people's identities arises from birth and is influenced by the values and perspectives that prevail at home and in the neighborhood. (<https://racismnoway.com.au/cultural-exchange-nsw/about-culture/>).

Themes emerged after thematically analyzing the participants' narratives about their daily cultural practice panaglaga ti silag. Notably, these themes represent the participants' view of their industry and the defining traits of the Ilocano that are molded and mirrored by the said cultural practice.

1. Views on Buri Weaving (Panaglaga ti Silag)

During the initial part of the interview, the researchers asked the participants' views on panaglaga ti silag (buri weaving). Their responses revealed the following views categorized into the following dichotomy: positive and negative.

Positive Views

Fulfilling. Fulfillment has something to do with making our lives more significant and worthwhile. It is something that gives incomparable joy. According to Goldsmith, finding a purpose in life is essential for living a satisfying existence, and those who feel as though they are making a positive impact on mankind tend to be happier with their lives. It is rewarding for people to be a part of something bigger than themselves. (Goldsmith, 2010).

Fulfillment is precisely how the respondents feel being part of this long-standing panaglaga ti silag tradition. Full of conviction, one participant shared, "There is nothing that makes me happier waking up every day than having the chance to do what I love most doing...weaving buri fibers into something useful and special. Weaving to be able to earn for my family is one reason why I look forward to each day with excitement because I know that in doing it, I can contribute to my family and society."

Another participant said, "There is no doubt that Weaving is tedious; however, seeing the beautiful items that I am able to make every day just drive away my tiredness. I have always known and embraced that my purpose in life is to make something which other people can use, and for which I contribute to my family and society. Doing it makes me feel fulfilled and at peace."

Still, another weaver declared, "Growing up, I have always enjoyed Weaving, that is why I never gave up on it even when I went to high school. I would bring to my boarding house and sell mats I wove. That is how precious this craft is to me. My parents afforded to send me to college through the money they earned from Weaving. It practically helped us through difficult times. For us in the family, Weaving completes our day. It is one thing we cannot live without."

Another weaver also commented, "Weaving has become a part of our life. We have been into it since we were young, and we will keep doing it until we breathe our last. That's why we make sure to instill in the minds and hearts of our young to love and treasure it, that no matter what they become in the future, they must not forget nor turn their back on it."

Promotes Teamwork and Collaboration. In the workplace, teamwork and cooperation improve how individuals cooperate and solve problems, encouraging more creativity, effective procedures, more achievement, and better communication. Through cooperation and collaboration, members listen to, learn from, and complement one another, supporting the achievement of their objectives.

The promotion is another positive that the participants derived from their weaving engagement. The resident weavers primarily do the Weaving at home; however, these home weavers regularly convene

and discuss matters that can be done to improve their craft. Thus, teamwork and collaboration are done at the family and community levels. One participant mentioned, "We brainstorm, we try to generate from one another ideas about other stuff that can be made from buri leaves, how we can improve our existing products."

In addition, another participant spoke, "We used to just keep weaving and immediately dispose whatever we could finish. We were mostly after weaving more so that we can sell more. We paid little or no attention to details, to how we can make them more beautiful. But now, due to regular brainstorming, we have figured out strategies to make our produce more pleasing and attractive."

Another weaver declared, "It's when we are huddle up that we practice applying the things we learned from the training given by DTI. Truly, applying new styling techniques gained from training is not that easy, thus we ask anyone from us who was able to understand and internalize emerging techniques to demonstrate how things should be done."

A Sense of Identity. One's sense of identity is closely tied to his/her work. Work is an essential factor that shapes one's definition of who he/she is. One participant mentioned, "The silag and its panaglaga reflects our being Lapoguenos. The silag tree is found only here in San Juan, and when one sees the tree and the products made from it, he/she automatically realizes that he/she is seeing San Juan and its people."

One weaver talked about the One-Town-One-Product scheme of the Department of Industry, saying, "In the DTI scheme, silag products stand as symbol of San Juan. There are other things produced in our place, but it's the buri products that are mostly associated with our town."

Regular Income-Generating Source. The main benefit of a job is that it provides a steady stream of income, ensuring stability and security. Income makes life easier and is essential for daily survival. Indeed, the participants' earnings from their engagement in Weaving have afforded them a much-needed financial bailout, especially during the pandemic.

Along this line, one young participant uttered, "My weaving skills have empowered me, at my early age, to earn. Through it, I was able to buy my cellphone, and I no longer bother my parents for my regular load. My earning has made me mostly financially independent and enabled me to buy most of my school needs. I actually enjoy weaving especially that I treat it not as a work but as a game I enjoy playing. Instead of being out there playing with other kids, I would rather play here on my own with the buri leaves."

A proud mother also said, "This craft has always helped us earn our daily keeps. We use the proceeds from our sales to buy our groceries and other necessities. We do not spend all our sales proceeds. We live a simple life; thus, we can set aside even just a tiny sum of our earnings so that there is something that we can draw in times of difficulties and when orders are hard to come by.

Negative Views

Backbreaking. Weavers may just be seated and stooped down as they do their work, but their work is simply backbreaking. The participants shared that suffering from chronic back pains was their only complaint. The participants said, "Despite its being challenging and enjoyable, this work tests your limit and endurance as it is simply backbreaking. Sitting, bent down for a whole day almost to finish many outputs, is a big sacrifice. As you see, we are working so hard this early and will be this way until we sleep. We barely have rest, and normally, our only break is when we eat or answer nature's call."

2. Ni Ilokano kas Maanninag iti Panaglaga ti Silag (The Ilocano as Reflected in Buri Weaving)

The Buri Tree has, for centuries, been the enduring symbol of San Juan. When one hears the word silag and all the words that refer to products made from it, what comes to mind is San Juan, where the tree is endemic, and its people, whose ingenuity makes the creation of the buri products possible.

Suppose the buri tree alone speaks a lot about the Ilocano. In that case, looking into the industry that creates all buri products certainly provides a clearer picture of the defining traits of Ilocanos. Moreover, the investigators identified several traits after closely examining the buri industry as a site of Ilocano identity by analyzing the interview transcripts with the participant weavers.

Industrious, Diligent, and Patient. An industrious person is hardworking and persistent, while a diligent one performs tasks responsibly with intense concentration and focus. The two are closely related, and both require optimum patience. They tend to overlap.

The resident weavers showcase These three traits every time they settle down and start their work - panaglaga ti silag. One weaver shared,

"Buri weaving, first and foremost, shows how industrious we, Ilocanos are. Because buri weaving is our primary source of livelihood, we need to be diligent and hardworking. To increase our daily production, we need to wake up early in the morning and sleep late at night. Likewise, the buri industry showcases how the Ilocanos love their work and the things that can sustain life. In our case, the buri tree is the source of all our products.

In addition, one weaver shared, "In this work, we can also have a glimpse of the Ilocano patience. As you see, we are now breaking our back, working so hard this early, and it's going to be this way until we go to sleep. We barely have rest and normally, our only break is when we eat or answer nature's call." Similarly, another participant quipped, "Patience is so vital in this work. Sitting, bent down for a whole day almost, in order to finish many outputs simply requires patience."

The aforementioned claim is consistent with Yabes' assertion that the Ilocano is an action-oriented guy since he was created under strict economic constraints (Yabes, n.d.). Additionally, he claimed that the Ilocano toils away while the Visayan appears carefree and the Tagalog daydreams. Yabes also agrees that the Ilocano thinks while working and performs best in circumstances requiring rapid judgments. He claims that the secrets to his success are Ilocano's patience, perseverance, and capacity to remain with and concentrate on everything he undertakes. He plows through with little fanfare; his progress is not impressive. Yabes said that the Tagalog is a poet, the Ilocano is a handyman, and the Visayan is essentially a troubadour. The Tagalog, the Ilocano, and the Visayan evaluate life in terms of aesthetic beauty, feeling, and utility, respectively.

Similarly, Foronda et al. (1971) posited that by interacting with this harsh and forbidding country, the Ilocanos molded their fabled virtues and honed their skills. They were able to surmount the challenge. Despite the difficulties, they learnt how to cultivate the land. Their varied economic activities, including trading, weaving, pottery, basi and vinegar production, and fishing, to name a few, speak well of their ability to survive and adapt to their surroundings. They are renowned for their diligence, frugality, and economy in daily living.

Altruistic. An altruist has an unselfish concern for the well-being of other people. He is someone who does things out of a genuine desire to help. This Ilocano trait is seen in one participant's statement, "Weaving is one big sacrifice which we are so willing to do daily all for the love of our family. Because we love them, we need to look into their well-being, not just ours. We make sure that they get three square meals a day. We send our children to school so that hopefully, they will have a better future."

Another participant intimated, "Our earning, no matter how meager it might be, is not only for us. When we sense that our neighbors need something, that they are experiencing difficulty, we make sure to share to ease their burden." This corroborates the statement of Yabes (n.d.) that even if Ilocanos are clannish, they are naturally sensitive to the miseries of others because they are affectionate.

Prudent. A prudent person acts with or shows care and thought for the future. As such, he is a judicious spender. In addition, he does not

spend more than he earns and only on essentials. This is one of the trademarks of Ilocanos. They are known to be thrifty and stingy. This trait is observed in the statement of all the participants, "Our children's early involvement in weaving helps them realize how difficult it is to earn every cent, and in the process, learn to be prudent with their earnings, not to spend them on non-essentials."

The respondents also unanimously said, "We don't spend all our sales proceeds. We live a simple life, thus we can set aside even just a small sum of our earnings so that there's something that we can draw in times orders are hard to come by."

This is backed up by Foronda et al. (1971). They mentioned that due to living in a harsh and forbidding country, the Ilocanos molded their famed virtues, including hardworking, thrifty, and frugal in their lifeways.

Similarly, Yasounme (2017) corroborates this finding by saying that Ilocanos work arduously to support themselves; hardship never stands in the way of their accomplishment. Ilocanos are capable of overcoming hardships. Every Ilocano family pushes their children to attend school and gain the skills they need to secure better jobs and, as a result, enjoy better lives because they value education, hard effort, and patience. The austerity of the Ilocanos has an impact on the majority of their customs and ceremonies. He added: that the Ilocanos are notorious for being stingy, or "kuripot" in their native tongue, yet they are also hardworking, resolute, straightforward, and grateful. However, for them, this is only a running joke among all Filipinos and not a derogatory term for their race. Our nation has come to appreciate them because of their traits.

Collaborative and Creative. Ilocanos are open-minded and always willing to listen and learn from other team members, experts, and others. Such willingness to learn has made them more creative, which is why the buri weaving industry thrives. The Ilocanos' collaborative mindset and creativity can be deduced from the following responses of the participants. "We brainstorm, we try to generate from one another ideas about other stuff that can be made from buri leaves, how we can improve our existing products;" "For us to make our buri products more attractive and saleable, we request skills training from the DTI, properly endorsed by the municipal office;" "We need assistance so that we can make our buri products more attractive. Such assistance is provided to us by our customers through their feedback and government agencies in the form of seminars and training."

These narratives indicate the Ilocanos' openness to feedback, realizing it is vital for continuous improvement. The weavers' soliciting

feedback from customers/buyers reflects their willingness to satisfy their clients, who are the lifeblood of the weaving industry.

Trustworthy. Trustworthiness is the ability, to be honest, dependable, and reliable. In professional settings, it is the assurance that someone will get things done. A trustworthy individual does what he says he will do. He never breaks his promise or lets anyone down. He keeps his words and values commitment.

This Ilocano quality or trait is observed in the statement of one weaver, "Our buri weaving industry is thriving, thanks to our local customers and those who come from faraway places. They mostly place their orders in advance, indicating the pickup date. Once settled, we start weaving, and with focus, quickness, and finesse, we bend down all day to make more outputs that are refined and pleasing, ready for pick up on the agreed date and time. We need to fulfill our commitment because when we falter on the promised date, buyers will not come back to us anymore."

On the same note, another participant offered these words, "Notably, we are usually flooded with orders from November to May. Buri weaving peaks in these months. We go through the daily grind that long, but we need to keep our promise or words as tired as may get. For us, ti saom ket isu't rupam (your word is your face), and if we cannot keep it, we lose our credibility. Although other people may see us as poor, we are a people who can be respected because we know how to keep our words." These narratives support the findings of Alviento & Alviento (2017) that the Ilocano is welcoming and can keep promises and secrets.

After a thorough study of buri weaving and the conversation with the weavers of San Juan, the following Ilokano terminologies surfaced with translations in English, Filipino, and the local language, Ilokano. Under each derivative are other terms that also came out with translations as well.

Table 1. Ilokano Terminologies Associated with Buri Weaving

TERM	TRANSLATION		
	ENGLISH	FILIPINO	ILOKANO
1. Apit	harvest	ani	ani; bunga; buras
<i>Agapit</i>	to harvest; to gather	anihin; mag-ani, umani	agani; agburas
<i>Apiten</i>	to reap; to gather	pag-ani	burasen; anien
2. Agitakdang	to take away something from soaking; to	ihawalay sa babaran; iahon mula sa pagkababad	agibangkag; agiaon

	remove from soaking		
<i>Itakdang</i>	to remove from soaking	iahon; alisin sa pagkababad	ibangkag; iyaon
<i>Nangitakdang</i>	the act of removing something from soaking	inalis sa babaran; iahon mula sa pagkakababad	nangiyaon; nagibangkag
<i>Panangitakdang</i>	the act of removing something from soaking	pag-ahon	panangiyaon; panagibangkag
3. Bay-on	bag made of woven buri strips of buri leaves	sisidlang yari sa buri; tampipi; bayong; kalupi	kuribot
4. Buri	a palm (<i>coryphe elata</i>) whose leaves are woven into hats, mats, bags, etc.; also known as silag in other areas;	buri	buri
5. Dye	chemicals used to color the buri	kemikal na pangkulang; tinta	pangmaris/koloran
6. Gisla	fiber	hibla	Linabag; gan-ay; banban
7. Ibilag	to dry under the sun	ipatuyo	ipainit; ipindang; ipakirrit; ipalag
8. Iit	the central rib of the leaves of buri	tingting	kaykay; sagad; gait
<i>litan</i>	to remove or separate the central rib from the leaf	paghiwalay ng dahon sa matigas na bahagi ng buri	isina
9. Ikamen	mat; material	banig; sapin; latag	pagiladan; pagiddaan

	made of plaited buri;		
10. Laga	weave	habi	sangal
<i>Aglaga</i>	to weave; weaver	maghabi; tagahabi	agsangal; tagasangal
<i>Makilaga</i>	to weave to somebody else's	makihabi	makisangal
<i>Malaga</i>	something to weave	bagay na hahabiin	banag/lagaen
<i>Panaglaga</i>	weaving	paghabi	panagsangal
11. Kallugong	general name for hat	sombrero; panangga sa init o ulan	kipis/ payabyab
12. Pagsukugan	molde	hulmahan; molde	pagpormaan; pagaramidan
13. Partuat	product; invention	gawa; produkto; yari	aramid; parnuay; agpatanor
<i>Agpartuat</i>	to produce, to create;	gumawa	agaramid; agparnuay; agpatanor
<i>Mapartuat</i>	the finished product; produce	bunga	maparnuay; mapatanor
14. Pigis	torn piece; tear	punit; pilas	pisang
<i>Agpigis</i>	tearing; ripping	napupunit; napipilas	agpisang
<i>Pigisen</i>	to tear; to rip	biyakin; punitin; pilasín	pisangen
15. Payabyab	hat made of woven buri strips of buri leaves	sombrerong yari sa dahon ng buri	kipis
16. Ririt	strip; division	pira-piraso	tinidtid; sigit
<i>Iirit</i>	to cut; to divide; to strip	ihiwalay; paghiwalayin	ilasik; isina; isigit
<i>Ririten</i>	to divide into the strip or pieces	paghiwa- hiwalayin	pagsisinaen; paglalasinen; tidtiden; sigiten
17. Rolio	bundle of buri	rolyo; bulto; bigkis	bulto
18. Silag	buri	buri	buri

19. Silap	gloss; glow; shine	kintab; ningning; kislap; sinag	sileng; rimat; raniag; rayray
<i>Sumilap</i>	to gloss; to glow; to shine	kumislap; kumintab; suminag	nasileng; narimat; naraniag; narayray
20. Sinit	burn or scorch with fire	sunog; paso	puor; siram; uram
<i>Agsinit</i>	scorcher; superficial burn	pasuin	agpuor; agsiram; aguram
<i>Masinit</i>	to be scorched	mapaso; masunog	mapuoran; masiraman; mauram
<i>Siniten</i>	to burn	sunugin; pasuin	uramen; puoran; siramen; rubruban; lay-aban
21. Ubad	a border that consists of two narrow strips of bamboo or rattan that cover the rim of a basket or hat, a boundary	gilid; paligid	kalupkop
<i>Ubadan</i>	straightening and smoothening of the buri leaf	pagpapakinis	siniten
22. Uggot	sprout	talbos	saringit; tarubong; murdong ti sanga; naganus a bulong; bulong
<i>Naguggot</i>	sprouted; vegetate; germinate	tumubo; sumibol	nagsaringit; nagtubo
23. Ungkay	branch; offshoot; soft stem; twig	tangkay; sanga	tangkay; sanga

Words that surfaced in this study were limited to those that came out with the pannakipatpatang with the participants. They mostly centered on the processes and their experiences among themselves, as weavers, and their relationships with others, their community, and their clients.

To come out with a material, the words captured in the participants' narratives were arranged based on their root words, followed by the derivatives used in their everyday tasks in buri weaving.

The words listed in the conversation with the participants were compiled through supplementary material entitled Buri- Preserved Words. Meanings in English, Filipino, and Ilokano were provided.

The material contains a title page, foreword, publication page about the authors, the material, acknowledgment, dedication, and the 50 words derived from the participants' narratives; 24 root words and their derivatives as used.

Conclusions

The narratives of the Buri weavers in San Juan, Ilocos Sur, reflect the dynamics of their engagement in this treasured cultural practice and likewise mirror the traits of the Ilocano. The analysis of their lived experiences revealed that the weavers have both positive and negative views of the panaglaga ti silag. On a positive note, they claim the panaglaga to be fulfilling, promoting teamwork and collaboration, a sense of identity, and a regular income generation source. However, they consider it backbreaking. As a distinct material culture, the panaglaga ti silag mirrors the admirable traits of the Ilocano, such as industriousness, diligence, patience, altruism, prudence, collaboration, and creative, and trustworthiness.

Recommendations

For the buri industry to continue thriving and the weavers to keep improving their artistry and weaving skills, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) should continue providing them with training. Since the weavers consider their work backbreaking, the local government may help them figure out how to make the work less toilsome by considering the potential use of technology. The local government may also assist the resident weavers with inappropriate marketing and promotional strategies. Providing assistance certainly makes the weaver feel essential and will make them love their work more. Educational institutions should bridge the missing link between the past, present, and future. Fora and other measures to echo cultural views should be a continuous program of culture-based curricula. Materials should be explored to document silent cultural practices.

Finally, the use of narratives to discover words that can be saved for the people, especially our young, to use and understand. It will make them feel a sense of belongingness through the meanings of words and actions that make them one community, one Ilokano, one Filipino.

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