

Panubok: Reviving the Embroidery Tradition of Panay Bukidnon

Ronilo G. Berondo ¹

¹ *Instructor I, Tapaz Satellite College, Fuentes Drive, Roxas City, Capiz, Philippines.*
rberondo94@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aimed to understand the best practices and the cultural tradition of *panubok*, the embroidery tradition original to Panay Bukidnon, and reviving this embroidery tradition in the barangays of Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines. Using the qualitative research design, four (4) informants from Minan, Tapaz, Capiz that are practicing *panubok* were purposively chosen. Fieldwork, observations, key informant interviews, and documentary and photographic analysis were the methods used. Verbatim data transcripts were analyzed using the general inductive approach by Thomas (2006).

The results of the study showed that the respondents see *panubok* as an integral part of their culture and think of it as a source of income for their community. Though researches tell that this cultural practice is facing extinction, there are many ways that these can be promoted more and taught to Panay Bukidnon youth natives to preserve their culture, tradition and identity.

Keywords: Embroidery, Panay Bukidnon, Panubok.

1. INTRODUCTION

Abounds with skilled embroiderer, the embroidery tradition in the Philippines belongs to one of the finest arts in the world. Embroidery is a very remarkable Philippine art and now it has been associated with many other native Philippine products that are being exported to almost all parts of the world (Conde, 2006). For generations, the Panay Bukidnon have mastered the art of embroidery making and one of the prides of these people is the “*Panubok*”, the traditional embroidery of Panay Bukidnon. This beautiful piece features intricate embroidery and a puffed sleeve. “*Panubok*” comes from the archaic word “*tubok*” which is “to embroider” while the Kinaray-a *manugtubok* refers to the “embroiderer.” The panubok motifs represent nature and characters and events from the Sugidanon epic. *Tinubkan* means embroidered (Capiz Tourism and Cultural Affairs, 2019).

Manugtuboks’ draws inspiration of the patterns and designs from the shapes and objects in the environment. The designs and patterns are incorporated on their traditional clothes, on bracelets, and many more. This surviving art has been passed on to many generations and is still being learned by the young of the Panay Bukidnon indigenous people’s community. More than a piece of art, the Panubok denotes the keenness of elders in their surroundings and their ability to develop their creativity that would define the Capisnon culture and the deep-seated connection with the environment (Olapane et al., 2021). What makes the *panubok* so central to the Suludnon is the way it serves as a form of cultural preservation, not just of the weaving arts, but of ancient Visayan lore as well. The many threaded symbols of the *panubok* bring to life the rich history of the *Sugidanon*, or the verbal epic chant. The chanting of the *Sugidanon* would play an important part of many rituals for the Sulod, from marriages, feasts, annual celebrations, or merely as entertainment. The *Sugidanon* is manifested in the *panubok* through embroidered symbols. These symbols, mostly of flora and different creatures, represent the Sulod’s ancient tales and connections with their environment as seen in the *Sugidanon* epics. Other motifs of the *panubok* include the *matang punay*, meaning “eye of the dove.” Punay was believed to be a female deity that protected souls in the afterlife. The *matang punay* is embroidered in geometric patterns, signifying on garments that the wearer is watched over by their ancestors. Other motifs of the *panubok* include the *matang punay*, meaning “eye of the dove.” Punay was believed to be a female deity that protected souls in the afterlife. The *matang punay* is embroidered in geometric patterns, signifying on garments that the wearer is watched over by their ancestors (Gowey, n.d.).

However, according to Rho et al. (2022), the smart textile industry has become increasingly interested in textile products with electronic functions. Madrid (2017) has also stated that the tradition of *panubok* is threatened by the

modernization of textile production, which has led to a decline in the demand for traditional embroidered clothing and textiles. As a result, the number of *panubok* embroiderers has decreased, and younger generations are less interested in learning the art form. In addition, the lack of support and recognition for traditional artisans makes it difficult for them to sustain their livelihoods.

It is the hope of the researcher to acknowledge and to help restore the embroidery tradition of the Panay Bukidnon.

The study generally aims to determine the level of practice of *panubok*, the embroidery tradition of Panay Bukidnon. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

- i. What encouraged the Panay Bukidnon to revive the *panubok* embroidery tradition?
- ii. How does *panubok* gives pride and identity to the Panay Bukidnon community?
- iii. How can the Panay Bukidnons keep the *panubok* tradition and pass it on to the next generation?
- iv. How did the Panay Bukidnon overcome the challenges they faced in the revival of the embroidery tradition?
- v. As Panay Bukidnons, how can they revive the *panubok* embroidery tradition?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study will utilize a qualitative research methodology in determining the needed information regarding the status of the famous embroidery tradition of Panay Bukidnon. Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2020).

Specifically, this study will use the qualitative narrative research design which aimed to explore and conceptualize human experience as it is represented in textual form. Aiming for an in-depth exploration of the meanings people assign to their experiences, a narrative researcher work with small samples of participants to obtain rich and free-ranging discourse. The emphasis is on storied experience. Generally, this takes the form of interviewing people around the topic of interest, but it might also involve the analysis of written documents. The researcher becomes the interpreter of the individual's stories, as opposed to a community.

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to identify four (4) key informants from a specific barangay who made embroidery as their source of living. This sampling technique refers to a type of non-probability sampling where the target participants meet specific practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, availability at the given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the study (Etikan et al., 2016). The selection criteria for the participants were the following: a) have been practicing *panubok* for a minimum of five years, b) native of the locale of the study, and c) made *panubok* as their source of living.

Locale of the Study

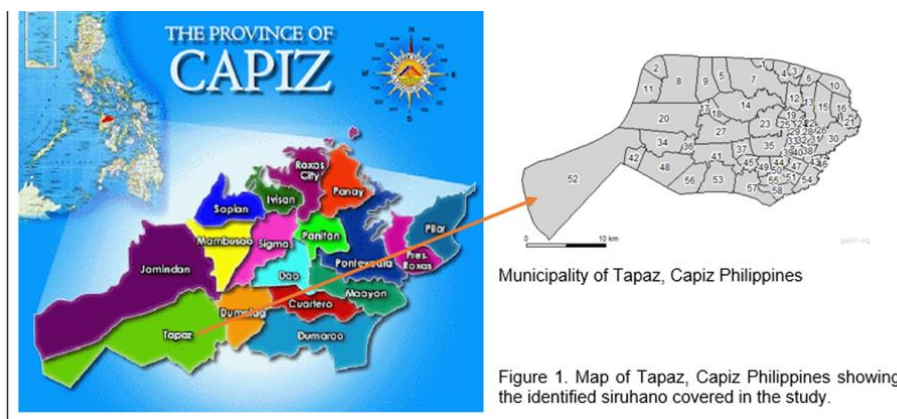


Figure 1. Map of Tapaz, Capiz Philippines showing the identified siruhano covered in the study.

The study was conducted at Minan, Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines. Minan is a [barangay](#) in the municipality of [Tapaz](#), in the province of [Capiz](#). Its population as determined by the 2020 Census was 535. This represented 0.98% of the total

population of Tapaz. Minan is situated at approximately 11.1909, 122.2708, in the island of [Panay](#). Elevation at these coordinates is estimated at 691.2 meters or 2,267.7 feet above mean sea level (PhilAtlas, n.d.).

Data Collection

Fieldwork, observations, key informant interviews, and documentary and photographic analysis were used to gather data. These methods substantiate and triangulate the data elicited from the informants. For ethical considerations, necessary permits and disclosure information were secured from the informants prior to the conduct of the study.

Data Analysis

Data gathered through key informant interviews were transcribed in verbatim. To make sense of the data transcripts, the general inductive approach by Thomas (2006) was used. Emerging concepts were then arranged thematically. This qualitative study utilized thematic analysis to interpret its findings. It focused on the important questions, topics, time periods, and events of the experiences of each individual. Through the process of horizontalization, all statements that were relevant to the participant's experience were listed, and each comment was considered to hold equal value. The findings were then interpreted and categorized accordingly into codes, which were all held verbatim. This was done by going through all interview transcriptions and labeling words, phrases, and sections of text that were related to the research questions of interest. Then, the codes were grouped into themes that aided the authors in answering each research question, enabling the researcher to formulate the essences of the experiences of the participants, both individually and as a whole. All of these were manually done, without the use of any qualitative software tool.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Basic themes from the codes were developed and organized into thirteen (13) categories that eventually led to five (5) themes. The sixteen (16) statements from the four (4) respondents gave way to sixteen (16) codes that were grouped into thirteen (13) categories that were further arranged into five (5) organizing themes paving the way to the central idea of the study which is the reviving of the embroidery tradition of Panay Bukidnon in the barangays of Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines (Table 1).

Table 1. Thematic Analysis of the Study

Statement	Coding	Category	Theme
1. This will help us in the coming days.	Use	Future use	Revival
2. I do not want it to be lost from our culture.	Preserve	Cultural preservation	Revival
3. This will make a profitable source of income.	Income	Entrepreneurship	Revival
4. This reminds me of my family's legacy and it makes me feel one with my mother who taught me how to do <i>panubok</i> .	Legacy	Family remembrance	Revival
5. <i>Panubok</i> is a part of our culture that gives identity to us as Panay Bukidnon.	Identity	Cultural Heritage	Identity
6. Only us Panay Bukidnon knows how to do the <i>panubok</i> .	Forte	Expertise	Identity
7. The popularity of <i>panubok</i> gives way for us to be known to other places.	Famous	Popularity	Identity
8. We are teaching our youth how to do <i>panubok</i> .	Youth	Education	Transference
9. I am training my kids and grandchildren to do <i>panubok</i> so this skill will not be lost from our family.	Skills	Training	Transference

10. In some balay tulun-an, <i>panubok</i> is being taught to interested young people.	Teaching	Peer Teaching	Transference
11. I go weak sometimes but I keep doing <i>panubok</i> because I need a source of income.	Income	Weakness	Challenges
12. I do not want <i>panubok</i> to be lost from our culture as <i>tinubkan</i> so I get inspiration from my fellows.	Culture	Cultural preservation	Challenges
13. I join gatherings of the <i>manugtuboks</i> and be uplifted by their motivation to earn and continue our culture.	Gatherings	Sense of Community	Challenges
14. I gather my children and teach them <i>panubok</i> so it will not be lost from our culture.	Importance	Education	Restoring Embroidery Tradition
15. I keep doing <i>panubok</i> and ask help from our young people to promote it through Facebook and by showcasing it in local events.	Facebook	Promotion	Restoring Embroidery Tradition
16. I will follow what my parents had done and teach my children starting from a young age how to do <i>panubok</i> .	Heirloom	Family remembrance	Restoring Embroidery Tradition

Revival of the *panubok* embroidery tradition

The key informants were all taught at a young age how to do the *panubok* as part of their cultural preservation. One respondent stated that at the age of 8, she was already taught how to do *panubok* as part of their family's routine. Another respondent agreed that at age of 5, she was already practicing *panubok*.

They answered differently when asked what encouraged them in keeping and reviving this dying tradition with one respondent saying that *"I am still doing this panubok practice because this will help us in the coming days and might be a possible source of income."*

This answer is somewhat congruent to the response of another respondent saying that *"Practicing panubok will make a profitable source of income by selling the embroidery to people who love native products."*

Also, one respondent answered that she is reviving the *panubok* tradition because *"I do not want the panubok to be lost from our culture."*

A passionate answer came from the fourth respondent when she said that *"Practicing panubok reminds me of my family's legacy and it makes me feel one with my mother who taught me how to do it and even if she is already dead, I feel her embrace through the clothes with panubok embroidery that she has passed on to me."*

Identity of the Panay Bukidnon through *panubok*

Panubok is the embroidery tradition known to be practiced only by the Panay Bukidnon. When asked about how this tradition gives them pride and identity, the respondents have varied answers.

Two of the respondents agreed that *"panubok is part of our culture that gives us identity. This is something that cannot be taken away from us and when you mention panubok to the outside community, it would mean also the Panay Bukidnon."*

Another respondent answered, *"Yes, I agree. And only us Panay Bukidnon knows how to do the panubok. This tradition is unique to us."*

Lastly, one respondent said that *"The popularity of panubok gives way for us to be known to other places. Sometimes people do not even know about Panay Bukidnon but knows well of the panubok embroidery."*

Transference of the tradition to the younger generation

With the emerging technologies, the practice of the *panubok* is slowly facing extinction. How are the Panay Bukidnon doing measures to avoid that to happen is a must for us to know. When the four key informants were asked about it, they have varied answers as well.

One informant said that *"We are teaching our youth to do the panubok. Many of them are interested so we spend time teaching them how do the basic pattern and let them explore on their own."*

Two of the respondents said almost similarly with great conviction that they are *"training the kids and grandchildren to do panubok so this skill will not be lost from our family. I will not shame come unto us when we attend ceremonies and events with no designs on our clothes as panubok also serve as our accessories in our clothing."*

One respondent mentioned about the use of the *balay tulun-an*. She said that she sometimes volunteers there and *"panubok is being taught to interested young people in balay tulun-an. As they get excited to do patterns and designs and practice the running stitches using various threads, these young people are encouraged to continue the legacy of the Panay Bukidnon through panubok embroidery."*

Surpassing challenges encountered in the revival of the panubok

It is but normal that one faces challenges and struggles as they revive the dying *panubok* embroidery tradition. When asked about it, how these informants face the challenges and surpass them, their verbatim answers follow:

One informant said, *"I go weak sometimes but I keep doing panubok because I need a source of income. I even cannot see clearly now but I still do this because of my family's needs."*

Another informant answered, *"I do not want panubok to be lost from our culture as tinubkan so I get inspiration from my fellows. I gather their advices on what to do and I get inspired from them."*

Two informants chorused, *"I join gatherings of the manugtuboks and be uplifted by their motivation to earn and continue our culture. Truly, panubok is a good source of income as many people have become interested in this art."*

Restoring the embroidery tradition

Lastly, when asked about how they can revive their community's tradition and culture through the *panubok* embroidery, the informants go puzzled but thought of answers to help their dying culture:

The first informant said that *"I gather my children and teach them panubok so it will not be lost from our culture. I even do it everyday and makes sure that they get a job done before allowing them to leave the house."*

Two of them answered that *"I keep doing panubok and ask help from our young people to promote it through Facebook and by showcasing it in local events. The recent Capiztahan is one example and we were able to sell some of our designs and works to locals who have used them for their performance."*

One informant said that *"I will follow what my parents had done and teach my children starting from a young age how to do panubok. I will make sure that the family legacy will continue and the panubok tradition will live on and exist longer than predicted and will fight the challenge of evolution."*

4. DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed to understand the best practices and the cultural tradition of Panubok, the embroidery tradition original to Panay Bukidnon, and reviving this embroidery tradition in the barangays of Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines.

The results of the study showed the need to educate the younger generation of the importance of the cultural tradition of the Panay Bukidnon and how to keep practicing these standards. This challenge is similar to the ones pushed by Olapane et al. (2021) as they said that despite the efforts to revive Panubok, several challenges need to be addressed. One of the main challenges is the lack of awareness and support for traditional artisans, including embroiderers. The lack of market access and recognition for their products also makes it difficult for traditional artisans to sustain their livelihoods. In addition, the younger generation's lack of interest in traditional art forms is a challenge that needs to be addressed.

The identity of Panay Bukidnon is also at risk as *panubok* is slowly facing extinction. It must then be that this embroidery technique be inculcated in the minds of the Panay Bukidnon's youth as this represent their identity as one cultural group. Madrid (2017) has even said that the tradition of Panubok is threatened by the modernization of textile production, which has led to a decline in the demand for traditional embroidered clothing and textiles. As a result, the number of Panubok embroiderers has decreased, and younger generations are less interested in learning the art

form. In addition, the lack of support and recognition for traditional artisans makes it difficult for them to sustain their livelihoods.

Therefore, the measures conducted by the NCCA and several other groups like UNESCO (n.d.) must be supported as these will promote the propagation of this unique embroidery of the natives of Panay. Several efforts have been made to revive the art of Panubok and preserve this cultural heritage. One such effort is the Panubok project, a collaboration between the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and the Philippine Textile Research Institute (PTRI). The project aims to revive the art of Panubok by providing training and support to weavers and embroiderers in the Panay Bukidnon community (Olapane et al., 2021). Another effort to revive Panubok is the establishment of the Panubok sa Panguma (Embroidery in the Farm) program, which is supported by the Department of Agriculture's Sustainable Livelihood Program. The program provides training and livelihood opportunities to Panay Bukidnon women, who are the traditional embroiderers of Panubok (Madrid, 2017).

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of reviving the Panubok embroidery tradition of Panay Bukidnon and the need to preserve this cultural heritage for future generations. Panubok is not only a source of livelihood but also a part of the identity of the Panay Bukidnon people, and the tradition is facing extinction due to the lack of interest and support from the younger generation.

To ensure the continuity of the Panubok embroidery tradition, it is recommended that more efforts be made to promote and preserve this cultural heritage. The younger generation needs to be educated on the importance of Panubok and encouraged to learn the techniques and skills needed to practice this art form. This can be done through school programs, community workshops, and the integration of Panubok in cultural events and festivals. Furthermore, the government and other organizations should provide more support for traditional artisans, including embroiderers, by providing market access, recognition, and opportunities for livelihood.

Finally, it is also essential to innovate and modernize the Panubok tradition while still maintaining its cultural and traditional roots. This can be done through collaborations with designers and artists, creating modern designs while using traditional techniques and materials, and exploring new markets and audiences for Panubok products. With these efforts, the revival of the Panubok embroidery tradition can be achieved, and the cultural heritage of Panay Bukidnon can be preserved and celebrated for generations to come.

6. REFERENCES

- [1] Bhandari, P. (2020, June 19). *What is Qualitative Research? | Methods and Examples*. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research/>
- [2] Capiz Tourism and Cultural Affairs. (2019). *Tanglaw ng Pamana*. <https://www.facebook.com/OfficialPueblodePanay/posts/panubok-from-the-word-tubok-is-the-traditional-embroidery-of-the-panay-bukidnon-/2561081160577406/>
- [3] Conde, J.A. (2006, July 31). *The Fine Art of Embroidery*. Philippine Star. <https://www.philstar.com/cebu-lifestyle/2006/07/31/350340/fine-art-embroidery>
- [4] Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4.
- [5] GOWEY, D. (n.d.). "CHANGE ME TO A CHIEFTAIN": RESISTANCE AND PERSISTENCE IN UPLAND PANAY ISLAND, PHILIPPINES.
- [6] Madrid, R. M. (2017). Ang Sining Ng Panubok Bilang Pagkakakilanlan Ng Pangkat-Etnikong Panay Bukidnon Sa Kanlurang Kabisayaan. *Saliksik E-Journal*, 6(1), 1-1.
- [7] Magos, A. (1996). The Sugidanon of Central Panay. *Edukasyon: Harnessing Indigenous Knowledge for Education*. Quezon City: Education Resource Program
- [8] Olapane, E. C., Ricardo, L. E., & Azuelo, J. M. (2021). Cultural Preservation of Panay Bukidnon-Halawodnons Amidst Emergent Society. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies*, 3(11), 41-56.
- [9] PhilAtlas. (n.d.). *Minan*. <https://www.philatlas.com/visayas/r06/capiz/tapaz/minan.html>
- [10] Rho, S. H., Lee, S., Jeong, W., & Lim, D. Y. (2022). Study of the optimization of embroidery design parameters for the Technical Embroidery Machine: derivation of the correlation between thread consumption and electrical resistance. *Textile Research Journal*, 92(9-10), 1550-1564.

- [11] Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American journal of evaluation*, 27(2), 237-246.
- [12] UNESCO. (n.d.). Panubok embroidery of the Panay Bukidnon. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/panubok-embroidery-of-the-panay-bukidnon-01316>.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15379/ijmst.v10i3.2733>

This is an open access article licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>), which permits unrestricted, non-commercial use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the work is properly cited.