**FROM LOCAL THREADS TO THE FORMATION OF ILOCANO IDENTITY:**

**THE SOCIO-CULTURAL RELEVANCE OF ABEL ILOCOS OF VIGAN CITY**

**ABSTRACT**

This ethnographic study explores the intricate symbolism, socio-cultural significance, and preservation efforts surrounding Panagabel, the traditional loom weaving of Vigan City, Ilocos Sur. Through participant observation and in-depth interviews with local Ilocano Abel weavers, this study documents the rich narratives embedded within diverse Abel patterns, including karantiris, binakul, tanap abel, and abel-a-sumileng. These patterns, prevalent in Vigan and surrounding areas, serve as tangible expressions of Ilocano beliefs, cultural history, and communal identity. The study reveals a critical challenge in the transmission of Panagabel techniques, highlighting the potential loss of traditional knowledge. Furthermore, it demonstrates the profound connection between this craft and the Ilocano socio-cultural identity, reflecting core values such as kinakired (strength), kinagaget (industry), kinalaing (skill), and kinakermet (thrift). The research underscores the vital role of collaborative initiatives between weavers and local government in ensuring the sustainable preservation of this cultural heritage. Ultimately, this study advocates for a culturally sensitive approach to preserving Abel weaving in Vigan, emphasizing the need to empower traditional weavers economically while safeguarding the craft's authenticity and intrinsic cultural value.

Keywords: *panagabel, traditional loom weaving, Vigan Abel Iloco, socio-cultural identity, symbolism, weaving patterns*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Traditional fabrics represent a rich tapestry of cultural heritage, with each region of the world boasting unique textiles and techniques. Philippine traditional weaving, using local cotton, abaca, fibers, and pineapples, showcases both the environment and culture of the Filipino people. Ancestral beliefs have made this craft central to each region's cultural identity (Cayabyab & Queddeng, 2024). In the northern region of the Philippines, Abel Iloko, a traditional woven product, is traditionally crafted through preparing the cotton – from picking the Kapas-Sanglay or the cotton, removing seeds, pounding or beating, twisting using a spindle, and winding the cotton yarn into the skeiner–, preparing the parts of Pilar/Pagabelan or the loom, and yarn warping to the process of knitting by interlacing two sets of threads on a loom or the Panagabel itself (Bellen, 2017). The complex weaving process, utilizing traditional wooden looms and intricate design patterns, reflects the complex yet rich artistic heritage of the Ilocano people.

The Abel weaving tradition, deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Vigan and the Ilocos region, is an evidence of their resourcefulness and creativity and stands as a testament to the enduring craftsmanship of the Ilocano people. While 'Panagabel' broadly refers to traditional loom weaving across the Ilocos region, with the distinct patterns of Abel Ilocos in Vigan City and its neighboring towns, Vigan City's Abel Ilocos highlight a distinct expression of Ilocano identity.

While traditional Abel Ilocos from Vigan City, influenced by shared history, displayed patterns akin to those of the Cordillera region and northwestern Luzon such as the Binakol/Binakael of Ilocos Norte and Abra and the Ikat of Ifugao (Sustainability Solutions Exchange, 2022), modern Vigan Abel prioritizes vibrant colors and varying silver linings, often minimizing traditional patterns. This shift, driven by contemporary trends and the need for cultural survival, exemplifies the community's culture of resilience (Morris & Kadetz, 2018).

Deeply embedded within Ilocano culture and history, Abel fabric transcends its material form; it is a tangible thread connecting generations to their history, a vibrant expression of community identity, and a profound symbol of Ilocano resilience and spirit (Calumag & Tagata, 2024).

Beyond its cultural significance, Panagabel in Vigan City remains socially relevant today. Abel weavers actively engage with contemporary trends to ensure the craft's continued viability (Ali, 2024). This research, therefore, examines the socio-cultural relevance of Abel Ilocos to Ilocano identity formation, employing a purposive sampling of Vigan City weavers. The study utilized direct engagement with these weavers to understand their customary knowledge and socio-cultural value responses regarding the formation of Ilocano culture through the Abel Ilocos of Vigan City.

This research delves into the multifaceted socio-cultural relevance of Abel Ilocos of Vigan City, analyzing its visual patterns as reflections of Ilocano life, its contribution to Ilocano socio-cultural identity, and the role of local government in preserving this identity.

This paper therefore sought answers for the following questions:

1. What meanings are associated with the visual patterns in the Abel Vigan?
2. How do Abel weavers of Vigan perceive the relationship between their craft and their Ilocano socio-cultural identity?
3. What support is extended by the local government of Vigan in the preservation of the socio-cultural identity of its people through the abel weaving?

**METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized ethnographic research to explore and document the narratives surrounding Panagabel (traditional loom weaving) in Vigan City, Ilocos Sur. By immersing the researcher within the community and gathering detailed accounts of participants’ experiences, this method provided a rich understanding of these cultural practices (Creswell et al., 2017). The researcher immersed in the communities, gathering data through participant observation, field notes, and structured interviews. Five (5) experienced abel weavers and two (2) weavers-turned-entrepreneurs in Camangaan, Vigan City, were selected through purposive sampling based on their expertise in traditional loom weaving (Panagabel). This method, which targets participants with specific expertise (Bisht, 2024), ensured the inclusion of individuals with substantial knowledge and experience of traditional loom weaving.

Interviews, conducted in Iloko, were transcribed verbatim and subsequently translated into English to facilitate the thematic analysis. Following the framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), the analysis aimed to identify, analyze, and report recurring patterns (themes) within the data, thereby providing a rich understanding of the abel weaving experience. The themes were categorized as: symbolism of Abel Vigan patterns, socio-cultural identity of Ilocanos, and cultural preservation of Abel Vigan. Furthermore, this research adhered to stringent ethical considerations, ensuring informed consent and maintaining participant confidentiality in accordance with established research ethics guidelines.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents and interprets the collected data, organized around the identified themes: symbolism of Abel Vigan patterns, socio-cultural identity of Ilocanos, and cultural preservation of Abel Vigan.

The first theme, symbolism of abel Vigan patterns, explores the inherent meanings and cultural representations embedded within the designs and motifs of traditional abel fabrics, as articulated by the loom weavers, thus into the symbolic language of the textiles, revealing the stories and cultural values woven into each piece. The second theme, the socio-cultural identity of Ilocanos, examines how abel weaving, from the weavers' perspectives, contributes to and reflects the social and cultural identity of the Ilocano people. This theme investigates the craft's role in reinforcing community bonds, transmitting cultural knowledge, and expressing regional identity. Finally, cultural preservation of abel Vigan addresses the ongoing efforts to sustain and protect traditional abel weaving practices amidst modernization and evolving social landscapes. This theme analyzes the strategies and initiatives implemented to ensure its continued transmission and relevance within evolving contexts.

**Symbolism of Abel Vigan Patterns.** Inabel weaving in the Ilocos region displays variations in designs, often influenced by the geographic location of the weavers and patterns of neighboring places. This reflects the rich tapestry of local traditions and the subtle differences that emerge within a broader cultural practice. These patterns are not merely intended for aesthetic or decorative purposes; they often carry cultural narratives, historical references, and even spiritual significance (Tagata & Calumag, 2024). Furthermore, these textile signs or symbols are portrayed realistically (representatively) or in an abstract (simplified) style (Williams, 2000), and specific patterns carry symbolic meanings unique to a particular locality, representing local stories, beliefs, or natural features (Cayabyab & Queddeng, 2024).

A respondent shared his perspective regarding the symbols used in the abel products of Vigan:

Ado iti nadumaduma a disensyo a maararamid [dituy Ilocos]. Adda iti Tinumballitian idiay Santa [Ilocos Sur], Sinubur idiay Tagudin [Ilocos Sur], Pinilian diay Santiago, Abel Ules diay Bangar [La Union], ken Binakul idiay Ilocos Norte. Dituy Camanggaan [Vigan City], adda iti naisangsangayan a disensyo. Kadagituy a disdisenyo iti nadumaduma nga abel ket naipuon da kadagiti lugar a nakaaramidan ken tay pammati a taktakderan tay agababel. (There are a lot of patterns and designs used in Ilocos, including the Tinumballitian in Santa, Sinubur in Taguidin, Pinilian in Santiago, Ilocos Sur, as well as Abel Ules in La Union and Binakul in Ilocos Norte. Here in Camanggaan, Vigan City, we also have our own design. And these patterns are rooted in the location of the weavers themselves and the beliefs they hold.)

In Vigan City, there are different patterns weaved by abel weavers. These patterns include Binakul, similar to the Binakul of Ilocos Norte, which are blankets with geometric patterns of gradated squares and rectangles of positive and negative hues. There is also Kantarinis, an abel pattern using stripes and plaids. Savellano (2010) documents the rich historical tapestry of patterns in Ilocos Sur's Abel weaving, especially in Vigan City. Unfortunately, the transmission of these intricate techniques to younger weavers was incomplete, resulting in a significant loss of traditional knowledge.

In connection, a respondent shared his thoughts:

Dituy ayan tayo, manmanon iti agararamid iti inabel a addaan iti narikut a disenyo. Ngem dagiti immununa kinyami nga nagababel, adado ti sabasali nga disenyo a maararamat da. Adda iti makunkuna nga Binakul a kapada metlaeng iti Binakul idiay Ilocos Norte – nu kitkitam daytoy, kasla isuna bumukelbukel a mangulaw. Iti ibagbaga dagiti babbaket, naaramat daytoy tapnu ulawen na dagiti madi nga karkararwa tapnon iti kasta, umadayo da. Adda pai tay kunkuna tayo nga Kantarinis, iti disensyo na daytoy ket kasla napagiinnabay a linya ken addaan iti naakaba a puraw iti duwwa nga igid na. Dagiti nagkakauna [nga agababel], maaramat da pay iti agiburda iti nagan idiay Panagabel. Ngem itattan, dagiti laeng nakurapay a disensyon iti maararamid gapwanan ta haan amin kinyami ket nasursuro na iti pinagaramid ti naririkot a disensyo – adayo a narigrigat gamin didiay ken adda pay iti sabali [partes iti Pilar] nga masapol a makuti. Iti agdama a maararamat a disenyo ket daytoy kunkuna tayo tanap ken dagitoy addaan iti panait a sumilengsileng. Ken kastamet dagituy maiparparabaw iti lamisaan ta isu iti birbiruken iti tattao, aglalo kadagiti turista. (In our locality, there are only very few who weave Abel with intricate patterns, but before, alot of our predecessors in this Abel culture crafted various intricate designs and patterns, including the Binakul pattern that is similar to the Binakul in Ilocos Norte. This pattern creates a dizzying optical illusion of waves or circles and it was used in blankets to confuse and ward off evil spirits. There are also patterns such as kantarinis, utilizing color stripes with a notable wide white area on both sides. Some of our predecessors also were capable of embroidering names through a certain Abel weaving technique. However, today, we only weave plain to minimal patterned Abel because the technique wasn't passed down due to its complex and intricate nature; no one was ever able to master it just like before. Today, the only surviving common patterns are the plain, silver-threaded, and minimal patterned Abel, which are popular to tourists.)

Due to variations in patterns and motifs, each locality also possesses unique patterns with its own symbolic significance. The composition and aesthetic of clothing—specifically the materials, designs, embroidery, and color palettes—are deeply significant within groups, symbolizing their core beliefs and ritualistic traditions (Malbog, 2018).

A respondent further shared:

Nu kitkitaen tayo, kaspangarigan kuma dagituy disensyo a Sinubur, mabalin tayo nga ibilang a kas mangitaktakder iti pammati dagiti Ilokano, lalo dagiti adda sadiay ngato. Sinubur kuna tayo tay abel a kasla ules para dagiti minatay. Addamet dagiti tanap a maris puraw ken asul a mabalin nga mangitaktakder iti pammati kenni Apo Caridad. Addamet dagidiay maradaga a maris, isu dagituy iti ususaren da nu adda iti Binatbatan [festival], ipakpakita na iti gameng iti Panagabel a manipud pinagala iti kapas-sanglay inggana makabukel iti abel. Kasla taktakderanna iti kulay iti daga a nangpadakel ken nangbiag ti tatao. (When we look at it, these patterns reflect the beliefs of people, such as the Sinubor patterns, which reflect the burial culture as it was intended for burial blankets for Upland Ilocanos. White and blue colors also signify adoration to the Virgin Mary. There are also brown-colored Abel, which was used during the Binatbatan Festival, representing both the process of weaving Abel from picking Kapasanglay (the used cotton) to the final product itself and the connection of people to the environment that helps them thrive.)

Traditional fabrics are also associated with ceremonial events and are symbol of new beginnings, especially in the context of Ilocano weddings; thus making them essential, in the context of a young couple building their own family, as a practical and a symbolic blessing for warmth, comfort, and hospitality (Marchese, 2005). In Vigan City, tanap-nga-abel or plain Abel are commonly in the form of hand towels, pillow cases, curtains, and blankets and bed covers, which are usually gifted to newly wedded couples (Amistad & Azares, 1998), and over time, it became a representation of the collective blessing and support of the community for the couple’s continued happiness and prosperity (De Marco, 2023).

Furthermore, a respondent shared the following:

Adda pay dagiti tanap nga abel a mabalin makita iti nadumaduma a maris. Dagitoy ket abel nga maususar a kas ules, supot iti pungan, ken kurtina ket kinanayon a maiplasplastar iti uneg iti balay. Dagitoy dagidiay nalalag-an a klase iti abel; haan unay na puskol ngem haanmet a naingpis, ken dagitoy ket awan iti silengsileng na. Dagituy dagiti praktikal a mabalin usaren iti inaldaw, lalo idi nagkauna. Idi nagbaliw bassit iti panawen, nagbalin daytoy a pangregalo –aglalo dagiti puraw a klase– para dagiti agkasar. Isu nga nu mapan ka ag damag iti Abel nga ules, damagen dan dagus nu kaano iti kasar tapnu maiburdan tay nagan iti agkasar idiay rabaw iti abel a gatangem. Nabayag idi ingana tatta, kastuy iti kangrunaan nga itited iti bisbisita nu mapan da makikasar. Isu payen siguro iti maarpat a gapwanan nu apai nga daytoy kakastuy a klase iti abel iti mangitaktakder wenno mangibabaet iti nakurapay ngem natibker a pinagayat ken panagsuporta iti masakbayan iti mesa nga tao yenti pagayam na nga agkasar. (Plain Abel, available in various colors, such as blankets, pillow cases, and curtains, are commonly used in households. These plain Abels are lightweight –not too thick, not too thin Abel-woven textiles, and don't have silver threads. These Abel fabrics are woven for daily practical use, especially in the past, and the white-colored ones eventually became a staple gift in weddings. This is why, when you purchase this type of Abel, they typically ask when the wedding will be held, as they will embroid the couple's names onto the fabric. Due to this long-standing gift-giving tradition at weddings, these plain, lightweight Abels have become symbols of simple yet strong support and good wishes for the newlyweds.)

Cordwell and Schwarz (2011) emphasized that the symbolic meaning of motifs are dynamic and more than just aesthetics; it highlights the role of time, social, and cultural entities and their relationship to one another that serves as a universal language, thus conveying narratives. Textiles, through their intricate patterns, styles, and usage, articulate a universal language of storytelling, symbolism, and cultural expression. Regional textiles provide a lens through which we can understand the values, beliefs, and lived realities of their originating communities. Beyond mere functionality or artistic display, these patterns weave narratives that transcend time.

**The Socio-cultural Identity of Ilocanos** **Reflected through the Abel Vigan**. The Inabel craft molds the socio-cultural identity of Ilocanos as it reinforces community bonds, transmits cultural knowledge across generations, and serves as a marker of regional identity. Inabel weaving is often a communal activity, from gathering of Kapas-sanglay or the raw materials to the weaving process itself, it fosters collaboration and strengthens social ties. The communal work of Panagabel, opens the concept of close-knit social networks as it also reinforces the importance of kinship ties in Ilocano culture (Bautista et.al., 2020). This active participation in shared responsibility cultivates a robust collective identity, binding the community together (Procentese, Gatti, & Falanga, 2019). The transmission of skills and knowledge not only cultivates a profound sense of belonging but also serves as a vital conduit for the intergenerational transfer of cultural knowledge, thereby significantly strengthening the Ilocano sense of community.

A respondent shared the following perspective:

Iti panagabel ket narikot ken ado iti gameng na, lalo nu sikayo palaeng iti agaramid dagiti panpanait a mausar. Manipud pinagpuros iti kapas, pinagaramid iti panait, pinagarmidor ken pinagmaris, pinagubon ti panait, pinaggur-un, pinagmoton, pinagpasalaysay, ingana tay pinagaramid tay abel idiay pilar, masapol iti ado a pinagtitinulong. Lalaki, babai, ubbing –amin ket tumulong. Nakabingaybingay iti gameng iti maysa ken maysa manipud panagrugi inggana malpas. Isu daytoy panagabel a makunkuna ket gameng iti amin, haan nga tay mangmanmandar laeng tay pilar wenno tay pagabelan. Kas kunak itay, pati dagiti ubbing ket tumulong da –isu masursurwanda iti kinapuon ken gameng iti Panagabel. Daytuy payen iti mangtulong nga mangpaawat kiniada nu anya ti kayat na sawen iti kina-ilokano tayo. (The process of Panagabel is meticulous and complex, particularly when producing your own threads. It involves cotton picking, cotton rolling to create thread, starching and dyeing, thread insertion into the gur-on, batido, moton/bitin, pasalaysay, and finally, the weaving of the Panagabel itself. Men, women, and children participate in this process, each with distinct roles and tasks. This is why Panagabel requires the effort of everyone involved, not just the weaver. Significantly, the inclusion of children in this practice serves as a vital educational tool, enabling them to acquire cultural knowledge and solidify their sense of Ilocano identity.)

Furthermore, the meticulous and time-honored process of panagabel (Santiago, 2015) —requiring immense patience, honed skill, and unwavering dedication—serves as a tangible embodiment of traditional Ilocano values. Legarda (2014) emphasizes that panagabel is not merely the creation of cloth but a living testament to the Ilocano spirit of hard work, perseverance, and exceptional craftsmanship, reflecting the enduring resilience of the Ilocano people. The demanding time investment and intensive human labor of panagabel embody the enduring Ilocano spirit, a testament to their deep-seated patience in familial provision (Tobias, 2012).

A respondent shared the following perspective:

Iti panagabel, kas kunak itay, ado iti masapol mo nga ubraen sakbay mo makita iti pinal a maubraam. Isu a masapol iti atiddug a pagpaspasensya. Nu pay maminsan ka laeng nga agkamali, mabalin a haan mabukel wenno haan nga agbalin tay araramatem nga abel. Iti gamin kapadasak a kas agababel, sobra unay iti rigat na lalo nu sika paylaeng iti mangaramid tay usarem a panpanait. Dayta iti gapwanan na nu apay nga adon iti agababel dituy nga agangangkat iti panpanaiten. Ngem uray man pay nu gatangendan iti panait, tay pinagsuksuksok iti panpanait idiay parpartes iti pagabelan ken tay pinagmandar iti pilar na ket narigaten. Isu para kinyak, ipakpakita na iti kinaanos tayo [nga ilokano] tapnu lang makasapol para iti pampamilya tayo. Gapwanan ta sipud idi, panagabelen iti mangbibiag ti pamiliamin. (When you weave, there are many steps involved, from preparing for the Panagabel itself to creating the final product. This requires immense patience. If you make a mistake, there's a high chance that the Abel won't be of good quality. Based on my years of experience with Panagabel, weaving this craft is extremely challenging, especially when you produce your own threads. This is why many weavers purchase their threads instead. However, even when purchasing threads to simplify the process, threading each hole on the Pilar or the wooden instruments, remains difficult, as you must insert them thread by thread, up to the completion of the Panagabel itself. For me, this demonstrates the patience of Ilocanos in providing for their families, as this craft has supported our daily living for generations.)

The process of abel weaving embodies core Ilocano values such as kinakired (strength), kinagaget (industry), kinalaing (skill), and kinakermet (thrift) –making it abel a preserver of values. These values are woven into the fabric of the Ilocano community, and by practicing the craft, they reinforce them.

A respondent shared her experiences by saying:

Nu iti maysa a tao ket agabel, maspol na iti kinagaget ken kinariked gapwananta narigat, narikot, ken nabannog iti panagaramid iti Abel. Manipud pingubon iti panpanait kada pinagsalsalaysay, ingana panagpedal tapnu gumanat tay pilar, lalo a narigrigat manen nu sika iti mangbukel tay panait nga usarem. Masapol pay nga ururnusem a nasayaat dagiti materiales ken iti panagabel mo, gapwananna ta nu agkamali kan, mabalin nga aramatem manen tay kabukelan iti proseso wenno makaramid ka man iti abel ngem haan a mayat iti gameng na. Gapwanan ta kastuy karikot iti panagabel, masapolmo pay iti agkirmet iti kwarta nu nailakon tay nalpas nga ababel. Haan tay pidpiduten iti kwarta ken maysa, nakarikrikot iti agabel ken aglalo ta manmanon iti gumatgatangen [iti abel] –haan a kasla idin. (If one weaves Abel, they must understand hard work and perseverance, as the process is meticulous and tiring, from threading and positioning the yarn to operating the loom's pedals – especially challenging when creating the thread oneself. Abel weaving also demands specialized skills to produce a quality product; a single mistake can necessitate starting over or result in an inferior piece. Given the complexity of the craft, it's crucial to value the money earned from selling the woven Abel. We don't find money on the streets, so we need to appreciate our hard-earned income, particularly now that there are fewer Abel consumers compared to the past.)

Abel weaving is a fundamental pillar of the Ilocano identity. It is both a cultural anchor and a cultural identifier. Abel is a tangible link to Ilocanos’ ancestors, a way to keep their stories and traditions alive through the patterns weaved and techniques used; they all carry the weight of history. Furthermore, Cayabyab and Queddeng (2024) emphasize that Inabel textiles are used in significant life events, from weddings to funerals, marking important milestones in ilocano people’s lives. They are a visible symbol of our Ilocano identity, distinguishing them from other groups.

In connection to this, a respondent shared his experience:

Dagiti abel tayo ket kasla isuna iti literal a koneksyon tayo ken kadagiti imununa kadatayon. Iti abel ket gameng iti amin -lalaki, babai, lakay, baket, ubbing –ket agtultuloy daytuy nanipud idi ingana ita nga agdama. Idi ubbing kami, nakasursuro kami gapo kadagiti imununan a babbaket. Manipod addaan kamin iti puot, kastuyen iti pagubraanmi ingana itatta sikami metten iti bumaket. Itattan ket maipaspasami metten kadagiti naububing kanyami dagitoy ririt iti panagabel. Dagituy nadumaduma nga abel ket itaktakderna pay dagiti nadumaduma a paspasamak, pagsasao, kada kinanakem. Naglabas man iti panawen, malaglagip mi latta dagitoy. Kasla kuma tay mesa a klase iti panagabel; tay makunkuna nga Ingkamen. Kunada, Ingkamen kano iti naimatang a naganna gapwananta kasla agassawa nga agtiptipon dayti maararamat a disenyo gapo iti panaginkamen tay panpanait. Isu iti gapwananna nu apay nga ingkamen nga abel iti maysa pay a iregaluda kadagiti agkasar. Makita dagitoy nga abel kadagiti nadumaduma a pasadas tayo iti biag, idi ubbing datao ket abel a nalalamuyot iti kaadwanan a maususar a paglampin iti ubbing, maususarpay a pagbadoda iti bunyag kada isu amin. Adda pay tay ules nga ipabpabalon kadagiti pimmusayen nu maudi nga walo nan sadiay pagtabunan. (These Abel fabrics are our literal connection between us and those before us. Panagabel is a collective task involving men, women, and children, ensuring the continuous knowldegde of the craft. When we were children, we learned from the elders. This is why we grew up with this livelihood, and now that we are the elders, we try to pass it down to younger weavers. These Abel fabrics also hold stories, such as how Ingkamen—a technique used in Panagabel—is said to have gotten its name from a couple embracing since the technique involves two sets of intertwined threads that creates a distinct embracing pattern, making it a good gift for weddings. We can also see these types of Abel used in different occasions of life, such as lampin for infants and attire for christenings. There is also the Abel given to the deceased during their burial blessing.)

Gordon (2010) emphasized that traditional textiles have functioned as an integral component of cultures for millennia, serving as markers of identity, culture, and ethnic affiliation. Cultural textiles persist as significant expressions of communal pride. Malingan (2024) also supports that across various communities, textiles have served as vehicles for the communication of stories, values, and belief systems, conveyed through intricate patterns, motifs, and even the technique itself.

**Cultural Preservation of Abel Vigan.** Abel Vigan is the living embodiment of an undying cultural spirit. Active preservation of this heritage necessitates a comprehensive strategy. By integrating local government-led tourism with innovative, culturally sensitive practices, this strategy ensures the sustainable preservation and advancement of the craft and the culture behind it.

The local government unit of Vigan, as well as the support of the Ilocos Sur Provincial Government, initiates various festivities such as the Longganisa Festival every January, Binatbatan Festival of the Arts in May, and the Provincial Kannawidan Festival in February (Chan, 2020). These initiatives provide avenues for weavers to market their Inabel textiles to tourists, thereby enhancing their economic competitiveness and enabling weavers to benefit financially from the festivities (Malbog, 2018). Furthermore, these tourism-focused initiatives facilitate the showcasing of weavers' artistry through the attire of participants in various cultural contests, such as street dancing during the festival (Icalla, 2024). These cultural performances often depict traditional crafts and their production processes, including Panagabel. In this manner, the Panagabel culture is disseminated and promoted to both younger generations and non-Ilocano visitors attending the festivities. The government-sponsored Ilocos Sur Festival, formerly known as Kannawidan Festival, also specifically highlighted the artistry and craftsmanship of Panagabel –from its technical designs and layouts to the various cultural events during the month-long festival (Provincial Government of Ilocos Sur, 2023).

A respondent shared the following perspective:

Tapnu agtultuloy a maipakpakaammo [iti kultura ti panagabel], maararamat dagituy nadumaduma a fiesfiesta. Adda iti Kannawidan, Binatbatan, ken Longanisa festival. Kadagituy a panawen [iti pinag fi-fiesta], kapigsana iti abel gapwananta isu iti maususar a pagbado wenno pagdekorar iti gameng dagiti makisalsali iti sala ken dagiti nadumaduma pay nga pakisalyan. Manipud idi addan iti Kannawidan Festival inggana nagbalin nga Ilocos Sur Festival, ipatpateg iti gobyernon iti panangi-amammo, panangtan-ok, ken panangpreserba daytoy kultura iti panagabel. (In order to promote and preserve the craft, festivals such as Kannawidan, Binatbatan, and Longanisa, are organized and celebrated to showcase the artistry and culture behind Abel Iloco. During these celebrations, there is a high demand for Abel fabrics, since they are used in the attires and general aesthetics of various cultural contests. Since the formation of the Kannawidan Festival, which eventually became the Ilocos Sur Festival, the local government has placed a significant emphasis on the promotion, celebration, and preservation of this weaving craft.)

Furthermore, Malbog (2018), in her study “Abel: The Ilocano Weaving Industry Amidst Globalization,” emphasized that innovation amid the changing economic and social landscape is crucial for this industry to survive. The study further emphasized that the integration of technologies in Abel weaving challenges the authenticity of the craft; hence, the integration of traditionally woven Abel into daily clothes and other modern clothing—such as uniforms, as mandated by RA 9242, or the Act Prescribing the Use of the Philippine Tropical Fabrics for Uniforms of Public Officials and Employees—- are seen as vitak steps in abel innovation and preservation. New innovative approaches, through the help of the Department of Science and Technology - Philippine Textile Research Institute, such as the development of various products using Inabel fabrics (e.g., face masks, bags, and household aesthetics), also enable weavers to preserve and continue the craft (Ali, 2024).

According to one respondent:

Tatta agbaliwbaliw iti panawen, adda iti tsempo a marigatan nga sumabay iti abel kadagiti baro a klase iti teltela. Agbaliw pay iti kayat ti tao ken mesa, bumaba iti malakwanmi gapwananta adayo a nanginngina iti abel nu ikumparam kadagituy baro a tela nga inararamid iti makina. Nu agusar kami iti makina, kasla mapukaw dayti usto a tradisyon iti panagabel. Pagyamananmi nga adda latta dagiti patron a gumatgatang kadagiti aramidmi. Kasla kuma kadagiti agipipan iti Abel sadiay kabarwanan a badbado. Dagiti dadduma nga opisyal ket maaramatda nga ipan daytoy a klase iti tela sadiay yuniporme nga usarenda, ngem narigat latta gapwanan ta haan nga inaldaw addaan iti gumatang iti abel. Ti pagsaysayaatanna, adda dagiti nalalaing a kakadwa ta makaaramidda iti baro a pakausaran iti nanumo nga abel. Kaskapangarigan idi pandemya, adda iti aggatang kadagiti face mask nga abel. Iti gobyerno tayo ket ayayaban dakami a makidangdanggay tapnu makaited da iti baro a kapanunutan tapnu haan kami maibati itatta nga agbaliwbaliw iti panawen. (With the numerous changes occurring, the Abel industry is often challenged by current trends. There are also shifts in consumer preferences, and we experience minimal or no income due to these trends, which favor economically cheaper alternatives to Inabel. We are hesitant to adopt technology-based weaving due to concerns about the Abel's authenticity. However, we are grateful for those who continue to appreciate Abel fabrics, incorporating them into their daily attire and the civilian government officials who include Abel in their uniforms. Although some people patronize Abel, their purchases are not frequent, posing an economic challenge for us. Fortunately, there are individuals who creatively innovate various products using Abel fabrics, such as face masks during the pandemic. The local government also assists us in innovating Abel products through sponsored seminars and workshops, enabling us to remain relevant and resilient amidst these changing landscapes.)

The Department of Trade and Industry emphasizes that the government-sponsored OTOP (One-Town-One-Product) initiative is a priority stimulus program for Micro, Small, and Medium-scale Enterprises (MSMEs), serving as the government’s customized intervention to drive inclusive local economic growth. Consequently, this initiative provides assistance to Abel Vigan weavers, strengthening their economic viability (Ramo, 2007). This ensures that weaving remains a profitable livelihood, encouraging younger generations to continue the tradition (Calumag & Tagata, 2024). Furthermore, ability but also ensuringAmbroza (2024) suggests that trade fairs provide a platform to showcase their products to a wider audience, including national and international buyers, facilitating direct connections between weavers and potential customers and leading to increased sales and market access.

As respondents stated:

Nu dadduma, ayayaban dakami [nga agababel] sadiay sentro tapnu makipaset kadagiti nadumaduma a programa tapnun ti kasta, maipakita ken maitan-ok dagiti aramidmi. Kasla kuma idi naudi a Kannawidan, ado kanyami iti napan nagiplastar iti laklako ken aramidna [sadiay ili] iti mano nga aldaw. Adda iti aldaw pay a mapaspasamak dagiti ibagbaga tayo nga one-town-one-product, mapmapan kami makipaset tapnun mapalawa daytoy panaglakomi. Narigat gamin nu dituy kami laeng, masapolmi nga i-amammo dagitoy aramid ken laklakomi ken tapnu payen maiamammo iti kultura iti panagabel. (We occasionally participate in city-center trade fairs and product showcases. For example, during the recent Kannawidan festival, we displayed our crafts for several days. We also participate in One-Town-One-Product events to expand our business. Remaining passive would be detrimental; therefore, we actively seek product exposure to expand our market and endeavor to reintroduce the culture of Panagabel.)

These initiatives generate a profound and lasting impact on the livelihood of Abel weavers, providing not only economic stability but also ensuring the enduring preservation of the intricate craft, the rich artistry, and the deeply rooted cultural heritage embodied within the Panagabel tradition (Tagata & Calumag, 2024).

By investing in targeted programs, the government can secure the enduring legacy of panagabel, preserving not only the craft itself but also the vital cultural values and historical context that are deeply woven into its fabric, thereby minimizing the possibility of its cultural significance fading from memory.

**Conclusions**

Abel Vigan is more than just for aesthetics; it serves as a powerful visual narrative, reflecting Ilocano beliefs, history, and socio-cultural practices. These patterns, varying across localities, convey unique symbolic meanings, connecting the present generation to their ancestral roots and cultural values. Moreover, the Abel weavers themselves perceive their craft as a vital component of their Ilocano identity, reinforcing community bonds, transmitting cultural knowledge, and embodying core Ilocano values such as strength, industry, skill, and thrift. The communal nature of the weaving process further strengthens social ties and fosters a sense of collective identity.

Furthermore, the local government of Vigan plays a crucial role in preserving this cultural heritage through initiatives such as festivals, trade fairs, and support for innovation. These efforts not only provide economic opportunities for the weavers but also ensure the continued transmission of the Abel weaving tradition to future generations. By actively promoting and showcasing Abel Vigan, the government is safeguarding a significant aspect of Ilocano identity and ensuring its enduring relevance in the face of modernization.

Abel Vigan transcends its function as mere textile; it is a living embodiment of Ilocano identity, a tangible link to the past, and a dynamic expression of cultural resilience. Collaborative efforts between weavers and the local government are essential for the continued innovative thriving of this rich cultural heritage, ensuring the preservation of Ilocano identity for generations and the economic viability of traditional weaving while maintaining its authentic cultural expression.

**RECOMMENDATION**

This research highlights the critical need for a multifaceted strategy to ensure the continued vitality of Abel weaving. Firstly, it is essential to foster mentorship programs and implement educational initiatives within communities, thereby counteracting the potential loss of cultural knowledge. Secondly, the industry must pursue strategic market diversification by exploring innovative applications for Abel textiles across diverse sectors. Finally, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and the Philippine Textile Research Institute (PTRI) must foster a climate of design innovation and product development while simultaneously safeguarding traditional weaving techniques.

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