

# Unveiling the indigenous art and craft of *bakat* and its economic significations

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to unveil the intricacies of *bakat* art of weaving; its origin; processes; uses; primary materials and principles used; the profile of the weavers; and its economic significations in the system of production and trade.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study used a descriptive–qualitative design with 35 key informants using narrative analysis. The unstructured questions listed in the interview guide were used during the interview. Responses were recorded using an audio–video recorder. Coding sheets were used in the actual transcription of data.

**Findings** – The results showed dependency on the *bakat* art of weaving with the available resources found in the environment. Its economic significations showed a sustainable impact on the weavers' life. The *bakat* art of weaving represented the values of resiliency to hardships, adaptability to changes, passion to craftsmanship, sense of community and family centeredness. Aspiring craftsmen and artists may enhance continuously their craftsmanship for sustainable development with government support through the creation of the School of Living Traditions.

**Research limitations/implications** – The study was limited to *bakat* art of weaving based on the responses of the key informants that were subjected to a point of saturation without sacrificing robustness, brevity, credibility and dependability.

**Practical implications** – Though the economic side of *bakat* art of weaving is sustainable within the village, it can create a powerful branding for cultural recognition that would transform the town of Barili into a creative weaving hub in Cebu. This creates the balance of the historical significance of *bakat* art of weaving and the tourism sector in promoting sustainable development.

**Social implications** – *Bakat* art rekindled the spirit of consciousness among the majority of the Cebuano public for preservation and promotion.

**Originality/value** – The study is original because this has not been published.

**Keywords** Education, Sustainability, Preservation, Rural cultural heritage, Arts and crafts, Shared heritage

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

The culture of farming traces the beginning of world civilization when nomads learn to plant, harvest their crops and create settlements. The use of basket serves as a solution on how to carry their harvest from farm to market using the environment's available resources. Baskets become the most common carriers use for storage or transportation of farm yields. Lee (1948) claimed that basketry had been traced back since time immemorial. According to Meilach (1974), "Basket making is one of the oldest universal crafts of primitive men" that is evident to numerous baskets seen throughout the world for thousands of years. All great civilizations



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like the Ancient Romans and Egyptians utilized baskets in their religious and daily activities (Philippine Basketry Collection, 2017). In the Americas, the Inuit of the North, the Wampanoag of the East, and the nations of South America use watertight baskets to hold water. As mentioned in the Bible, baskets commonly store the fruits for a sacrificial offering to God. These accounts are similar in some places in the Philippines regarding its uses.

In Cebu City's public markets, trucks loaded with baskets filled and stacked with farm produce, before lifting these inside the stores or in the warehouse is one of the market's common routines. These baskets made of bamboo strips called by the locals *bakat*. The local residents in other towns of Cebu and the nearby islands of Bohol and Leyte call these baskets *a'at* or *bukag*. The names of *bakat* (*a'at* or *bukag*) reflect the convergence of ethnolinguistic differences between the natives and the migrants of Cebu. The *Bukidnon* is a lowland term for highland folks (Jocano, 1998), as depicted in the painting of *Bukag*, recognized *bakat* as an indigenous art (Bendit, 2015). Numerous folktales and dance traditions like in the story of "The Worn-out Basket" also depicted the *bukag* (Ang Gubaun nga Bukag, 2012). As a craft, Antequero, Bohol (the Basket Weaving Capital of the Province) produces several pieces of *bukag*. For the people of Antequera, *bukag* is a "market basket" and a "container for all seasons". The town kept producing these baskets since 1911 and continuously benefitted the town residents; boosting it from a sixth to a fourth Class Municipality – improving their education and standards of living (Antequera Local Government, 2012).

Art and craft are forms of human creativity. Art is an expression of feelings and emotions; craft is a form of work with the use of available materials. Art and craft can be different, but these two can be similar in some ways. In art, for instance, a *bukag* painted on a canvass reflects an expression of a farmer's lowly life: burdened with work, in order to meet both ends meet. When the weavers use vines or bamboo strips in the weaving of the *bukag*, a craft supports its functionality to produce a useful basket using any of these materials. Appreciating the aesthetics of the *bukag* and analyzing the durability of its materials reflect the significance in both concepts. Art and craft dichotomize the invisible and the visible, which the soul capacitates the hands to perform the weaving process. Hence, all crafts are products of art; however, not all of the arts necessitate the creation of a certain craft.

While *bakat* symbolized the long years of art and craft tradition, not only to the history of Cebu; but to human development as well, dating back in the early part of the thirteenth century during pre-colonial times in the Philippines. Within this period, the natives of Cebu and the Chinese traders used *bakat* to store farm yields during the harvest season. The harvests stored in several *bakat* transported by a buffalo-drawn sled to the nearest market. Those who did not take their village buffalos, they had no choice, they carried their *bakat* on their heads, especially for women. Women walked downhill and uphill to trade their produce in the market. Men carried their *bakat* on their broad shoulders, either by balancing it alone using a small bamboo pole tied on extreme ends or at the middle with knots tied on a wooden rod, for two men to carry on their shoulders. Men with extra strength carried one heavily loaded *bakat* without any help.

In the village, the early Sugbuanon weavers used simple weaving techniques and entwined *bakat* for regular days' use, as depicted in the functional theory of art. How *bakat* contextualizes in the functional theory of art? Within this theory, Simon (2015) considered "objects are art by virtue of a distinctive function they fulfil in the society". The crafting of the *bakat* fulfills the people's needs for transportation during farm harvests and for storage of other goods in the market. Even today, no one can underestimate its functionality.

With the advent of time and modern road transportation now, the use of a buffalo-driven sled, as mentioned, is no longer popular. In contrast, no one uses the buffaloes as a beast of burden because the use of these animals violates animal rights protection. *Vis-à-vis*, men and women do not use anymore a *bakat* to transport the goods because they prefer the use of big trucks to avoid discomforts and the practice of manual labour. However, the shifting pattern

does not diminish the demand for *bakat* in the market for its economic signification. In the context of this study, economic signification refers to the sense of the commercial value of *bakat* craft from the weavers to the end-users. Its utilization continues more especially in storing of farm products in public markets. The increasing volume of trash in urban public markets, many garbage collectors use *bakat* as manual trash lifters in the garbage truck. In some establishments, the management uses several pieces of *bakat* as lampshades to establish an indigenous ambiance for customers.

The shifting utilization of *bakat* is evident among the Cebuanos' commitment to traditions and customs despite the advent of technology. The materials used in the weaving of *bakat* are tropical vines found in the surroundings that made the weaving traditions indigenous. Hence, the *bakat* dubs as an indigenous art of weaving among the locals. Indigenous art is a homegrown art among the natives using local materials in the community (Fajardo, 1998). With the rare supply of tropical vines in the environment, the weavers opt to use bamboo strips as the primary materials in the actual weaving. In Southern Cebu, *bakat* flourishes in the towns of Dalaguete and Barili because of the abundant supply of bamboos. The dwindling supply of vines, during summer, increases the demand of bamboos in the vicinities of these towns. This creates the weavers' interaction that exemplifies the classic notion of the townspeople's indigenous worldviews. McKenzie and Morrissette (2003) in Hart (2010) affirmed that the close relationship of people with the environment is a product of indigenous worldviews. Regardless of the materials used, the weaving techniques of *bakat* are essentially the same.

Today, small, average and large sizes of *bakat* become more elaborate based on the customers' preference. On the other hand, millennials and other Filipinos who live in highly urbanized areas in the country disregard the importance of *bakat*, due to the competitive use of modern synthetic baskets available in department stores. Despite the important contributions of *bakat* to Cebuano culture, there is a little exposure or credit given to the weavers that make marketers' lives easier. It is through them that a long tradition of Cebuano basketry maintains and allows them to make use of this craft in order to survive. Public knowledge about them in how they weave and how they earn is scant based on the existing literature. Thinking to unveil the *bakat* art and craft to the public and the academic community can open the basket industry with numerous opportunities for business and tourism with promising government support.

The basket is a work of art and weaving is a talent. The lineage of weavers slightly decreases due to modern life attraction. The effect of modernization does not steal away the old traditions of weaving, but rather it modifies them. Plastic replaces the *bakat* and the weavers have simply no choice but to adapt the fast pace of modernization. Today, numerous government policies, laws and regulations will enforce shops and other establishments to use paper bags instead of plastic. Though paper bags and plastics are common in Cebu's markets, the use of *bakat* contains several items of goods because of its sturdiness. The materials are completely natural and environmentally friendly.

This study is significant to the Cebuano heritage and the environment sector in order to promote the "Five Senses of Quality Communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:" a sense of place, sense of identity, sense of evolution, a sense of ownership and sense of community, which serve as a functional model for preservation and economic development (Rypkema, 1999). This study unveils *bakat* art and craft and its economic significations by tracing its origin; describing its processes of weaving in terms of materials and sizes; analyzing its principles of aesthetic design; determining its functionality; ascertaining the weavers' profile; and describing its trading system – essential in the process of documentation, preservation and development.

## 2. Literature review

### *Socio-historical background of the art of weaving in the Philippines*

The Milwaukee Public Museum (2017) released 235 collections of Philippine baskets defined by their function rather than their form. This means that the utilitarian principles of the

baskets are more important than their aesthetics. Based on this collection, the *bakat* was curated under provenance number 06,884 on 19 February 1911. The bamboo is the basket's primary material with a wide mouth; narrows down; turns down into a point; similar to the upside-down tent; resembles a cage; bamboo with open hexagonal plaiting (Milwaukee Public Museum, 2017). The *CCP Encyclopedia of the Philippines*, Volume 1, stated that trading with other nations allows the Cebuanos to develop their own local arts which include basketry (Tiongson, 1994a, b). This is possible because, during the pre-colonial times, Cebu has a trading port that transmits these arts among the Chinese, the Arabs and other Asian traders. Junker (2000) affirmed that Cebu, Manila, Maguindanao and Sulu were maritime ports observed by the Spaniards with interregional powerful political entities, large scale economies and trade during the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. To Tiongson (1994a, b), basketry symbolized the intimate connection between the people and the environment that relies on the use of earth's resources. He further rejoined that this art form encourages people's creativity and innovation in the environment's available resources. In support, McDowall (2013) stated that the tools the weavers use in making baskets are dependent on its location. This means that the local materials used in making baskets differ as well. Pre-colonial Cebuano folks typically favored coconut and bamboo stalks in their crafts. The weaving of elaborate rice pouches called *puso* used coconut fronds (Nocheseda, 2009; Inocian, 2013; Eslao-Alix, 2013; Inocian, 2015), as one of the basic weaving materials, because these fronds remained one of the most important materials for feasting and rituals (Fenner, 1985; Jocano, 1998; Junker, 2000).

#### *Common materials used in the art of weaving*

Tiongson (1994a, b) described bamboo materials to have a purity that combines resilience and strength in the actual basket products. Big baskets without a handle in Cebu are locally called *bakat*, which were used throughout the province where suppliers send a truckload of fresh farm produce to the market (Osorio, 2014). Aside from bamboo, weaving also used materials like wool, cotton and silk for different kinds of products, ranging from clothing to mats and hats (Manufacturer and Builder, 1894). Designing carpets, clothing, flags, armour, kitchenware, etc., are the common uses of these woven products. While, storing of weapons, clothes, foods, firewood, money and coins served as the common uses of this bamboo and plaited products (Robinson, 1917).

#### *The potential of basket weaving to structural and interior designs*

The application of the techniques used in basketry and the art of weaving produces numerous types of handicrafts throughout the world. For example, the Irish use the same basket techniques to make handwoven boats which called "coracles", and in Northern Europe, these techniques applied in house buildings called "Wattle and Daub" (Kaller, 2012). Others applied weaving and basketry in arts such as the case seen in sculptures, like the fishnet sculpture of Janet Echelman (2013). Terrol Dew Johnson applied ancient basket weaving of Native Americans, which he stated: "blending art and usefulness" (Shaw and Huang, 2017). The honeycomb design of the interior ceilings of Bao'an International Airport in Shenzhen, China, designed by Massimiliano and Doriana Fuksas typifies that said blending of art and usefulness. The natural blending of the honeycomb with hexagonal holes allows the passage of light in the airport interior serves the usefulness of the design (Fuksas and Fuksas, 2014). The geometric proportions of the design quantify its aesthetic qualities as depicted on the honey cells that construct hexagonal geometries (Dabbour, 2012). As regard to basketry, certain innovations such as the parabolic basket: a solar cooker made up of invasive species by weaving the pampas grass into vines serve its utilitarian variation (Orlando, 2017).

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### *Models of cultural heritage preservation*

With the changing demographics of the local artists who entrusted to promote Islamic culture in Afghanistan, the Turquoise Mountain Foundation recruited old artisans to teach the new generation to revive and promote the popular local art skills (Chaon, 2017). In India, numerous efforts in reviving traditional arts provided by the Company Act that requires companies to infuse a specific art into their products through a combination of subsidies, patronage and marketing to create employment opportunities for the poor artisans, and to benefit India culturally and economically (Nirbhay, 2016). Japanese Mayor Osami Takeyama rejoined the need for cultural heritage preservation by educating the next generation on its importance (Murueñas, 2012). In Turkey, education, media and the arts have key roles in cultural preservation (Mimar Sinan University, 2014). Rwanda's policies allowed different sectors to engage in a dialogue to use African art as a venue for cultural preservation (Nkusi, 2013). Likewise, the City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Programme preserved Philadelphia's art by offering teaching opportunity as well as publicity (Bryson, 2016). People learned and gained knowledge through the passing of information, which simply needed the knowledge and familiarity of the trained ones through education (UNESCO, 2009). Hence, the cultural preservation of crafts and folk art in the City of Baguio in Northern Philippines catapulted in the recognition of the city into a "Creative City", by organizing the artists to develop creative centres and establish linkages in different UNESCO member countries (UNESCO, 2017). These centres are responsible to gather artists to teach their skills to the young, they produce their crafts and sell it to tourists, to make a sustainable living.

### *Models for economic significations*

The essence of cultural preservation is not terminal. To make it sustainable, it needs a system to ensure its viability through promotion and tourism. Throsby (2006) believed that when there is an application of economics to cultural heritage decisions, it mobilized stakeholders to achieve its ends and possible trade-offs. In relation to this, George W. Bush's Preserve American Community Programme created a collaboration of local communities and government departments in the preservation of American heritage for economic development, and community revitalization for public awareness promotion (National Park Service, 2018). This initiative anchors on the Indigenous Model of Economic Development (IMED) by Mark Anielski (2018). IMED expounded that to ensure the economic development, management of assets of the communities like a human, social, cultural, built, natural and economic, with effective decisions, ensures the people's quality of life (Anielski, 2018).

As rejoined, Rypkema (1999) propounded that historical preservation can drive economic growth in responding to the realities of the twenty-first century, by embracing the principles of economic development through globalization, localization, biodiversity, sustainability and responsibility. Preservation of cultural heritage is crucial since it increases positive feelings of the locals towards their background which could lead to pro-social behaviour by aligning diverse and often contradicting conservation objectives (Chng and Narayanan, 2017), relevant to sustainable economic development. With these things are in place, Petronela (2016) stated that heritage facilitates emotions towards a nation for viable tourism development, through promotion and marketing strategies.

### *The situation of the bakat art and craft*

There are two processes in how to perform weaving: the hand weave and the machine weave. The machine weave was much faster, cost a lot of money and saved a lot of time and energy compared to the hand weave (Albers, 2017), which is labour intensive. Since there has been no mechanization of basketry (Meilach, 1974), it also noted that the machine could not replace the fingers (Lee, 1948). To the Ancient Art of Basket Weaving (2009), "The process of making

basket slowly declined; however, this art reawakened its significance and value, as a form of art". In contrast, Cebu's *bakat* art of weaving uses the hand weave process; but it is now in danger of declining due to modernization. The machine weave does not overshadow the *bakat*, but the greatest danger is when no one rallies for its preservation and promotion. This study intends to prevent the declining situation by preserving the expertise of the *bakat* weavers. Passing on their knowledge to the young generation, in order to educate them on the importance of *bakat* art of weaving becomes an enduring legacy, by preserving this into a heritage of living tradition. According to UNESCO (2009):

The conflict between cultural creation and cultural commercialization was a challenge in preserving the divergent culture and whether art values for the preservation of cultural identity or is it valued as a product of art, i.e., used in making a profit.

Very few people see *bakat* as carriers of Cebuano heritage, as most people see it as a cheap product used in carrying produce. The imbalance between *bakat* as a cultural icon and *bakat* as a utilitarian object happens when cultural illiteracy takes place, making the people oblivious to appreciate its significance in the local culture.

### 3. Methods and materials

The study employed a qualitative method in descriptive research design. Descriptive research is a study that deals in describing the research subject in a detailed and precise manner (Kowalczyk, Undated), to provide detailed documentation of the art and craft of *bakat*. The 35 KI's or key informants in the study comprised ten weavers; ten traders; ten buyers; and five middlemen of *bakat* art of weaving. Their selection used a purposive sampling because some of them were members of the *Balaonong Nagkahiusang Igsuon sa Kalamboan* (BANIKA) and the *Mag-uumang Nagkahiusa sa Budbud* (MANABU) cooperatives, except for the selection of buyers in a convenience sampling. The selection of these key informants subjected to these criteria: engaging in *bakat* art of weaving and trading for at least three years; once members and/or leaders of the BANIKA and MANABU who resided in Barili for more than five years. The middlemen and the buyers utilize the *bakat* business. An interview guide, field notes, observation sheets, video recorder and camera served as primary instruments in the study. The field notes contained the responses of the key informants. The observation sheets contained the procedures of weaving and its trading practices. A video camera documented the actual weaving process that served as the basis for the analysis of the art principles used both in the stripping and in the weaving process of the *bakat*. Transcriptions of the verbatim accounts from the recorded video-camera facilitated the coding process using a coding sheet.

#### *Data gathering procedure*

After identifying the key informants, the village chief approved the conduct of the interview for the key informants after securing a letter of permission. With the approval of the village council, the site visit initiated the first exposure of the key informants. They received the letter of informed consent. With consent, they agreed on the time and place for the interviews using their preference; withholding their names and identity maintained the confidentiality of the interview results. The interview was not compulsory if they expressed unwillingness to participate, then they could withdraw it. Using narrative analysis, transcriptions of data generated common patterns and themes through the use of coding.

#### *Study context*

This study conducted in the villages of Balao, Pancil and Pang-pang Barili, Cebu, Philippines where hundreds of *bakat* woven by young and mature men. These mountainous villages covered with lush bamboo (*Bambusa vulgaris*) vegetation – a reason that the

weavers do not live in the congested town of Barili. To Cui-Maghanoy and Moreño II (2014), Barili derived its name from a Cebuano word *balili* (*Echinochloa stagnina* Retz) which means grass. The entire town had been mostly dependent on farming and agriculture (Cui-Maghanoy and Moreño II, 2014). The village's climate has no pronounced rainy season and has a short dry season. Since the organization of the BANIKA and the MANABU, the cottage industry of weaving became the alternative way of earning income. BANIKA focussed on handicrafts such as bags, native envelopes and baskets made of coconut midribs. These non-government cooperatives became essential to encourage both farmers and weavers to cooperate for mutual benefaction.

#### 4. Analysis and results

##### *Origin and design of bakat art and craft*

The historical accounts of the Philippines mentioned that the art of weaving started during the Neolithic Age, where the country had been performing a function demanded of her by her way of life (Sta. Maria, 1998) as fishers, farmers and traders in the maritime islands of the country, but the exact time of the origin of *bakat* art and craft of weaving, within this period, remained uncertain, except for a few pieces of museum collections as shown in Plate 1(a)–(c) found in Plate 1, from the Cebu Normal University Museum, complement for its similar development. These collections use hexagram debut relative to the six-star shape of the studied *bakat*.

The Slings *Bukag* in Plate 1(a) has two slings for the farmers to carry their farm produce like corn, yams, tubers, beans and spices at their back; while climbing up and down on the mountain trail during the harvest season. The Bobo Fish Trap in Plate 1(b) and the Bobo Crab Trap in Plate 1(c) used by the traditional fisherfolks in Bantayan and Siquijor islands in the Visayas region. The six-star debut of these traps looks very similar with the *bakat*, indicative of the Neolithic farm implements that use traditional art principles. As nuanced by Schuon (1984) in Dabbour (2012), “Traditional art has rules that apply the cosmic laws and universal principles”. This symbolizes the universal man’s intimate connection with the environment for survival. Hence, the six-star debut reflects the triadic connection of man, God and the environment. This relates to what Ardalan and Bakhtiar

(a)



(b)



(c)



**Notes:** (a) The Slings *Bukag*: vegetable farmers from Mantalongon use this bamboo basket as a container for their products (Provenance, Cebu Normal University Museum, 2016); (b) the Bobo Fish Trap: this is used for catching fish in Bantayan Island, Cebu (Provenance: Franco Veliganio/Cebu Normal University Museum, 2016); (c) the Bobo Crab Trap: this is used for catching crabs on the island of Siquijor (Provenance: Cebu Normal University Museum, 2016)

**Plate 1.**  
Cebu normal  
university museum  
collections of baskets  
and traps

(2000) in Dabbour (2012) believed that the “six-sided hexagon symbolized the universal man”. Palma (2010) inferred Dabbour’s universal man as a derivative of a Sanskrit which means “great people” chronicled in 1250 AD, as a piece of document during the arrivals of the Malays in the Philippines from 200 BC to 1500 AD. The repetitive patterns of hexagonal design in *bakat* art of weaving is a way of man’s supplication to please God and to provide him, in return, the needed resources he wanted in the environment.

The six-star shape of *bakat* also looked similar with the *Kagome*, a Japanese basket known as *kago* for the basket and *me* for eyes (Mekata, 2003). The Japanese had an extensive history in basket making (Lee, 1948) especially baskets made of bamboos (Novellino and Ertuza, 2005), but the time of origin of the *Kagome*, like that of *bakat*, also remained indeterminate. Though, the Japanese had been in contact with the Cebuano locals for trade and commerce during the Muromachi period (1338–1573) (Leupp, 2003) and transmitted the design to the community residents of Cebu and the rest of the Visayas (Tiongson, 1994a, b). Ergo, this does not mean that the natives of Cebu and other islands in the Visayas embrace the *Kagome* primarily because they do not have the *bakat*, granting if its origin is uncertain in support with Leupp and Tiogson’s claim or they accept the *Kagome* because it looks similar with their own *bakat*, in support with Sta Maria’s claim, that if the origin of *bakat* is determinate. The exact time of the emergence of both the *bakat* and the *Kagome* creates only approximations (the Muromachi Period from 1338 to 1573 for Japan and from 9 to 1600 AD for the Philippines) by historical researchers that neither the Philippines nor Japan can proudly claim its origin.

Based on the Philippine historical account, Aquino (1992) narrated what historian Martin J. Noone mentioned about the involvement of the Philippines, Arabia, India, China, Japan and Thailand during the sprawling of commerce in Southeast Asia in 1511, which ignited the beginning of European expansion, assimilation and diffusion of culture. Fenner (1985) affirmed that the Hindus traded with the Cebuanos in the port of Mactan when Hindu artifacts were discovered in the island; and Chinese traders and artisans who lived on the outskirts of the city. During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1650), the Arabs boarded Philippine goods to the Chinese mainland through Canton (Agoncillo and Mangahas, 2000). Junker (2000) and Sta. Maria (1998) affirmed:

[...] from as early 9 AD to 1600 AD, Filipino trading polities, particularly in the Visayas and Northern Mindanao, valued elaborate basketry, beads, beadwork, exotic textiles, pottery, gongs, gold-ornamental spears, and other weaponry.

Though, Junker believed Sta. Maria’s claim; but, she argued that tracing its origin of between 10 and 11 AD was difficult to discern. She further added that:

[...] too little is known for pottery, textiles, basketry or other essential goods, whether regional specialization in domestic good manufacturer and interdistrict trade because these may have been a widespread pattern during the contact period of the Philippines with other Asian traders from the 13th to the 16th centuries.

Though the exact historical origin of *bakat* is uncertain, its use confirms the socioeconomic life of the Cebuanos as depicted in the wall painting displayed inside the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño de Cebu during the Christianization of the Cebuano natives by the Spaniards in 1521. Hence, a possible conjecture is surmised that the similarity of the six-star shape of the *bakat* (then and now) and the *Kagome* is a product of the cultural convergence of trade and commerce for more than 15 centuries of Cebu’s maritime history. It is a conjecture that the Cebuanos learned the six-star debut of the Japanese (based on Lee and Tiongson’s account) or the Japanese learned it from the Cebuanos (based on Aquino and Sta. Maria’s accounts), or both learned during the trading contacts from the Hindus and Arabs or from the Chinese (based on Junker’s argument and Agoncillo and Mangahas accounts). Any of these conjectures challenges other scholars to prove regarding their quest for basket history in the country and the rest of Asia.



The six-star eyes of the *bakat* are functional for enough air to circulate and to hold farm harvests and other goods from unnecessary spoilage. This is widely woven on the neighbouring islands of the Visayas and Mindanao in two features. The first is the *bakat* without a handle characterized by a large opening, which can be lifted by two persons. The other one is the *bakat* with back slings found in Plate 1(a), which is used by farmers to carry their harvests or with arm handle by the wives in lifting it personally when harvesting or doing marketing. Plate 2 exhibit the striking similarity in terms of the materials used in the weaving of *bakat* before in Plate 2(a) and now in Plate 2(c) including the Japanese *Kagome* in Plate 2(b). Bamboos are the primary materials used in most Japanese baskets (Weida, 2014), similar to the Cebuanos.

*Process, materials and sizes of Bakat*

*Pag-la* is the process of weaving *bakat* using bamboo strips as a primary material. The properties of the bamboo such as strength, durability, and flexibility facilitated the easy weaving of the basket (SSchröder, 2016). The greenish strips are flexible enough for weaving. Regardless of the size, the number of strips measures 18–24 cm can start the weaving process, what matters is the length of the strips that complete the basket’s rim. The sizes of *bakat* vary according to purpose; small-sized *bakat* has a 26–28 cm base, 16 cm high and the diameter of its opening is 33–35 cm. The medium-sized *bakat* has a base diameter of 29–30 cm, its height is 30 cm and the diameter of the opening is 57.5 cm. Large sizes of *bakat* have a base diameter of 62 cm, a height of 35 cm and the opening diameter is 78.5 cm. Smaller *bakat* stores fruits, vegetables, and bread. The smaller size is ideal in transporting goods in short distances carried by hand. The larger *bakat* stores bigger fruits like melons and coconuts for transport by a truck. It is an ideal size to carry goods in long distances as it allows the larger quantity of goods or items stored inside. Medium sizes of *bakat* also use either big or small items, depending on its capacity.

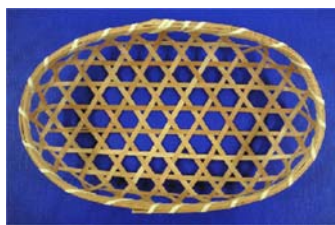
Table I presented the visual descriptions of the stripping process used in the *bakat* art of weaving into five basic steps. The weaving of *bakat* is a hand process dependent on the dexterity of the fingers. KI-Weaver 3 uses a machete and a large piece of wood to hammer the bamboo and split it into multiple strips. The process involves no complex machinery and a large piece of wood is used as an inclined plane shown in Step 3.

Table II presented the visual descriptions of the weaving process of *bakat* into seven steps. KI-Weaver 25 showed the actual weaving of *bakat* with no complex machinery use. The steps show the weaving process by pure hands and feet—indicative of a labour-intensive process of craft production.

(a) The Old Bakat



(b) The Kagome








(c) The Current Bakat



**Notes:** (a) The Philippine Basket Collection curated by the Milwaukee Museum in 1911; (b) *Kagome* basket curated by Google.com; (c) Woven today by the *Bakat* Weavers of Barili, Cebu

**Plate 2.**  
The comparison  
of the six-star  
debut of *Bakat*

Picture	Steps	Textual Descriptions
	Step 1 The Breaking of the Bamboo Pole	The artisan breaks the bamboo pole into the desired pieces
	Step 2 The Breaking of the Bamboo into several strips	The artisan breaks into the desired strips
	Step 3 The First-Degree Smoothing of the skin of the bamboo strips	The artisan smoothens the strips to be bendable for weaving
	Step 4 The Second-Degree Smoothing of the Bamboo Strips	The artisan removes the excess stalk and leaves the bamboo skin that maintains sturdiness and durability
	Step 5 The Third-Degree Smoothing of the Bamboo Strips	The artisan smoothens further the strips to produce the needed 18 to 24 pieces of strips needed in the actual weaving process

**Table I.**  
The visual descriptions of the stripping process








### *Principles of aesthetic designs in the Bakat*

Basket weaving dubbed as an advanced Philippine craft based on the beauty and the relationship between form and function (Fajardo, 1998). This statement provides a profound justification that *bakat* is both an art and a craft. The form of *bakat* is one of the aesthetic dimensions of the basket itself, and function elaborates its usefulness or its intended purpose. The design of the *bakat* is dependent on the type of materials and functions used:

Different basket weaving techniques and forms evolved, related to the inherent characteristics of its raw materials [...], the computation created structurally stable forms for a specific function from flexible, pliable materials, which involved specific techniques employed within same structure. (Hebbar, 2015)

Triaxial weaving of *bakat* is better than rectangular weaving since the strips run in three directions that resist to friction. Its design is known as “Sparse Triaxial Weave” which allows the space in the middle, giving the *bakat* a distinctive eye design. The *bakat* design is compatible with the bamboo strips; its weave is appropriate with the pliant strips used in the interlacing process. A common advantage of the design is its simple weave, which is easy to manufacture (Hart, undated). The design of the *bakat* is pragmatic because it uses a small number of materials without sacrificing the use of art elements. The art elements used by the basket weavers are line, shape, colour, value, form, texture and space analyzed in the context of Marder’s seven artistic principles (Marder, 2017).

Providing a holistic view of the art and craft of *bakat*, Table III showed the comparative analysis based on the principles of aesthetic design utilized in a crafted *bakat*.

Picture	Steps	Textual Descriptions
	Step 1 The Plotting Formation of Strips	The weaver interlocks two pairs of bamboo strips forming a six-star debut to initiate the weaving process
	Step 2 The Running Formation of the strips	The weaver adds pieces of strips parallel to the six-star debut in step 1. This process is repeated until the desired size of the base is formed
	Step 3 The Formation of the Base of the Basket	The weaver shapes the base of the <i>bakat</i> using a guide usually the completed one
	Step 4 The Bending of Strips to form the Circular Sides of the Basket	From the base, the weaver bends the strips to form the basket's body in horizontal to the direction to form several coils radiating to form its rim
	Step 5 The Weaving of the Strips forms the Lower Body of the Basket Extended from the Base	The weaver adds more strips and horizontal coils form the upper body until the basket's rim determines its desired height
	Step 6 The Weaving of the Strips forms the Upper Body of the Basket Extended from the Lower Body	The weaver continuously weaves the basket's lower body to expand the upper part reaching its ideal height
	Step 7 The Making of the Basket Opening	To strengthen its shape, the weaver uses a thicker strip to form the rim that warrants strength. Tightning the rim ensures the basket's quality and strength

**Table II.**  
The visual  
descriptions of the  
weaving process

This comparative analysis serves as a venue for budding artists in the academe and in the local communities to understand both the technical and the artistic sides of the *bakat*. Hence, *bakat* is not only viewed in isolation as a traditional craft, but as a local art as well, i.e., based on the parameters of quality vs quantity, aesthetics vs structure and expression vs attraction. The quality of *bakat* is emotionally manifested through the seven

Principles	Meaning	Comparative analysis of the <i>Bakat</i>
Contrast	It is the difference between elements of art in a composition, such that each element is made stronger in relation to the other	<i>Bakat</i> shape creates the ideal space of the composition compared to the line, colour, value and texture. Its round form opening is determined by its hexagonal base. The six sides at the base create hexagonal eye designs, expanding to interlace the body of the <i>bakat</i> in a round form until the tightening of its rim. The fresh green bamboo strips are more flexible to interlace compared to the dried ones. The skin's texture at the back strips is smoother than the front
Balance	It refers to the visual weight of the elements of the composition, which provides stability	The Sparse Triaxial Weaving forms the hexagonal base of the <i>bakat</i> creates stability of its form and space. This supports the radiating round shape of the body that provides stability in the symmetrical balance. The shape is formed with radial symmetry, allowing it to look like an inverted trapezoid towards its opening
Emphasis	It refers to the dominant element of art that strikes to the eyes and attracts the viewer's attention	The hexagonal shape of the <i>bakat</i> eyes catches the viewers' attention. The interlacing lines moving to the directional movement in the weaving process become another important emphasis in the art. The freshly crafted <i>bakat</i> creates a lighter value
Rhythm	It is created by movement implied through the repetition of elements of art in a non-uniform but organized way. Unlike pattern, which demands consistency, rhythm relies on variety	The uniform sizes of lines found in the uniformed strips create the interlacing hexagonal directional patterns of weaving. The elements of space and line of <i>bakat</i> repeated several times of the design from the base to the opening. These directional sides of the <i>bakat</i> eyes create a rhythm of natural honeycomb textures. Viewed from afar, its texture is rough with a lighter value
Pattern	It is the uniform repetition of any of the elements of art or any combination thereof, as a result of several rhythms	The pattern is shaped into six directions forming a hexagon. With the hexagons aligning horizontally and vertically to their points between them to form two overlapping triangular spaces that may look like a star of David. This pattern is found consistently in all sides of the <i>bakat</i>
Unity	It refers to all the elements of art that fit together comfortably	Triaxial weaving ensures that space, line, form, shape and texture ensure the strength and stability of the design. This proves the functionality of the design. The colour determines the strength and value of the <i>bakat</i>
Movement	It is the result of using the elements of art such that this moves the viewer's eye around and within the image	The overall shape of the <i>bakat</i> , the horizontal and vertical alignment of its eyes point to the running lines in six directions from the base and expands to a radiating movement to form the lower and the upper body moving in a triaxial movement towards the opening

**Table III.**  
The principles of  
aesthetic design used  
in the *Bakat*

art principles. Its quantity mirrors the utilitarian aspects of the craft like its strength, durability and sturdiness of the bamboo strips used. The art and craft of *bakat* express how the weaver projects the aesthetic appreciation and value invisibly seen in the quality of weaving. Its structure is visible in its trans-axial form that looks like an inverted trapezoid with a wide opening. The attraction of *bakat* as a craft continuously demands

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the utilitarian purpose of its market – as a product of a weaver’s mind. But, the emotions to hang on the toil to produce the desired pieces of *bakat* each day becomes a struggle for life survival that remains invisible in the heart and soul of the weavers.

#### *The utilitarian view of Bakat*

The basket’s function determines its craftsmanship and form (Fajardo, 1998). Although basket weaving is not a utilitarian craft alone; but it remains a symbolic and a sculptural area of creation (Weida, 2014). Cebuanos have many ways to use *bakat*. In Barili, the famous bread which community residents call it *pan burikat* (local bread) stores for trade in a *bakat*. In the Carbon Market, *bakat* stores numerous types of fruits and vegetables for sale. The bigger the *bakat*, the bigger its size and the capacity contain farm produce. For the small and medium sizes, it has the capacity to contain less. Aside from transferring products from one place to another, the *bakat* is contained root crops and nuts. The community recycles tattered and used *bakat* as trash bins. Amidst the several uses of the *bakat*, its art of weaving surpasses a pragmatic and utilitarian view that serves the interests of the weavers and the Cebuano public. The niche of *bakat* in Cebuano arts and culture is a symbol of prosperity as featured in Cebu’s numerous festivals. The Sinulog dance festival uses empty *bakat* as props, symbolic for Señor Santo Niño’s blessings for the abundant harvest. This religious act represents the mystical symbolism that exemplifies the unity of the finite (nature) and the ultimate reality (God) common in the Islamic art as one of the most powerful forms of sacred art (Critchlow, 1984). In the city’s resto-bars, *bakat* is a decorative item that creates a fanatical ambiance for a sumptuous dinner and social drinking experience, longing for a mystical blessing for a peaceful dining experience.

#### *The status of the weavers*

It is important to consider that gender matters in the process of *bakat* art of weaving. Contrary to existing findings that basketry links with women’s domestic orientation (Weida, 2014) and some men also participated in weaving (Brown *et al.*, 2018). In Cebu, men engage in *bakat* weaving using their big hands and fingers that can easily interlace the sturdy strips of the bamboo; while women engage in hat weaving because of their tender hands and fingers to interlace the soft strips of the *huri* (*Corypha elata Roxby*) leaves. Though, this shows a classic status of gender segregation in terms of the harder jobs given to men and the lighter jobs given to women. However, the cultural account shows that “baskets are mostly woven by men for ceremonial, domestic, and industrial uses” (Fajardo, 1998).

As responded by the key informant weavers, the availability of the bamboos in the rural environment becomes a potential material in *bakat* weaving. They learned how to weave at a young age during their pre-teen years, some even at the age of eight by their parents (KI-Weavers 6–9). They engage in weaving for almost 30 years (KI-Weavers 1–2 and 4–7). The youngest key informant (KI-Weaver 3) is 20 years old, but he has already ten years of experience in *bakat* weaving.

They teach their children and grandchildren’s *bakat* art of weaving because of fear that they cannot proceed to finish high school and college due to their limited income. “We inherited a *bakat* weaving from the elders” (KI-Weaver1). This reality contextualizes the famous Malapasquan folktale “Ang Gubaon nga Bukag” that proved the existence and inheritance of this art in the pre-colonial times (Ang Gubaon nga Bukag, 2012). One of the most common aspects of Cebuano culture exemplifies in the family orientation and its importance to family traditions and values. The way the parents teach their children *bakat* art and craft shows a close relationship of atypical Cebuano family. Their long commitment to this shows how they value and uphold the traditions handed down by their ancestors despite challenges. They pass on their weaving skills to the next generation despite the lures of modernity.

*Schedule and income*

The artisans begin early in the morning, collecting the bamboos needed for the *bakat* weaving on a regular day. Weaving a *bakat* takes around 15–30 min, depending on its size (KI-Weavers 1–2 and 5–7). They can sell from 24 to 36 pieces of *bakat* per week and can earn around P2,000.00 (\$38.49) with each basket costing P30.00 (58 cents) for small sizes, P60.00 (\$1.15) for medium sizes and P80.00 (\$1.54) for large sizes. Dividing this income into daily basis P285.00 (\$5.49) meets the required minimum wage imposed by the Philippine government to workers in the rural areas. This means that the weavers' wage of the *bakat* industry in Cebu is indicative of a subsistence economy. Since then, centralized production development resulted in the realm of basic subsistence and household goods (Junker, 2000). Hence, their survival depends on the number of baskets they have woven. The weavers justify the prices because of the bamboo cost, and the travelling expenses in trading the products. There are two ways the weavers sell their products through direct selling and distributing. In direct selling, they travel to Carbon Market to sell several dozens of *bakat*. In distributing, the middleman distributes and sells the product with a predetermined profit. The weavers' daily needs are sufficient (KI-Weavers 3–7). In contrast, KI-Weavers, 1 and 2 believe that their income is not enough to feed the whole family. Consequently, they resort in the weaving of hats for an extra income. This act indicates resiliency to hardship, an aspect of the Filipino cultural values. Despite insufficient income of some, they never give up weaving; instead, they find ways to alleviate poverty.

*Educational attainment*

None of the key informants reached tertiary education and only one managed to finish high school. The rest of the *bakat* weavers only reach elementary education. According to the older weavers, "There was only one school available in Barili at that time and their homes were too far from that school" (KI-Weavers 1, 7 and 9). Another factor is the lack of income to finance further studies (KI-Weavers 5–10). The younger weaver that manages to graduate high school nuances a minimal improvement in the education of the weavers. Their children and grandchildren manage to study in schools, but they insist to teach them the art of weaving if in case they fail in their studies (KI-Weavers 6 and 7). This implies the passion for craftsmanship that they cannot afford to let go.

*Social pattern*

Another aspect of the Cebuano culture is the concept of *tambayayong* or Cebuano sense of community; it is an extension of the Cebuano's value of the family towards their neighbours and strangers. The *bakat* industry heavily relies on these values to earn income. Members of the family either make *bakat* or distribute and sell so that the combined income benefits the whole family. The concept of a loyal customer who returned to the same vendor was scattered among the village communities in the town (Arbringer, 2006). There are few *bakat* sellers and buyers in Carbon Market because shoppers prefer to go to malls. Familiarity increases the trust among the weavers, traders, and buyers, with regard to the quality of *bakat*. BANIKA and MANABU cooperatives assist the weavers; however, most of them have less trust to join because of the feeling of distrust regarding its management and operation. They give a contribution to these cooperatives, but no assurance of benefits in return. The regular meetings called by the cooperatives cost them time – a reduction for their usual outputs in weaving *bakat* to earn the expected income.

*The system of Bakat trading*

Some buyers buy *bakat* for several purposes. The sellers' price of a *basket* is P50.00 (96 cents) for small size P80.00 (\$1.54) for medium and P100.00 (\$1.92) for the largest size. However, despite the

strategic location, business is not strong, according to the traders as they can only sell less than a dozen. Business is strong during summer because of the harvest season. The farmers need several pieces of *bakat* to carry their produce to the markets. The time of festivities like the *Sinulog* (festival in honour of the Holy Child Jesus) and “Handog sa Mag-uuma” (thanksgiving for farmers) also increase its demand. The distribution of the product is unstable. According to the traders, either they buy *bakat* from the weavers who sell in Carbon Market or they go to Barili to buy it directly. When asked about “why they engage in the business”, they claim that this begins with their parents and they do not have a choice, but to follow their legacy because of no other options.

### *The implications*

Though the origin of the art and craft of *bakat* and the Japanese *Kagome* is relatively indeterminate due to scant literature. The thirteenth century sprawling trade in Southeast Asia with China, Arabia, India, Japan, Thailand and the Philippines inferred a cultural convergence that influenced the six-star debut of the *bakat*. Based on ethnographic and museum collection, the aesthetics and the functionality of the *bakat* design focus on the bamboo as a basic craft material. Bamboo is the strongest material used in basket weaving (Fajardo, 1998) to justify its holding capacity. Classified as tall grass, bamboo is a common species that grows in the tropical regions among these aforementioned countries that participated in the trading contacts during the thirteenth century. This provides an inference that the bamboo shapes these maritime countries together in terms of the art and craft of basketry through trading.

As found in Plate 2(a)–(c), the six-star shape is a common debut in the weaving process imitating the most important symbol – the hexagram. The hexagram is a combination of two opposing pyramidal triangles: one is pointing up that symbolizes fire and the other pointing down symbolizes love; this contrasted the polarization of values in Islamic art, providing the balance of forces between the inner and the outer dimensions (Critchlow, 1984). Among the Hindus, this hexagram in Shatkona represented the six seasons: spring (Vasant), summer (Grishma), monsoon (Varsha), autumn (Sharad), pre-winter (Hemant) and winter (Shishir), which served as basis for farming activities (Vital, 2018). This is similar to the practice of Islamic Folk Astronomy that the year was defined by the basic seasonal change over the course of the months (Varisco, 2000). In Shinto shrines dating back to at least fifth century BCE, the *Kagome* crest in stone lanterns depicted the conventions of being a Shinto follower (Grapard, 1984). In Israel, the Magen David or (Shield of David) remains one of the sacred symbols of holiness into three entities: *pnimiyut* (inner dimension), *chitzoniyut* (outer dimension), and the *Kaballah* (the esoteric teaching of the Talmud, the Jewish law) (Silberberg, 2019). Beyer (2019) revealed that the pointed-up triangle in the hexagram provides a strong foundation of stability; ascends to heaven; symbolizes air, fire and the masculine energy. In contrast with the point down triangle, Beyer (2019) disclosed that this descends into the physical world; symbolizes water, earth and the feminine energy, like the Chinese *yin-yang* in the mandala. These symbolisms hold true Shatkona’s the sexual union of a man and woman in perfect harmony of passion reflects a similar belief of the Arabs in separating the year into two parts: *shita* (male) for rain and *sayf* (female) for pasture, symbolic to local contexts of natural fertility (Varisco, 2000).

The introduction of Islam in the Philippines by Tuan Mashai’ka, a trader from Malaya, and his companion Tuan Maqbalu who came to Sulu in the 1240s ignited the Arabs’ flourishing trade relations in the Philippines through Taiwan and China (Agoncillo and Mangahas, 2000). Islam gained attraction as it spreads to Maguindanao, Cebu, and Manila prior to the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores in 1521. Part of Islam’s teaching in the Quran is the *Shahadah* – a declaration of faith that “there is no God except Allah” that solidifies the absolute truth in the Arabic cultural beliefs and practices. Translating this

dogma to Islamic art, Critchlow (1984) mentioned that “there is no part without a whole, no reflection without a source, and no single dimension without dimensions”. This implies that the principles of art are absolute, *vis-à-vis* in the context of Sufism. Sufism is the inner, mystical, or psycho-spiritual dimensions of Islam (Asreemoro, 2008) upon which Keith Critchlow’s works are dependent on.

Islamic art emphasizes geometric figures emanating the ultimate reality to human realities, as one of the most powerful forms of sacred art (Critchlow, 1984). This means that the Supreme Being controls the environment and he designs it perfectly for humans as one of his creations (Exodus, 1:31). The environment is seen as part of the super-natural world, inhabited by a myriad of spirits which actively participate in human affairs (Jocano, 1998). This belief from the relative to the absolute, from the finite to the infinite, from multiplicity to unity (Critchlow, 1984) provides the foundation of numerous rituals the Filipinos practice as a celebration of thanksgiving to a Celestial Being during the planting and harvesting seasons (Jocano, 1998; Junker, 2000; Inocian, 2015); feasting and ceremonies during birth, marriage and death; and war victories (Jocano, 1998; Junker, 2000).

Among the Muslim artists, beauty is objective and self-expressive of the truth (Dabbour, 2012). The hexagon nuanced the six days of creation that God created man and six days represented to a perfect number in Islam that attributed to a symbol of a universal man (Dabbour, 2012). While “Geometry represented the blueprint of the Creation and the generator of all forms”, the five perfect shapes of “Platonic solids” of the tetrahedron, hexahedron, octahedron, dodecahedron and icosahedron represent the five archetypal patterns of the earth, air, fire, water and life force (Dabbour, 2012). The adoption of Islam in the Philippines, like other exotic religions in Southeast Asia, more elaborate ceremonies and rituals, and advanced means of ideology increased the consecrated authority and legal political powers of rulers to strengthen weak political bonds (Junker, 2000). If the six-star debut of a hexagonal shape of *bakat* was Islamic in nature caused by the Islamization and the flourishing trade in the thirteenth century, its mystical significance, then, would have connections to the feasting and ritual practices of the Filipinos (Junker, 2000; Jocano, 1998; Fenner, 1985), that makes the craft sacred.

Though the knowledge about the philosophical and religious underpinnings of *bakat* disappeared in the advent of time because of painful realities the Cebuano people experienced; from the unpredictable raids of pirates seeking for slave trade (Fenner, 1985; Junker, 2000); the Christianization and colonization of the Spaniards (Agoncillo and Mangahas, 2000); to the Filipinos’ retaliation and raids against the abusive Spanish authorities (Dery, 1997; Palma, 2010). All these reflect Cebuano people’s resiliency to continue weaving of the *bakat* for economic value; despite its masked historical beginning and shrouded metaphysical form.

If not based on any influence of Islamic art, *bakat* remains a product of local residents’ interaction with the environment. It is a culture that is tied up to a specific set of practical signifiers (Pertierra, 2002) like any social interaction within and outside of the weavers’ group may or may not affect their hexagram perspectives. The likelihood of whether or not the Arab traders learn *bakat*, that argument is not that far since its origin is an approximation of different historical periods of time relative to historical accounts (Tiongson, 1994a, b; Leupp, 2003; Sta. Maria, 1998; Varisco, 2000; Junker, 2000). Varisco (2000) affirmed that as “Islam spread, Muslims would follow their own traditions, adapt those of others with whom they are in contact, and build on their own [...]” The animist religious beliefs of pre-colonial Cebuanos represents the weavers’ intimate connection with nature. Their art of weaving *bakat* symbolizes the union of the souls of the mortals and the spirit of *Laon* (Supreme Visayan Deity–The Ruler of Time) who dwells in Kanlaon Volcano. The woven *bakat* represents the mortals’ language of supplication that pleases *Laon’s* eyes, as a sacred offering and passion of the human hands.



Comparable to Islam's Sufism, the study of *bakat* unveils the Cebuano philosophy of *Handurawism* – a form of transcendence of the mystical power of *Laon*. *Handurawism* derives its root from *handuraw* – an inner reflection of the connection between the divine mysticism and sublime obedience of man in perfect harmony with the *kalikupan* (nature). Similar to Chinese Taoism and Japanese Shintoism, *Handurawism* connects the Filipinos to the bosom of nature that controls their maritime behaviour as farmers, fishermen and traders. The naming of the most towns and places in the Philippines on an endemic flora (Barili derives its name from a *balili* grass) and fauna (Buaya a vernacular name of a crocodile given to one village in Lapu-lapu City) (Benitez, 2018) reflects *Handurawism*. The naming of the days of the week into *Tigburukad* (Monday), the blooming flowers; *Dumasun* (Tuesday), the passing wind; *Dukot-dukot* (Wednesday), the igniting fire; *Baylo-baylo* (Tuesday), exchanging of farm harvest; *Danghus* (Friday), the flowing water; *Hingut-hingut* (Saturday), the breathing of animals; and *Ligid-ligid* (Sunday), the rolling stones (Palma, 2010); and the Cebuano farm rituals for *Harang* (ancestor worship), *Buhat silung* (for good fortune), *Sagangsang* (for abundant wine), *Damit* (for abundant harvest), *Balangkisaw* (for water deities) (Inocian, 2015) showed the intimacy of the Cebuanos to nature. These aforementioned pieces of the literature support the profound regard of *Handurawism* as an indigenous philosophy espoused from the deep respect of local knowledge and local Cebuano traditions.

In relation to the *bakat* and the *Kagome*, the six-star shape of the design infers a more profound dependency with nature where they source the bamboo as the primary material in the weaving process; their commitment on the struggle for survival, despite meagre income in a subsistence economy, reflects their intimate experience between *Laon* and nature. In a mathematical sense, the six-star shape of the *bakat* is a combination of opposites between *Laon* and nature or between *Malakas* (male), *Kusganon* in Cebuano and *Maganda* (female), *Maanyag* in Cebuano in a tale of a man and a woman in a bamboo split symbolizes strength and beauty of the Filipinos; and transmutations like sexual intimacy and harmony (a submission of *Kusganon* and *Maanyag* to *Laon*) reflect the essence of the basic tenets of *Handurawism*. The practice of traditional subsistence economy and the dependency of the bamboo in the community makes the *bakat* craft indigenous and sacred.

The shifting seasons of the year are essential in the environment's supply of raw materials for the weaving of *bakat*. Weavers use vines during the wet season and bamboo during the dry season. The use of bamboo strips in *bakat* weaving indicates a tedious stripping process that ensures its best quality compared to the natural vines. Its sizes depend on market demands. *Bakat* crafted with bamboo strips of medium sizes are demanded in the market for storage primarily for farm produce. Smaller sizes of *bakat* are used for decorative purposes and props during annual festivals. Large sizes of *bakat* are used for storage of heavy farm produce and other items.

The analysis of principles of aesthetic design applied in the *bakat* provides a plethora of art concepts that would make the weavers enhance their imagination for improvement on their craft in terms of contrast, balance, emphasis, rhythm, pattern, unity and movement. In terms of contrast, aside from the production of *bakat* to different sizes, weavers would think possible to dye the bamboo strips to create a colourful *bakat* to attract more customers. Aside from the symmetrical balance, the weavers would explore creating an asymmetrical balance that would respond to various functions of the *bakat*. The six-star rhythm of the *bakat* creates a simple pattern for the weavers' children to learn more easily in the weaving process. Hence, consistent rhythms create a pattern that would speed up the number of baskets woven a day to increase production. The plaiting of the bamboo strips gives the weavers' idea of unity that would provide strength and stability of the *bakat*, in relation to its size and intended function. When observing the rhythm and the pattern, the weavers can imagine the movement during the plaiting of the bamboo strips in hexagonal directions.

These seven principles of design offer budding scholars, artists, educators and culture enthusiasts to understand the intricacies of the *bakat* and find means to promote the craft to make it sustainable for the next generation. The weavers believe that the six-star shape suggests simplicity of the design and it provides wider functionality in terms of its holding capacity of the weight of farm product. Its wide functionalities reflect its sustainability, which is practical and environmentally friendly. The gendered status of weavers, their minimal income, their low educational attainment and their communal social pattern implies a traditional set up that necessitates the utilization of an indigenous model of development to improve the craftsmanship and industry of *bakat* among the concerted efforts of government, non-government sectors and the academic institutions.

In an indigenous model of sustainable development, the Rypkema's "Five Senses of Quality Communities in the 21st Century" promote greater development. In the "Sense of Place", the natural environment of the weavers, in the Barili's local context, strengthens the effective management of the BANIKA and MANABU and other members of the community to regulate and promote the *bakat* trade. The identified needs and attributes of the weavers maintain a common "Sense of Identity" that protects the financial viability of the weavers as cooperative members under the monitoring programs of the village elders or the master weavers.

The status and existence of the weavers are vital indicators for the *bakat's* transformation in the future or the "Sense of Evolution" of the BANIKA and MANABU. The "Sense of Ownership" determines the feeling of the weavers as primary stakeholders, vital in the achievement of the general welfare of the community. This "Sense of Community" requires certain obligations of the weavers to acknowledge their interconnectedness that binds an effective support system. Responding to minor problems of dissatisfaction in BANIKA and MANABU is immediate with the use of proper regulations and benefits granted to the *bakat* weavers. These five senses enshrined in the UNESCO's cultural development of community action in preparation for the establishment of the Schools of Living Traditions (SLT) in Barili would increase sustainability, similar to IMED.

The seasonal trading of *bakat* requires the most efficient system of management. Once, there is the establishment of SLT, weavers increase its production during the summertime when *bakat's* anticipated demands increase. The SLT can also find other markets for *bakat* products where the weavers do not engage in direct selling, but entrusting the SLT's marketing division to be responsible in the business operations of the industry to ensure the weavers' quality of life.

## 5. Conclusion

The unveiling of the art and craft of *bakat* in the town of Barili, Cebu opens to more opportunities of the BANIKA and MANABU *bakat* weavers to take advantage of the long traditions of *bakat* craftsmanship. The simple ways from the weaving of vines to bamboo strips produce different sizes of *bakat* for different uses. The sturdiness of *bakat* reflects its functionality. For more than 15 centuries, its sturdiness strengthens the weaver's desire to continue their craft despite minimal income. Its aesthetic background in terms of art principles remains an expression of the weavers' souls in responding to the constant struggle to their family's daily subsistence. Though weavers do not produce art; they produce craft for its intended function and economic signification. However, there is a need for intellectual discussion for art scholars to revisit the aesthetic principles used in the six-star debut in the weaving process of *bakat* in order for the next generation of artists learn and appreciate its art and its philosophical and religious underpinnings to make the *bakat* craft more sustainable in the community, similar to the cultural models of Afghanistan, India, Turkey, Rwanda, Japan and the state of Philadelphia in the USA have done.

This reality offers understanding and windows of opportunities for educators, artists and cultural workers on the intricacies of *bakat* weaving. Its economic and commercial

impact measure the weavers' values of resiliency to hardships, adaptation to change, passion for craftsmanship, strong sense of community and family centeredness that contribute to economic significations that shape the Cebuano sense of cultural identity and national pride; indicative on Rypkema's "Five Senses of Quality Communities in the 21st Century". Despite minor glitches in the BANIKA and MANABU, the weavers of Barili make their weaving and farming life sustainable. In the context of *bakat* art of weaving, issues related to gender, education, income, product regulation and promotion remain the challenges of the BANIKA and MANABU that need immediate response through the SLT. The adoption of the UNESCO's framework for cultural development, as provided in the vision and goals of the National Commission on Culture and the Arts in the Philippines, necessitated the reinforcement of the establishment of the SLT. The realities of the art and craft of *bakat* hinge Anielski's IMED where human, social, culture, built and economic assets of the town of the BANIKA and MANABU managed to realize effective decisions for the establishment of a Creative Weaving Hub in Cebu, similar to Baguio's Creative City. The planned economic development of *bakat* craft measures its effective preservation and promotion, with maximum participation of the *bakat* weavers and other stakeholders in the community of the town of Barili.

## 6. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following measures will be considered. First, the officers and members of the BANIKA and MANABU will constitute the creation of the Culture and Arts Council that will be responsible to promote awareness of the artistic background of *bakat* craft, more especially the young generation to learn the skills and to enhance its functionality. Second, under the SLT, a Marketing Division will be created to measure its economic and commercial impact of production and sales. The division will ensure product quality, advertisement and promotional strategies to increase production and sales. Third, using the IMED, the UNESCO's framework and the SLT, efficient monitoring of *bakat* production and weavers' benefits will be ensured by BANIKA and MANABU top management, even if with or without government support.

Fourth, through the SLTs, resiliency to hardship will be realigned to its vision; adaptability to changes will be included in its training workshops; passion for craftsmanship will be imbibed in the minds of the young by the master weavers and be introduced to the new and emerging weavers; strong sense of community by boosting the morale of the cooperative members; and family centeredness where members of the cooperative invite their family to work in the cooperative to ensure its economic sustainability. Fifth, this framework is supported by the National Commission on Culture and the Arts or NCCA in the Philippines as one of its noble goals, to ensure the future modernization and development of the art and craft of *bakat*.

Sixth, for the town of Barili to have the SLT, the town officials and the BANIKA and MANABU officials will write a proposal to NCCA or to the Culture, Arts and Design Association of the Philippines-Foundation, Incorporated (CADAP-FI), for the approval of its required funding. Last, the SLT and the CADAP-FI will transform the town of Barili into "Creative Weaving Hub in Cebu" that will promote tourism and sustainable development in the region and improve the weavers' quality of life and increase income and robust production of *bakat*.

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