

# Cultural Practices of the Indigenous Peoples (IPS) of San Emilio Ilocos Sur: Then and Now

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## ABSTRACT

The cultural practices of the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) are a reflection of their ancestral origin. The performance of these practices indicates their sacredness and respect for their traditions. This investigation is an exploration of the cultural practices of the Indigenous People that have been performed in the past and in the present. This is a qualitative study employing an ethnographic approach with 12 key informants. These informants are elders, leaders, and residents of San Emilio, Ilocos Sur. Unstructured interviewing and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were the means of obtaining data and were analyzed through Analytical Induction (AI) and Grounded theory. As a result, the performance of the cultural practices such as Pidis, Sakeb, Sawid, Legleg, Begnas, Paama, and Dwayya of the IPsin San Emilio, Ilocos Sur, has surpassed the challenges of modernization, technology and the existence of different religions in their place. With these circumstances, the Indigenous People of San Emilio collectively advocate these cultural practices for the younger generations. Despite uncontrollable factors affecting these traditions like religion, modernization, and the death of the elders who can perform these practices, they still aspire to their preservation. The theory of collectivism was deduced from the results obtained from their responses and observed behaviors during the performances of these cultural practices. The Indigenous People value their traditions as representations of their identity as a tribe.

**Keywords:** Cultural practices, Indigenous Peoples, ethnographic, collectivism

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The cultural practices of the indigenous peoples are representations of their ingenuity and uniqueness as a tribal community. The carrying on of these traditions amidst modernization and the dominance of technology is embedded in their struggles, beliefs, and aspirations. These cultural practices are kept in their hearts, and they are performed for the young generation's appreciation and inheritance. The Indigenous People cultural practices are never spared from undergoing changes due to some factors that aren't within their control.

The town of San Emilio is occupied by the Indigenous peoples like the Bago, Kankannaey, Ibaloi and Tinguian. The place is predominantly occupied by Bago. According to the conclusion of the Bago Tribal Congress, they are the hill tribe dwellers and original inhabitants in the border regions between Ilocos and Cordillera mountains different from their neighboring tribes and other adjacent ethnic groups whose ancestors are early inhabitants of the country prior to colonization. It is believed that Bago communities existed in the country before the arrival of the Spaniards and during the process of Christianization by the Spanish Catholic missionaries. They were called as "Bagong Kristyano" by those who preceded them and to

this date are now called Bagos (Alviento,n.d.).

Through migration and other forms of settlements, undeniably there other IPs aside from the Bago who now live in the town of San Emilio Ilocos Sur. This information was obtained from the residents of the place. These IPs include the Kankanaey, Ibaloi and Tinguian. The Kankanaey are part of the collective group of indigenous people known as the Igorot people. The Kankanaey live in western Mountain Province, northern Benguet, northeastern La Union and southeastern Ilocos Sur(Fry,2006).The Ibaloi, on the other hand, are an indigenous ethnic group found in Benguet Province of the northern Philippines. The Ibaloi are one of the indigenous peoples collectively known as Igorot (igudut, “hill-dwellers”), who live in the cordillera central of Luzón(Sumeg-ang,2005).The Itneg (exonym “Tinguian” or “Tingguian”) are an Austronesian ethnic group from the upland province of Abra in northwestern Luzon, in the Philippines.

Historically, the Bago-Igorots were officially recognized by the National Commission on Indigenous People(NCIP)as an indigenous group in 2003 although the campaign for its recognition was said to have started as early as 1997. Elders described the enactment of Republic Act no. 8371 or The Indigenous People’s Rights Act of 1997 as a significant event that paved the way for the recognition of the Bago-Igorots(Pawilen & Pawilen,2020).

Under RA 8371, it clearly defined the IPs or Indigenous cultural communities as groups of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription or ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions, or who have, through resistance to colonization, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos(Chapter II, Section 3, letter h.)

Culture should be defined as a form of structured practice. Structure in this sense is a set of virtual schemas, which cannot be reduced to any of their particular exemplifications, “templates,” or “procedures,” filled with the actual content of resources. The relationship between structure and culture is a dual one: the components of an individual’s environment become resources as exemplifications or concretizations of schemas, which are instilled and confirmed in this way(Sewell,1992).Culture is a system of beliefs, customs, literature, art, religion, morality, and attitudes that guide man’s behavior in society. It is a social heritage transmitted from one generation to another and commonly shared by people in a particular society (Cawili and Bakidnan,2016).Culture is a very complex body of knowledge based on creation stories that need ethical approaches to capture, analyse, interpret and preserve(Mit et al,2012).

Cultural heritage and natural history of a nation has a very high value and is unique. It is an identity that can be introduced to the world. Cultural heritage affirms our identity as a people because it creates a comprehensive framework for the preservation of cultural heritage including cultural sites, old buildings, monuments, shrines, and landmarks that have cultural significance and historical value. Culture and its heritage reflect and shape values, beliefs, and aspirations, thereby defining a people’s national identity. It is important to preserve our cultural heritage, because it keeps our integrity as a people. The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next ([https://amf.net.au/library/uploads/files/Diversity\\_Matters\\_Forum\\_overview\\_and\\_theme\\_summaries\\_2014.pdf](https://amf.net.au/library/uploads/files/Diversity_Matters_Forum_overview_and_theme_summaries_2014.pdf)).

Anaya (2004) asserts that the right of the indigenous peoples to maintain the integrity of their culture is a matter of equality, of being free from historical and ongoing practices that have treated the indigenous cultures as inferior to the dominant culture.

Modernization is one of the influencing factors to Aetas’ traditional cultural practices on pregnancy, childbirth, marriage, death, and burial(Grey,2016).Nevertheless, all cultures are constantly changing and adapting their beliefs and norms in response to the changes that occur day in and day out in the social,

economic and intellectual environment. In this sense, there is no such thing as a traditional culture; no culture in the world today is exactly the same as it was a generation ago or even last year (Durston, 1993).

Relative to the purpose of this study, David (2013) used ethnographic approach to document the culture, the oral literature, traditional skills that included traditional dances, songs, chanting, traditional cooking and traditional medicines. of the Ayta Magbukon for its preservation. These data was presented again to the cultural masters for validation using the triangulation approach. Results show the significance of this data in the SLT Program in the transmission of the Ayta Magbukon indigenous culture to the young.

Indigenous peoples around the world have preserved distinctive understandings, rooted in cultural experience, that guide relations among human, non-human, and other-than human beings in specific ecosystems (Bruchac, 2014). Indigenous knowledge is not wholly unscientific, and concepts of “science” and “tradition” need not stand in opposition, since these are potentially complementary ways of organizing human understandings and interactions with the natural worlds (Apffel-Marglin 2011; Augustine 1997; Smith 2012). The right of the indigenous peoples to maintain the integrity of their culture is a matter of equality, of being free from historical and ongoing practices that have treated the indigenous cultures as inferior to the dominant culture (Anaya, 2004).

Despite western influence and so-called modernization, the Indigenous people have maintained their unique culture to this day. In spite of the influence of lowland people, this culture has survived. The Kankanaey, Tinguan, Ibaloi, and the Bago who are identified as Indigenous people are not far in the way they carry their rituals, practices, customs, systems, and beliefs.

The premises above serve as the foundation of this research. This investigation shall carry the objective of witnessing, observing and documenting the cultural practices and will look into how the Indigenous peoples (IPs) in San Emilio Ilocos Sur carry with them these practices then and now.

### **Framework of the Study**

Collectivism is a cultural value that is characterized by emphasis on cohesiveness among individuals and prioritization of the group over self. Individuals or groups that subscribe to a collectivistic worldview tend to find common values and goals as particularly salient.

Cultural views are believed to have a reciprocal relationship with macro-level processes such as economics, social change, and politics. The collectivism-individualism dimension of culture influences economic development: collectivistic culture theoretically promotes growth.

Schwartz (2012) Theory of Basic Values emphasizes that at the heart of the theory is the idea that values form a circular structure that reflects the motivations each value expresses. This circular, that captures the conflicts and compatibility among the ten values is apparently culturally universal.

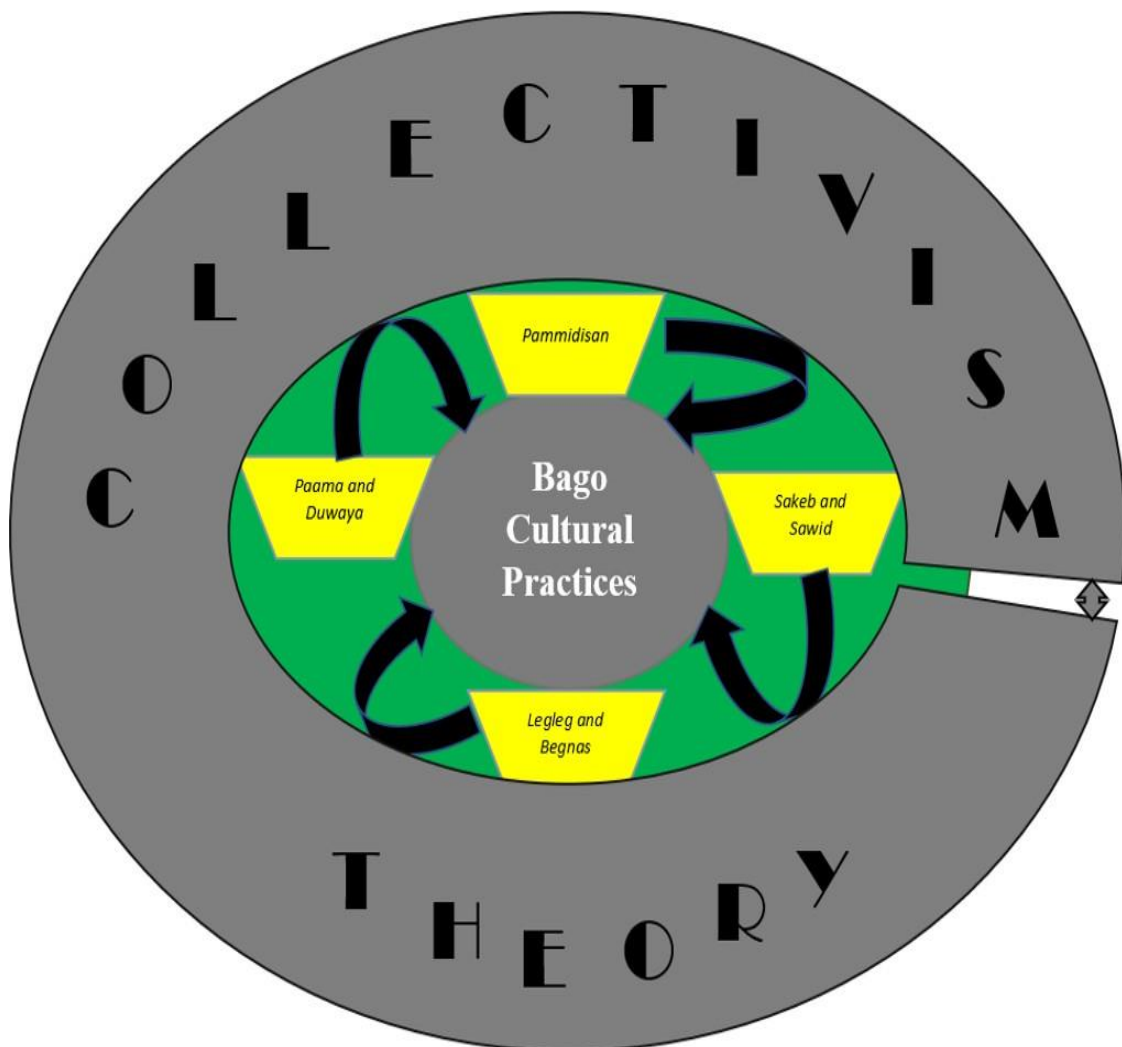
Cultural theory of risk developed by Douglas et al. In 1980's suggests that people tend to perceive danger and respond risk in different ways that these different ways tend to encourage the development of different social structures. It goes on to suggest that these structures can be viewed in terms of group and grid how cooperative they are and how much control above is exercised (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1983). Cultural theory of risk focused on collective, social, and shared conventions that influence individual perceptions (Douglas, 1992).

Cultural values are understood to be dynamic and perceived through different lenses, but what is crucial is to accept the changeability and significant changes of values from one culture or period to another (Hall, 1997; Mason, 2006; Heras et al., 2013). This can be seen when four distinctive cultural values of social,

historic, aesthetical, and scientific were established by UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee (2008) and later were followed by economic, political, ecological, and age to complement the conservation development process (Riganti and Nijkamp, 2005; Piper, 1948; Lowenthal, 1985; Reigl, 1982).

Cultural preservation is vital for peaceful cooperation of civilizations. If people have a strong sense of self-identity through culture, they are more likely to interact peacefully with other cultures, with respect for the diversity of value systems and religious beliefs as well as the tangible aspects of culture(Thomas-Hoffman,n.d.)The need to preserve one’s culture is essential, particularly due to the role it plays in preserving the identity of a specific group of people. Having a strong sense of self identity through culture creates a larger possibility for peaceful interactions with other cultures while also observing respect for the differences between groups. Maintaining cultural differences is in fact not new in international law(Kugelma,2007).

Threats to cultural preservation also persist, with forces such as modernization, socio-economic development, and migration influencing indigenous people to absorb these ideologies and systems. Ethnic identity is in peril of being lost primarily due to rapid urbanization brought upon by the call to synchronize societies into the strife for a global community. This rapid urbanization forces minority groups to undergo autopoiesis, or the process of self-reorganization of one’s on culture(Goda,2009).



**Figure 1**

**Simulacrum**

The simulacrum presents the cultural practices that are being performed by the Indigenous Peoples of San Emilio Ilocos Sur from the olden times up to the present time such as Pidis, Sakeb, Sawid, Legleg, Begnas, Paama and Dwayya. The theory of collectivism best characterizes the Indigenous people. Their performance of these cultural practices manifests their collective efforts. And as a tribe, they value their traditions and carry them all throughout this present time. They believe that these cultural practices are performed meaningfully when they perform together. The performance of the latter brings back their origin and eventually reflects and forms their truest identity.

## **Problem**

### **Research Question:**

**What are the cultural practices that are practiced by the IPs of San Emilio Ilocos Sur then and now?**

### **Sub-questions**

1. How do Indigenous people perform their cultural practices then and now?
2. How do cultural practices are performed as time passes by?
3. What are the hopes and aspirations of the Indigenous people in relation to the preservation of their cultural practices?

### **Scope and Limitations**

This research is limited to the exploration of the cultural practices of the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in San Emilio Ilocos Sur. This study did not cover all the cultural practices but it is only limited to information on the cultural practices narrated by the key informants. Particularly, these cultural practices included in this research are Pidis, Sakeb, Sawid, Legleg, Begnas and Dwayya.

The researchers intended to examine the data for patterns and themes across the participants of the study. The results of the analysis included the voices during interview and photo documentation during the performance of cultural practices.

Specific limitations inherent in this research study included 1) sensitivity to the topic; 2) participant limitations (reluctance, anxiety, time constraints); 3) the researchers' relationships with the participants, and 4) the methods used within the study (semi-structured interviews and observation). These limitations might have had an impact on the trustworthiness of these findings.

### **Importance of the Study**

This study will be of enormous benefit to the Indigenous people of San Emilio Ilocos Sur. Result provides them the rare opportunity to showcase diversity and the uniqueness of their culture. This investigation will further establish awareness on culture preservation.

### **Literature**

Often, people define culture only as it relates to the art and heritage of Native or Indigenous People. However, culture has greater meaning and should be applied to both dominant and minority populations in both developed and developing countries. At the World Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico City (1982), participants defined culture as "the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and

emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.” (UNESCO, 1972) This broad definition of culture extends beyond art and heritage, and recognizes the intricate tapestry of culture that defines societies.

Ruiz Palacios(2023)presented the first analytical experience of cultural changes in the Lajas population by analyzing their social perceptions and cultural manifestations. Results revealed that in the town of Lajas, while the population recognized ways in which their customs have changed in recent decades, they were unable to determine whether or not such changes affected their cultural identity and the preservation of their cultural heritage.

Cultural identity is complex and can be defined in different ways, and in the current interaction context of globalization and technological development, where social interaction and socio cultural manifestations are in increasing evolution and are exposed in virtual environments, any social group can harbor multiple cultural identities (Heisey,2011).Cultural identity in relation to citizen participation shows a dialogue and interaction without social classes, where social resilience in the face of changes allows reorganization and maintenance of its structure and group identity (Horgan & Dimitrijević,2019)

Development is both a threat and an opportunity to the cultures of the world, and economic globalization is at the core of the debate of how to preserve the cultural identity of diverse populations while working to provide the benefits of globalization to all people. International trade often brings material goods into countries that displace traditional goods, yet it also provides opportunities to enhance the economies of diverse populations through the inherent value of traditional art and practices. The struggle to maintain cultural identity in the face of development came to the forefront of international debate in the 1960s during decolonization. Models of development at the time stressed modernization through industrialization and urbanization. These models threatened the established cultures of diverse populations and as people began to find political freedom, they also began to challenge the homogenization, or “Westernization” of their cultures (UNESCO, 2003a). In response, the international community began to incorporate the protection and preservation of culture into development models, recognizing the importance of cultural identity to the maintenance of society and finding ways to use culture to enhance the development process.

Alviento and Nisperos (2008), mentioned that the tribal communities are the more than 12 million descendants of the original inhabitants of the Philippines archipelago who have somehow managed to resist centuries of colonization and in the process have retained their own customs, traditions and life ways. Some even believed that these indigenous people are gradually fading because of rapid commercialization and modernization.

Indigenous peoples (IP) and the cultural attributes that define them have survived with great resilience in the face of tremendous adversity suffered through centuries, despite the designs of both early colonizers and more recent liberal assimilationists. They have survived as they have striven to maintain the cultural integrity that makes them different while adapting, often ingeniously, to the changing conditions around them. What we see are peoples who are determined to be part of this world as viable communities – indeed, as self-determining peoples – and not to be relegated to histories of conquest or pre-modernity, or to be among the objects of tourists’ voyeurism (Anaya, 2004).

Half a century ago, cultural heritage was widely considered consisting mainly of monuments and movable objects. Nowadays, however, it is increasingly seen as consisting of both tangible and intangible elements. In our time, the transmission of this heritage from generation to generation is seriously threatened by industrialization, urbanization, migration, armed conflicts, environmental deterioration, consequences of mass tourism and other factors leading to cultural uniformity (Matsuura, 2005).

## Objectives

People in the community hold values and beliefs collectively that form part as their cultural practices. The performance of these cultural practices is believed to be a concrete representation of their uniqueness and diversity. As a member of the community who thrives and lives by these cultural practices express hopes and desire for their preservation.

This study explores the cultural practices of the Indigenous people taking the lens of the narrator so that in the end a comprehensive conclusions about how societies and individuals function.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study is a qualitative research employing ethnographic approach, as this study looked into the cultural practices of the Indigenous People(IP) of San Emilio, Ilocos Sur. Ethnography according to Caulfield(2023) is a research method that is flexible and gives the benefit of gaining a deep understanding of a group's shared culture, conventions, and social dynamics. Ethnography is best conducted by researchers that are not part of the cultural group to make it easier for the researcher to see what is happening in the setting (Grbich, 2007; Higginbottom, 2013; Knoblauch, 2005; Morse & Richards, 2002); describe the culture and social interactions of a particular group or subgroup; involves extensive immersion in a natural setting(Lichtman,2013,p.72) takes a cultural lens to the study of people's lives within their communities (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Fetterman, 2010).

### Research Setting

The study was conducted in San Emilio, Ilocos Sur from September 2021 to March 2023. The researchers observed details and provided full attention to the participants during their performance of some of the cultural practices.

### Sampling

Purposive sampling using the maximum variation sampling was utilized to provide a wide variation. There were 12 key informants who were interviewed. The IP members whose age are 60 years old and above, respected elders and younger members were invited for interview and for the Focused Group Discussion (FGD). The participants were Indigenous People in ethnic affiliation and residents of San Emilio Ilocos Sur, willing to be interviewed to share rich information about their cultural practices were main criteria in choosing the sampling of this study.

### Population and Locale of the Study

The study necessitates the involvement of the Indigenous People(IP) members identified as elders, and leaders in San Emilio, Ilocos Sur. There were a total of 12 who served as key informants broken down as four (4) elders, two (2) leaders and six (6) residents. They voluntarily submitted themselves for the interview and Focus Group Discussion(FGD). As part of the documentation, the performance of the Pidis ritual, 17 Indigenous people elders and leaders of San Emilio Ilocos Sur participated. This event was held in Paltoc, San Emilio Ilocos Sur.

### Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers sought permission from the National Commission for Indigenous People(NCIP)

provincial level for their endorsement for the issuance of Certification Precondition. The issuance of it gave permission to the researchers to conduct the consultation and the study. But prior to this, a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) was signed by the researchers, the elders and leaders of the Indigenous people of San Emilio Ilocos Sur. The MoA indicates the terms and conditions in the conduct of the study. One of the terms stipulated in the Memorandum of Agreement was to include not only the Bago but other IPs in San Emilio to serve as participants of the study.

Interview, direct observations, Focused Group Discussion (FGD), diary studies, video recordings, photography and artifact analysis were employed to obtain meaningful responses from the identified participants who were chosen based on the criteria set by the study.

### **Data Analysis**

In the analysis of data, Analytic Induction (AI) and Grounded theory approach were employed. Analytic Induction is a systematic method which generates, refines, and validates generalizations. This method was first conceived by Znaniecki (1934), and further developed by W. S. Robinson and Lindesmith (1947).

On the other hand, Grounded theory approach permits the development of “sensitizing concepts”. The generation of theory is from the ground up. Data collection and analysis may be simultaneous, while theories are formed on the basis of some data and then tested and refined against further data (Blumer, 1969).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Since this study involved the participation of the Indigenous People (IP), the researchers sought clearance from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) regional office for the issuance of a certification precondition (CP). This CP and Free and Prior Informed Consent, as prescribed under NCIP Administrative Order No. I-series of 2012, the Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) and Customary Laws (CLs) Research and Documentation Guidelines of 2012, were issued on March 4, 2022. The NCIP personnel and the researchers presented to the elders and leaders of the Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples (ICCs and IPs) from San Emilio, Ilocos Sur, before the conduct of the study. The terms and conditions stipulated in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) were discussed comprehensively. The results of the study were validated by presenting to the IP elders and leaders facilitated by NCIP personnel that include the Legal Officer. The presentation was facilitated by the NCIP personnel. Adherence to the procedures and guidelines in the conduct of the study involving the IPs was strictly followed.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the analysis of the responses that were transcribed and coded as a result of the observations and interview with the participants involved in the study.

### **Findings**

The Indigenous people, as an ethnic group, aspire to preserve their cultural practices as these are considered sacred and priceless inheritance they acquired and learned from their elders. These cultural practices were not taught to them directly but acquired them naturally through observations and participation. The following cultural practices were shared:

#### **The Performance of *Pidis* as a determiner of destiny of the future events, situations or conditions**

The performance of *Pidis* is one of the traditions known to every IP of San Emilio, Ilocos Sur. The



performance of which depends on their purpose. Its value and significance is founded in their belief that before any event shall take place, the elders shall consider the signs by examining the liver and the vile of an animal like a native chicken or a native pig. In their own context, the performance of Pidis becomes very significant for wedding, political aspiration, war, harvest, sapit and among others. For them, Pidis can be classified as **delway**, **sudek**, **ikban** and **piswid**. During the performance of pidis, when it manifests that the vile is full and it is more elongated than the liver, this signifies a favorable condition to the future events like wedding, harvest and other events. To the elders, this is called **delway**. On the other hand, **sudek** is when the vile is covered by thin veins. It is their common belief that this does not bring favor to them. This provides a clear message and at the same time it serves as a warning for them not to continue anymore their endeavor like going to war, attending sapit or aspiring to become a political candidate. When the liver and the vile are the same in size, the pidis is classified as **ikban**. This signifies a fair chance for any undertaking like going to a war or running for a position in the government. **Piswid** is when the vile is said to be in an erected position. This means winning whenever they go to war, attend sapit or aspire for a political position. Whenever they go to war, they believe that if the pidis is classified as piswid, they will not encounter any untoward incidents that may harm them. During olden times, it has become their practice to perform pidis especially when villagers would go to war. They need to see what chance awaits them. It is a strong belief that the positions of the liver and the vile helps them determine their destiny.

This “*Pidis*” is a tradition performed by the elders (panglakayen) at places like abong, Dap-ayan, at the house of the elder, or at the house of the barangay leader. Dap-ay, or Dap-ayan, is a place in the barangay that is used as an assembly area for the IPs. This place is also a depository for their *common* (*utensils* and other materials used for cooking). These are being used during gatherings or celebrations in their own village. Along with the animal are tapey and etag (smoked meat). These are being offered then by the elder leader as they pray to their god, called Kabunian. They offer the meat of the animal, *tapey*, and *etag* (*smoked* meat) as *atang* (food offering), and the rest is eaten by the IPs who attend the ritual.

To the young generation, as shared by a younger participant, he expresses his awareness of these practices like Pidis and would want their preservation for their own sake, thus said:

**Participant:** “As an IP, I am aware of the different cultural practices that are performed in our community. There is this ritual that necessitates a four legged animal. Its liver’s and vile ’s position is a determiner of the success of an event that will take place. Our elders perform it and call it Pidis. I learned that this is being performed to anticipate untoward incidents that may occur during the event.”

The experiencing and the witnessing of the performance of this practice happened before undertaking our activity in their place. The elders believe that Pidis should be performed before conducting our purpose. Our encounter with the elders who perform this tradition allows us to see how they personally value their tradition that it shall not exempt anyone from doing it. The performance of Pidis is coupled with a prayer ritual. The elders (panglakayen) offer a prayer after their examination of the liver and the vile of the animal like native chicken or a native pig.

A religious manifestation is part of a group and individual self-perception (constructed authenticity) found in a religious festival, in a specific space and time; it also adds value to the overall experience, and the participants identify with particular local expressions (Park.Choi, Lee, 2019; Olsen, 2002; Varga & Guignon, 2017).

## The performance of Sakeb and Sawid as a tribal death practices

### Sakeb

If someone dies outside the village, the family should inform the elders. Sakeb shall be performed before

they take the body into the village. To their belief, this is performed so that the village and the people especially the family of the dead one will be protected. They believe that the performance of Sakeb will give them protection from any untoward incidents and the dead will not bring bad luck to the village. Their tradition of Sakeb dictates that this shall be performed right at the entrance of the barangay. This involves the preparation of tapey, piyek (young chick) and etag (smoked meat) are used in the performance of this practice. The elders pray to Kabunian that nobody in the village will suffer the same incident or fate—that is to die anywhere.

**Participant:** *“It is always a prayer that we die inside our own dwelling. This practice was done by our great elders, and it has become very sacred to us. We are afraid that the non-performance of this practice may bring a bad consequence to the people in the village”*

The significance and purpose of this cultural practice is clear to them as implied from their statements. One participant further said that:

**Participant:** *“When a sick relative of mine died on their way back to the village, I had to call the captain and informed him about it. By informing the leader of the barangay, the elders are informed as well. I had to do that because I was afraid of what it might cause after as a consequence for not following it.”*

Another participant affirms that:

**Participant:** *“As far as I can remember, none from the tribe has not followed Sakeb yet. Even during Covid-19 lockdown, the body of the dead IP who died outside our place was not admitted inside the village until Sakeb was performed by the elders. After it, the ashes were brought inside the barangay .”*

As stated by Anaya (2004), Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and the cultural attributes that define them have survived with great resilience in the face of tremendous adversity suffered through centuries, despite the design of both early colonizers and more liberal assimilationists. They have survived as they have striven to maintain the cultural integrity that makes them different while adapting, ingeniously to the changing conditions around them.

Despite the performance of Sakeb up to this time, elders confide their worries that this may not be performed anymore in the future as there are only a few elders already who can perform the rituals. Adding to this factor, there are no children who are invited to attend during the performance of Sakeb. Only the elders and concerned people (relatives of the dead) are present during the rites.

## **Sawid**

The *Sawid*, on the other hand, is performed when the dead body has been brought into the house without receiving the ritual of Sakeb at the entrance of the barangay. The elders will prepare an animal like chicken or pig, etag (smoked meat) and tapey are used in the performance of the ritual. This practice is performed as a prayer to Kabunian for the protection of the family, for them not to suffer the same fate. This is performed inside the house of the dead person.

As narrated by one elder participant:

**Participant:** *“If Sakeb is not performed at the entry of the barangay, Sawid has to be performed. When the dead body has entered the barangay and has been brought inside the house, we, elders have to perform the sawid.”*

When asked if this practice is mandatory, the participant replied:

**Participant:** “Nowadays, this has become optional. The decision primarily comes from the concerned family. If it is against the belief of the concerned family, they don’t ask the elders anymore to perform it.”

Relative to death practices, during the burial, all of the villagers have to clean themselves through a prepared hot water after coming from the cemetery. This is performed as protection from someone (bad spirit) who might be with them. The water cleanses them to cast away that spirit with them. After that another ritual would be performed by the elders. It requires the preparation of Lagundi leaves and water to cleanse the house of the bereaved family and for the members of the family as well.

Despite modernization, all of them do the rituals. All the villagers attend the burial and perform the rituals even the young ones. All of those who want to cleanse themselves with the lagundi leaves with hot water do this.

Strictly, the wife is not allowed to eat any of the offering given by the barangay folks. Her food is also cooked separately using other cooking utensil. This happens during the wake. She is allowed to join other family members during meal time but she is not allowed to eat the offering intended or prepared for the dead given by their relatives or villagers.

On the next day after the burial, another ritual is performed. The family of the dead person prepares one chicken as a food to be shared by all the members of the family for the cleansing of the wife. She should be cleansed before facing his/her family.

When asked why there are Indigenous people who are making these practices like the Sakeb and Sawid optional already. They narrate that there are members of the tribe who became members of other religions like Protestants, Pentecost among others. Only those with solid and strong belief in their practices perform the rituals of Sakeb and Sawid. But then, there are other IPs whose religion is non Catholic still perform these practices. Their faith did not change their belief in those practices.

**Participant:** “There are some villagers who are no longer performing these rituals Sakeb and Sawid practices. Since the elders who can perform the rituals are gone. Religion has become a factor also. They just pray when ritual is not performed especially to those members who have religious affiliations. If things like that happen, they just pray as these practices are not enforced by anyone from the village. But if there are some who are not doing these (Sakeb or Sawid) only a very few.”

This situation that beset the IPs conforms that of Ahren (2004) indicating that despite increase of attention directed toward the particular situation of indigenous peoples, they still face problems and hardships that few other populations have to endure. One of the most significant factors is non-indigenous societies’ failure to acknowledge indigenous peoples’ legal systems (i.e., their well-established codes of conduct regarding how to operate and co-exist within their societies).

As stated by Anaya (2004), Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and the cultural attributes that define them have survived with great resilience in the face of tremendous adversity suffered through centuries, despite the design of both early colonizers and more liberal assimilationists. They have survived as they have striven to maintain the cultural integrity that makes them different while adapting, ingeniously to the changing conditions around them.

Tangible cultural heritage must continue to be relevant to a culture, be frequently practiced and learned within communities, and passed down through generations, in order to be preserved. Protection requirements for tangible assets differ significantly from those for intangible cultural property, which must be ensured that both natural and cultural can be passed down from one generation to the next.

## The performance of Legleg and Begnas as an agricultural practices

### Legleg

When the rain came, the water from *pay as* (*small body of water*) is directed to the rice fields. This is done to prepare the planting of palay. After the water has been directed to the *kelleng* (ricefield) and after palay (ricegrain) have been planted, they will now use the water from the source called *payas* (small body of water). After these preparations come the performance of a ritual which is considered significant in their agricultural activity. This practice is called *legleg*. The performance of this practice is to offer a prayer to Kabunian that their plants will not suffer from drought and infestation. Most importantly, it is prayed that the water directed to the *kelleng* (rice filed) will be spared from drought. The performance of it requires the use of a native chicken as an offering. They also prepare *etag* (smoked meat) and *tapey*. An elder performs the ritual and makes an offering. The chicken to be prepared should not be an ordinary chicken. *Pidis* is performed beforehand.

When the palay are good to be harvested, they prepare chicken again to be shared by the farmers under the shady part of the field. This is done as a gesture of thanks giving. According to the lady elder participant, the owner of the field and the other farmers do this in their own field. But this can be participated by all the farmers present in their respective rice fields. All of those whose rice fields were watered perform the offering. And if there are ten groups then there must be ten native chickens to be used for the ritual and to be eaten eventually right there at the fields.

**Participant:**” During this modern time, with the advancement of agriculture and technology, the people in our place do not perform anymore the cultural practices that are related to agriculture just like legleg This cultural practice was performed last in 1979. If ever performed today, it is being short cut or modified.

Indigenous knowledge, according to Federici (2015), reinstates people’s closer relationship to the natural world; a relation that went through millions of years of evolutionary development but is being suppressed by the elements of modernity.

### Begnas

For the IPs, Begnas is a celebration of thanksgiving for the abundance and blessings the villagers received after harvest. The performance of this cultural practice is to ask and pray to Kabunian for good health and long life for all the villagers. This celebration strictly prohibits everyone to bring food or something that has a foul odor (*nalangsi*). During the celebration, the IPs of San Emilio are gathered together on the first day and share their harvests. People merrily dance the *tadek*, their ethnic dance. On the following day, the *ubaya* is performed. During this time, no member of the barangay is allowed to go out from their place. People strictly observe the celebration by not working for two to four days. The meat of the pig is shared to the members and it is distributed to their respective houses. During *ubaya*, they pray to Kabunian that their harvests will be enough to sustain their needs for the whole year. If an emergency case happens during the celebration, the concerned IP asks permission from the elders to attend to this emergency.

The performance of the *ubaya* of today has become an ordinary occasion but it is still performed up to this time but this time it is simpler. It is treated like an ordinary occasion like a fiesta that is celebrated yearly in the village.

When the palay (rice) are brought home then placed at the *kamarin* (barn )for storage and piling, another native chicken is prepared in the afternoon as an offering for their thanksgiving. A prayer is offered for the

protection of their palay(rice)from pests.During this modern time, with the advancement of agriculture and technology, this particular practice was performed last in 1972.

**Participant:** “The other practices related to planting are no longer performed by the IPs like putting their harvests in one place with the performance of rituals relative to it because of modernization and the presence of modern agriculture technology.And some would philosophically say that same prayer is always made so they just do it own their own. But the legleg is still practiced up to this time.”

As expressed by the Indigenous People of San Emilio, modernization is a factor in the non-performance of the traditions along farming. This observation reconciles that of Crutzen (2006) who indicates that the global rise of modernity and decline of Indigenous cultures from the 16th to the 21st century corresponded with an unprecedented negative impact of human society on its ecosystem, culminating in multiple environmental crises.

Furthermore, the study of Grey(2016) indicates the same result. *The Aetas'old beliefs and practices had been influenced by modernization. It simply shows their susceptibility to accept changes that may affect their way of life. Their traditional cultural practices that deeply rooted in their beliefs were difficult to neglect since it has already been part of their tradition for years.*

Threats to cultural preservation also persist, with forces such as modernization, socio-economic development ,and migration influencing indigenous people to absorb these ideologies and systems. Ethnic identity is in peril of being lost primarily due to rapid urbanization brought upon by the call to synchronize societies into the strife for a global community. This rapid urbanization forces minority groups to undergo autopoiesis,or the process of self-reorganization of one's on culture(Goda,2009).

## **The Performance of Paama and Dwayya as wedding practices**

### **Paama**

This practice is performed before a wedding rite takes place. The couple in the barangay seeks the intervention of the elders (panglakayen).The couple entrusts their agreements to the amma. The agreement is communicated to the parents of both parties through the elders who serve as amma. The elders make the necessary arrangement for the meeting of the couple and their parents. All agreements for the wedding are discussed in through he interventions of the elders.

As narrated by the elders, no woman and man in their village have the courage to tell their parents of their marriage plan during olden times. Because of this, couple seek for the advice of the elders to become witnesses to the arrangements made by the couple before the elders arrange meeting to their parents.

The council of elders (panglakayen) is composed of qualified members from the IP tribe who serve as arbiters and resolve disputes. They are not lawyers but elders who are trusted by the IP tribe because of their wisdom, dignity, morality and leadership. These elders exemplify respect and they are highly regarded by the villagers.

IP wedding tradition does not practice the giving of dowry or sab-ong. Both couple give their equal share for the expenses of their wedding rites.

**Participant:** “The “amma” will talk to the parents of the future couple to make arrangements like wedding schedule and other events that will take place during the wedding. IP tradition dictates that both the groom and the bride will share equally on the expenses or whatever things needed for their wedding. If the man is

raising cattle then this shall be his share. They value sharing of their resources for the wedding event. No sab-ong (dowry) is required from neither the bride nor groom.”

As stated by Fahmi,2019), marriage process is a culture that still preserved in indigenous community. This is not only about women and men relationship but also the matters of relatives, family, relationships, dignity and personal affairs depending on the concerned society structure. Marriage is first stage of the long life cycle of human.

### **Dwayya**

When everything is arranged for the couple, a wedding is set. The venue of the wedding is shaded or covered (malinongan) for the occasion. After the wedding rites, Dwayya is performed to offer a prayer for the couple, the blessing of the gifts and the handling over of the gifts to the couple. The elders perform this by reciting an advice to the couple but in a poetic manner and in a song like manner. It is like singing a lullaby song that invites someone into sleep.

Just like the gift inside the box, when its kind cannot be determined, the elder performing the **dwayya** would say:

Participant: Oh, whatever you are that is inside that box

if it happens that you are a pot

may it be blessed with abundant food

To be shared by the family for good

All the gifts are placed together for the performance of **Dwayya**. The elders use of simile and metaphors to address the inanimate objects(the gifts) make it more very entertaining and interesting for the guests and visitors who are present in the wedding celebration.

Participant:When the gifts are placed again inside the house, the pastor, elder or the captain now give them to the couple. The gifts are given to the husband first then the husband gives these gifts to the wife.

Participant: “We love listening to the dwayya performed by our elders (panglakayen).The elders being very poetic during its performance entertain us all who are present in the wedding celebration.”

There is also an alternation in the performance of dwayya between the elders from the parties of the groom and the bride. But if the other party(either the groom’s or bride’s side) is unable to perform it, the elders of the village perform it.

The money which is given as a gift to the couple receives this kind of dwayya.

Participant:”The money shall be kept safely and shall not be spent for any unnecessary things. It should not be used as a bet for “huweteng”(small time lottery).But if the money will be used to pawn a land then that’s the time it shall come out(addressing the money).”

The statement mentioned by the participant is the dwayya recited before keeping the money inside the baul (wooden cabinet).

This dwayya, as a wedding practice, is still performed by the elders. People in the community appreciate its performance because of its aesthetic and entertainment value.

*With all these practices they share to us, they admitted that their old beliefs and practices have been influenced by modernization. It simply shows that the IPs, are also susceptible to accept changes that may affect their way of life. Their traditional cultural practices that are deeply rooted in their beliefs were difficult to neglect since they have already been parts of their tradition for years.*

### **The Collectivism Theory**

As deduced from the responses and observations from the key informants of this study, the IPs see themselves as a part of a larger group. Their focus is on the behaviour that would emphasize unity rather than individuality. The cultural practices they hold onto up to this time require collaborative action in their performances. The performance alone of these cultural practices necessitates witnessing for their transmission to the next generation. The elders, leaders and residents of San Emilio Ilocos Sur who are recognized as IPs strongly show their high regard to their ancestral cultural practices and traditions. These practices are deeply rooted in their veins. These were never taught to them by their elders but they learned them by merely observing how their elders performed these cultural practices. The transmittance, therefore, happened naturally. Their sacredness and respect to their traditions are the driving factors for them to perform these despite their silent battle against modernization and existence of different religions in their own locality. With all these observations, their behavior and treatment of their practices shows a collective identity. Their behaviors and beliefs as manifested in their performances of the different cultural practices are being strengthened by their collective actions. The emotions they project as they recall how their elders performed these traditional practices long before their time echo a nostalgic feeling. The elders of this place exhibit their strong desire that these cultural practices be handed down to the younger generations' appreciation. Through their collective action and their own patronage to their ancestral upbringing, they value more than anything else their traditions. All the rituals performed considered as cultural practices performed by the IPs like the sakeb, legleg, dwayya among others. They carry with them the strong belief that these cultural practices reflect their truest identity as a tribal community.

As an abstraction from the data obtained from the participants, the collective view conforms with this definition:

Collectivism is a social psychological term that relates to the manner in which humans identify themselves and prioritize their goals. Collectivism, which is the opposite of individualism, focuses on the priorities of the group and not the individual. In a collectivist society, people identify themselves with the goals of the group much more so than the goals of individuals. Collectivism also focuses on things such as fitting into the group, behaving in ways that are line with social norms, group solidarity, and gaining a sense of identity from being part of the group. America is a more individualistic country (we do value individualism) whereas many Asian countries place a greater value on collectivism (<https://www.alleydog.com/glossary/definition-cit.php?term=Collectivism>).

The welfare and goals of a group are prioritized over personal goals of its members in collectivist cultures, whereas individualist cultures place greater emphasis on personal goals rather than goals of the group (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1999). Collectivism, as described by Triandis (2015) is a cultural pattern found in most traditional societies, especially in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. His article also describes collectivism as a psychological phenomenon and ends with an examination of the implications of globalization and economic development for changes in this cultural pattern, which may involve a weakening of some of its aspects. Cultural practices, has a transpersonal dimension, based in organizational routines that make it possible to categorize people and their actions as either belonging in a specific field or not.

## CONCLUSION

The performance of the cultural practices such as Pidis, Sakeb, Sawid, Legleg, Begnas, Paamaand Dwayya of the IPs in San Emilio Ilocos Sur have surpassed the challenges of modernization and the existence of different religions. Out of sacredness and respect to their traditions, the Bago collectively advocate these cultural practices for the younger generations' appreciation. Despite uncontrollable factors affecting these traditions like religion, modernization and death of elders, still, they aspire for their preservation. The theory of collectivism was deduced from the results obtained from their responses and observed behaviors during the performances of these cultural practices. The IP, as a tribe, value their traditions as representations of their truest identity and their rich heritage.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As there are cultural practices that are becoming optional for they have been substituted by modernized activities resembling their old traditions, a documentation of these practices is recommended. The archiving of these cultural practices as performed by the elders can be proposed to the local government of San Emilio for possible funding.

The passage of these cultural practices to the younger members of the tribe may be done by proposing the incorporation of the cultural practices in the education system in the locality to forever remember their humble origin and their forefathers' dreams and aspirations.

An orientation on the documentation of their cultural practices may be conducted as an extension activity of the College to help preserve their cultural practices.

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