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Traditional Fishing Practices: A Documentary

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ABSTRACT

Fishing is one of the livelihoods of Filipinos that show their ingenuity. Fisher folks in coastal communities developed and practiced different types of fishing methods and gears. Thus, this paper described the ecologically sustainable traditional fishing practices of cultural communities in Northern Panay. Results revealed that there were 31 fishing methods used by fisher folks categorized into passive such as arong, bira-bira, padugmon, tangab; active such as hudhud, pamana, pamanti, and pukot; pot such as timing, panggal, and bintol; and hand fishing such as pagpangaret, pamuho, panikop, and panulo. They still used traditional fishing methods and locally available materials, and apply indigenous ideas and skills in fishing. It was also found out that some fishing techniques depend on the habitat and behavioral pattern of fish.

1.Introduction

Northern Panay, which faces the Sibuyan Sea is replete with marine resources that sustain the livelihood of the locals in this area. For years, these communities have developed their own fishing practices unique to every locality, contributing to the rich cultural landscape of the Philippines. There are, however, there are limited studies conducted regarding the fishing practices in this part of the Philippines and comprehensive ones, like the one done by Kawamura and Bagarinao (1980), were done decades ago. With the intrusion of modern technology, these fishing practices are becoming at risk of extinction. The goal of this project is to document traditional fishing practices and make them accessible to the greater public through social media in the hope of stirring interest and awareness among the locals of the rich tradition and practices in Northern Panay.

Nowadays, people from all walks of life regardless of age and gender are engaging in social media. With this, the social media has been an effective platform of information dissemination and learning. This is an open online platform for all communities sharing bodies of water to share local knowledge, skills, activities, methods, and memories of ecologically sustainable fishing traditional practices both inland and coastal.

2. Objectives of the Study

This project aimed to document and highlight ecologically sustainable fishing practices of cultural communities in Northern Panay, Philippines.

Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Document traditional fishing methods in the coastal communities in Northern Panay.
2. Identify unique traditional fishing practices of fisher folks.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on sociolinguistic theory and theory of practice.

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4. Methodology

Research Design

This study used the descriptive method of research. Descriptive research describes what may exist to help uncover new facts and meaning. This involves the collection of data that will provide an account or description of individuals, groups or situations (Polit and Hugler 1999).

Locale of the Study

The data were gathered in different fishing communities and estuaries in Northern Panay, specifically in the selected coastal areas of the Province of Capiz, Philippines especially in Pontevedra, Pilar, Ivisan, Barra Roxas City, Punta Cogon, and Cagay; Sicogon Island; Carles; and Masbate.

Informants of the Study

There were 20 fisher folks coming from different identified fishing areas who served as key informants of the study. They were fisher folks in their respective places whose main source of livelihood was fishing. The barangay officials in the community recommended these informants.

Research Instruments

Data in this study were gathered through the use of interview guide and field notes. The interview guide contained a set of questions that guided the researchers in asking questions to the fisher folks. Field notes were also taken. They were the researchers' written account of what they saw, heard, experienced, and thought in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data.

Data Gathering Procedure

The following procedures were done to gather the needed data and answer the research objectives:

- Meeting with LGUs. Conducted consultative meeting with LGUs and fisher folks to orient them regarding the project.
- Field work/Data Gathering (interview, community fieldwork, documentation). Involved identification of coastal communities, interview with key informants, documentation of fishing gears and practices.
- Analysis of data. After the data gathering/documentation, the researchers analyzed the data to determine the narratives of the fishing practices/gears and their significance to the community.
- Posting and uploading of photos, videos, blog content. Information gathered by the researchers was made available on the online platforms.
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5. Results and Discussions

Traditional Fishing Methods

Based on the interviews, observations and documentation conducted by the researchers, the identified traditional fishing methods were the following.

The researchers documented a total of 31 fishing methods categorized into passive fishing, active fishing, pot fishing, and hand fishing.

In passive fishing, the fisher folks install their gears on the sea, river, or estuary and depend on the movement of the current to bring in fish. In contrast, the fisher folks in active fishing chase and capture target species with the help of gears. Active fishing methods include *hudhud, pagpangasag, pagataw, paiwag, pagsibot/pamaslay, palumoy, pamana, pamanti,* and *pukot*.

In pot fishing, the fisher folks use cages that come in different types (turtle-shaped type, box, and frustum), which are covered with netting. Depending on the design, a pot may have one or more entrances to allow entry of target organisms. The entrance varies in design from a simple slit, a funnel-shaped entrance, or a non-return valve. Pot fishing methods include *bobo, timing* and, *pagpamanggal*.

Hand fishing, the very basic fishing method, uses only the bare hands to grope or capture the fish. This includes *pagpangaret, pamatad/panihi, pamuho, pangsisi/panisi, panikop,* and *panulo*.

The researchers also observed that the fishing methods are named either after the type of marine resource being harvested or based on the gear used. For example, *panisi, panginhas, panihi, pamangrus,* and *pamusit,* among others are fishing methods derived from the type of marine resource being harvested. Meanwhile, *pamana, panulo,* and *pamintol* among others, were based on the fishing gear used. *Pamana,* for example, uses *pana* or spear, thus, spear-fishing. In *panulo,* the fisher uses *sulo* or torch.

This observation by the researchers is supported by the prior research of Monteclaro, Ankaru and Ishikawa (2017) who documented various fishing gears in Aklan and discussed that traditionally, fisher folks learn through observation and also by joining the folks in the community.

Table 1. Traditional Fishing Methods

Traditional Fishing Methods			
Passive Fishing	*Active Fishing*	*Pot Fishing*	*Hand Fishing*
Arong	Hudhud	Bobo	Pagpangaret
Bira-bira	Pagpangasag	Timing	Pamatad
Padugmon	Pagataw	Panggal	Panihi
Pagpamangrus	Paiwag		Pamuho
Taba	Pagsibot		Pangsisi/Panisi
Tangab	Palumoy		Panikop
Taon	Pamana		Panulo
Pamintol	Pamanti		
Pamunit	Pukot		
Batak-batak	Pamusit		
Saluran			

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Traditional Fishing and Related Practices in Fishing Communities

The following fishing and fishing-related practices were noted in the fishing communities:

Fishing Techniques

Fishing techniques depend on a fisherman's knowledge about the habitat and the movement of fish. Therefore, knowledge about the fishing spot and the way the fisherman places the trap is considered as an essential and intricate skill. One technique employed by the fisher folks to attract fish is the *kurantog.* It is a technique of noise-making to attract fish or to cause them to move around using pulse stick or wooden paddle.

In Punta Cogon, Roxas City, 44-year-old fisher folk demonstrated that the *karog*, a wooden, baseball bat-like equipment that serves as a paddle and used to hit or strike a banger (made of bamboo or wood) placed at the far end of the boat. The noise that emerges vibrate to the sea, causing the fish to move towards where the nets until they reach the gillnet. The entrapped fish would then be harvested by the fisher folks.

The intricacy of fishing technique is also transferred to the technological modification of fishing gear, particularly for the design of trap entrances. The design is adapted to the specific environmental settings of particular area, taking into account the environmental conditions (such as the movement of the tides) and fish behavior. The success of trap fishing depends largely on how much fish are led towards the entrance of the trap, following their usual movements through the water. For example, gears like *arong*, *bintahan*, and *saluran*are passive gears that capture fish during the ebb-/high-tide. The amount of fish caught depends on the flow of current, thus, the technique in positioning the gear will have to depend on the usual movement of the current. Adjustments are, therefore, made. These stationary gears are also constructed and demolished based on the season.

Food preservation

D*ried fish making* is a common practice in fishing communities. Locals find ways to preserve their caught or make money out of it aside from selling fish. For preservation for this household is both for subsistence and extra income. Those who catch only enough for the family could suffice subsisting these dried fish, especially in lean times. Those with a fleet of boats or with more than enough harvest would dry the fish, save some for day-to-day needs and sell the rest. Dried fish are sold in kilograms and may even cost more compared to fresh fish. As a means of food preservation, drying the fish eliminate the water from the food, usually through air and sun drying, thus, inhibiting the growth of microorganisms.

Knowledge on Tidal currents

Fishing depends on tidal currents, which could be oceanic, river, and wind-driven. Creation of stationary fishing gears result from the fisher folks' ingenuity based on their observations of the movement of tides. Relying on ebb and flow of tides are traditional indicators of poor or abundant catch. During high ebb (*taas ang hunas)* the catch is observed to be good since organisms from the sea flow to the estuaries. On the other hand, slow ebb (*ayaay)* brings poor catch since aquatic organisms remain in the sea.

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Weather Prediction

Fisher folks these days either look to the skies before they embark on fishing trip or rely heavily on radio and television to determine what type of weather awaits them. Without radio or television, as in olden times, though, they would have to look around them and rely on what nature tells them. The following are the indicators, *manami ang langit*(clear sky), *indi mabaskog ang hangin* (fair winds), *indi mabaskog ang balod* (moderate current), *may bituon ang langit* (starry night sky), and *gatukturuok ang manok sa aga* (the rooster crows in the morning). Signals from plants and animals are also utilized by the fisher folks to predict change in season. For example, *tag-ilinit* or summer is coming when the trees turns to red-orange/red. Rain will fall if the heat comes from the ground and the surrounding smells earthy. Also the croaking of frogs signal rainy season. However, there are instances when they would leave the shoreline with fair weather and, while in the middle of the sea, all of a sudden, strong winds will gather (called *untog).* If this is the case, the fisher folks remain stationary in the sea and remain for the sky to clear.

Sound and Attracting Fish

Kurantog or *pamanti sibot* is the act of noise-making to attract fish or to cause them to move around using pulse stick or wooden paddle. Fishermen use *karog*, a wooden baseball bat-like equipment specifically used to hit or strike a banger (made of bamboo or wood) placed at the far end of the boat to make many noise that would vibrate on the sea. The fish would move towards where they nets are placed until they reach the gilnet. The entrapped fish would then be harvested by the fisher folks.

Spotting a School Fish

Modern fishing methods involve the use of fish finder, but for fisher folks, they perform the *pamata* or observing the water surface to identify if there is a *gataw* or school of fish. If the water surface appears whitish with air bubbles, a school of fish most likely is present on the surface. At night, they would look for a glow under the sea, to indicate the presence of *bilong-bilong* and *sapsap.*

6. Conclusions

1. Local fishers still practice the traditional way of fishing, but their gears are now modified.
2. Fishing terms for fishing methods and gears vary in different fishing communities.
3. There are competition between small local fishers and big fishing vessels operated by big operators.
4. Livelihood of fisher folks largely depends on weather condition. Rich harvest of fish and marine products is also seasonal.
5. The fishing methods are named either after the type of marine resource being harvested or based on the gear used

7. Recommendations

1. Preserve those local practices and gears of fishers through documentation.

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2. Since fishing terms for fishing methods and gears vary in different fishing communities, it is recommended to consider contextualization and localization in using those terms. Thus, consideration of the variance of fishing terms and gears be given emphasis.
3. LGUs must base their planning in the culture and practices of the place to help those local fishers in sustaining their livelihood. This is to reach out those local fishers whose main source of living is at risks of extinction due to emergence of big fishing vessels.

Local government must consider some mitigations to lessen the effects of global warming to help those local fishers who mainly depends on the bounties of the sea for their daily livings. Skills training programs may be considered to capacitate the locals to indulge in other activities to earn a living if weather conditions may not favor their fishing activities and in times where harvests are too minimal to sustain their needs

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