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UNVEILING THE STORIES, MEANINGS, AND SYMBOLISM BEHIND THE PATTERN OF AMAKAN CRAFTS

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Abstract

Amakan weaving is a traditional Filipino craft made from woven bamboo strips, serves as a visual narrative of the nation's history, beliefs, and values. However, increasing commercialization and limited research often overlook the more profound cultural and symbolic significance embedded in its intricate designs, risking the loss of indigenous knowledge. This study uncovered the symbolism and meaning of amakan craft patterns to ensure their preservation as an essential element of Filipino cultural heritage. Employing a Descriptive-Qualitative research design, utilizing purposive sampling to select artisans, cultural experts, and elders. Data were gathered through on-site semi-structured interviews and documentation, with triangulation used to enhance credibility by cross-checking information from artisans, tourism staff, and customers. The research identified five traditional patterns, including Sawali (Diamond Pattern), which symbolizes wealth and abundance, and Sinadyap (Herringbone weave), derived from the local farming livelihood in Ginatilan. Other key patterns symbolize the ups and downs of life (Zig-Zag Pattern), spirituality and protection (Cross Pattern), and the enduring solidarity of the family (Balostre Pattern). Amakan weaving is thus revealed as a living tradition that showcases the values and authentic rural livelihood of the Ginatilan locals. These findings underscore the urgency of preserving Filipino cultural heritage, informing contemporary design practices, and sustaining traditional craftsmanship amid modernization and integration in educational curriculum.

Keywords: amakan weaving, traditional Filipino craft, cultural heritage, symbolism, indigenous knowledge

Introduction

Amakan weaving is a traditional Filipino craft made from woven bamboo strips, commonly used for walls in homes and shelters. Like other Indigenous art forms such as pottery, weaving, and tattoos, amakan patterns are visual narratives of the nation's history, beliefs, and values (Malong, 2023). Weaving is a shared human experience and a reflection of how people interact with both the material and conscious world; through such handicrafts, humans have discovered the potential of fibers when woven into patterns and structured forms (White & Franklin, 2024). While amakan is widely recognized for its durability and aesthetic appeal, there is limited research on the deeper meanings embedded within its intricate designs, leaving a significant gap in understanding its cultural and symbolic value. The increasing focus on commercialization and industrialization has reduced amakan to a mere decorative and functional material, overshadowing its role as a representation of Indigenous knowledge, craftsmanship, and social identity (Martinez, 2023). This study aims to address this gap by uncovering the stories, meanings, and symbolism behind amakan patterns, ensuring their preservation as essential elements of Filipino cultural heritage rather than forgotten relics of the past.

Within the culturally diverse Philippine archipelago, numerous traditional motifs serve as visual narratives of history, beliefs, and values. Among these cultural expressions is amakan, a woven bamboo mat traditionally used for walls, floors, and cladding. As part of the Filipino weaving tradition, amakan reflects the ingenuity of Indigenous craftsmanship, requiring a deep understanding of geometry, material properties, and hand-making techniques (White & Franklin, 2024). The weaving technique, also known as Laga weave in Ilocano, is a lightweight, two-way overlapping pattern that interlaces bamboo fibers at right angles, resulting in a sturdy yet flexible structure. This method ensures durability while allowing natural ventilation and balancing indoor air pressure during strong winds, making it an essential building material in rural Filipino homes (Pazon & Del Rio, 2018). The process of creating amakan is meticulous—bamboo is carefully collected, moistened to maintain flexibility, and woven into intricate patterns such as diagonal, zigzag, and diamond weaves.

Apart from its structural role, amakan also embodies deep symbolic significance, representing indigenous identity, craftsmanship, and a harmonious relationship with nature (Flores, 2017). However, modernization has led to a shift in aesthetic preferences, causing a decline in appreciation for traditional Filipino patterns in favor of foreign motifs, gradually diminishing the cultural meanings embedded in amakan weaving (Marifi, 2023). Despite its historical association with low-income housing due to affordability, amakan remains a sustainable and environmentally friendly material, aligning with modern green architecture and sustainable design trends (Villanueva, 2018). As White and Franklin (2024) argue, if the origins of these designs cannot be traced orally to their roots, one can only speculate about their more profound historical and cultural influences.

Moreover, these cultural influences are not only embedded in architectural materials such as amakan but also reflected in the symbolic designs woven into various Filipino art forms. According to Marifi (2023), the rise of modernization has shifted Filipinos' aesthetic beliefs toward adopting foreign motifs, disregarding ethnic design as a mere aesthetic tool, until the identity and meanings of these unique motifs become irrelevant in the design process. One example of this is the "Amakan Wall Pattern".

Traditional amakan weaving formerly symbolized Indigenous handicrafts, social identity, and natural balance (Java Moja, 2021). Amakan is usually made from bamboo grass, a plentiful and adaptable resource essential to the building process. After meticulous collection, the bamboo is woven into intricate patterns to create a strong, adaptable structure. Bamboo is bent and woven into precise patterns throughout the weaving process, which calls for skill and expertise to produce a sturdy and beautiful result. In addition to serving a practical purpose by offering stability and support, these patterns also enhance the wall's aesthetic appeal and individuality. People used Amakan in the past to build their houses because life was difficult, and they had a hard time affording expensive materials. Amakan patterns, which are frequently used in complex designs such as diagonal, zigzag, and diamond weaves, are prized not only for their aesthetic value but also for their utilitarian use in fortifying walls against high winds (Pazon & Del Rio, 2018). Amakan is known for its lightweight, breathable, and sustainable characteristics, making it an environmentally beneficial construction material that promotes natural ventilation and helps manage indoor temperatures in tropical areas.

For instance, the existing understanding of amakan emphasizes its use as a traditional woven bamboo mat in Filipino architecture, notably bahay kubo and other vernacular constructions (Flores, 2017). While amakan is well-known for its functional and ornamental applications, there has been limited information on the deeper meanings and symbolic implications of its patterns. The deep cultural and spiritual aspects of these designs are still little understood, even though their aesthetic appeal and usefulness have received much attention (Reyes, 2018). It leaves a gap in our knowledge of their complete significance in the customs, identities, and beliefs of the communities that make and use them. A deeper examination of how Amakan patterns might convey values, ideas, or stories beyond simple ornamentation is necessary. It should give particular attention to the underlying levels of meaning in these designs (Rodriguez, 2023). The emphasis on commercialization and industrialization has eclipsed its traditional value, leaving a void in understanding how amakan designs represent Indigenous knowledge, craftsmanship, and social identities (Martinez, 2023). It emphasizes the need for further study to uncover the tales, meanings, and historical context underlying amakan patterns, ensuring their preservation as more than just visual motifs but as important components of Filipino history.

In this context, understanding the symbols and meanings embedded in amakan patterns becomes essential, as it highlights Filipino cultural identity, craftsmanship, and creativity. Amakan weaving not only reflects human skill, social identification, and traditional knowledge but also reveals how industrialization has reduced its cultural relevance to a purely aesthetic or functional aspect (Del Rosario, 2021). Recognizing its historical and symbolic significance is critical to retaining its role beyond mere ornamentation and ensuring it remains a living expression of Filipino history (Gonzales, 2020). Furthermore, amakan's environmentally favorable features, such as natural ventilation and climatic adaptation, align with current sustainable construction methods, making it a desirable material for modern design (Dy-Metilla, G. 2023). The growing cultural distance from traditional weaving emphasizes the need for more study and discussion to revitalize and preserve indigenous skills. Furthermore, incorporating amakan-inspired patterns into current goods and design breakthroughs demonstrates their versatility, providing opportunities for cultural preservation while stimulating creativity

across industries (Cruz, 2020). Addressing the degradation of traditional knowledge and the declining awareness of amakan's symbolic meanings is critical to creating a more comprehensive understanding of its importance (Domingo, 2022). Scholars, architects, and cultural activists may help to preserve and revitalize this indigenous heritage in modern

This study aims to unveil the symbolism and meaning behind the patterns of amakan craft. This research aims to explore the stories and social identities intertwined in amakan designs and to understand how these patterns represent Filipino heritage, craftsmanship, and environmental understanding. Furthermore, it seeks to address the rising cultural disconnection from traditional weaving processes by highlighting the need for preservation and regeneration. This study will contribute to the broader discussion of cultural sustainability, people's creativity, and the incorporation of ancient knowledge into contemporary design and construction by revealing the underlying meanings of the amakan pattern. Using a descriptive qualitative research design, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the meaning and symbolism inherent in amakan patterns. The findings will contribute to the preservation of Filipino cultural heritage, inform contemporary design practices, and support initiatives at sustain traditional craftsmanship amid modernization.

In general, the purpose of this study is to describe the meaning and symbolism behind the patterns of the Amakan Crafts. Specifically, this study seeks to address the following key problems, namely, (a) What types of patterns can be observed in the Amakan art form? (b) How did the local population derive these patterns? (c) What are the symbolic meanings embedded in traditional Amakan patterns? Moreover, (d) How do these patterns reflect local heritage and craftsmanship?

Hence, the final output of the study will be published on various online platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, X, and TikTok, through an infographic that visually presents the stories, meanings, and symbolism of amakan patterns. It will feature traditional patterns alongside their cultural interpretations, offering both educational value and a way to preserve Indigenous knowledge. This visual format aims to deepen appreciation for Filipino heritage and keep traditional craftsmanship relevant in today's cultural and design landscapes.

Methodology

Design

The researchers will employ a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the symbolic meanings embedded in traditional Amakan weaving patterns. According to Hall and Liebenberg (2024), a descriptive qualitative research design focuses on providing rich, detailed descriptions of specific phenomena, making it well-suited for exploring the intricate patterns of Amakan crafts. This methodology emphasizes capturing the perspectives and experiences of individuals closely associated with the craft, thereby uncovering the deeper meanings and symbolism inherent in the patterns. By emphasizing direct descriptions, the researchers will maintain proximity to the data, capturing the complexities and nuances of the Amakan Patterns (Hall, 2024).

Participants And Sampling Technique

This descriptive qualitative research explores the symbolic elements in traditional Amakan weaving patterns; the selection of respondents and the sampling technique are crucial to obtaining rich, culturally embedded data. Ethical consideration must be

obtained before conducting and engaging with participants. The primary subjects will be the local artisans. *Artisans* actively engaged in the craft, possessing firsthand knowledge of weaving techniques and the cultural significance of various patterns. The researchers will identify these individuals by acknowledging their years of experience and their credibility as artisans. The following criteria will be utilized in identifying participants:

- I. No. of Years Experience with Amakan Craft Making
- II. Quantity and quality of Amakan crafts
- III. Community Recognition
- IV. Diversity and Regional Representations

Given the qualitative nature of this descriptive research, purposive sampling will be employed to intentionally select participants who can provide in-depth insights into the cultural symbolism of Amakan patterns. This method is appropriate as it focuses on individuals with specific knowledge relevant to the research objectives. Snowball sampling will be used, in which initial respondents refer other potential participants. This study will employ triangulation to strengthen the validity and reliability of feedback. Triangulation is a method that uses different sources of data, research methods, theories, or researchers to examine the problem from various perspectives (Bhandari, 2023). It will include individuals from the local Tourism Department, specifically the Tourism Director, and customers of the selected Amakan artisans.

Environment

The study will be conducted in the Municipality of Ginatilan (6028), Cebu, specifically in Barangay Salamanca. This Municipality consists of 14 barangays and belongs to the 7th district of the province, with a population of 16,906 based on the 2020 census (PSA, 2020). The chosen setting was determined by its unique range of Amakan design culture and its community collaboration with sustainability.

Instrumentation

The researchers will utilize a semi-structured interview guide to explore the symbolic elements embedded in traditional Amakan weaving patterns, focusing on their cultural significance, narratives, and the impact of modernization on these traditions. The guide is tailored for use with Amakan weavers, community elders, cultural experts, and younger community members. It will target 10 participants from Ginatilan, Cebu. The mode of delivery will be on-site interviews and documentation, supported by video and audio recording technologies.

To identify the significant meanings of the Amakan Wall patterns, the researchers offer a few methodological recommendations to guide semi-structured interview coding and analysis. The early phase will evolve from on-site interviews with participants, supported by audio and video documentation. Following the conventional transcription and translation of an interview (Smith & Adamczyk, 2020), the researchers will identify Amakan patterns and utilize the transcription for its descriptions. In general, the researchers will conduct on-site, semi-structured interviews with Amakan weavers, community elders, cultural experts, and younger members in Ginatilan, Cebu, using audio and video documentation to explore the symbolic meanings of traditional weaving patterns and analyze their cultural significance amidst modernization.

Data Gathering Procedure

BEFORE

The data-gathering process for this study was conducted in three phases: before, during, and after data collection. Before data collection, a literature review was conducted to understand the historical and cultural significance of the Amakan craft. Ethical approval will be secured, and purposive sampling will be used to identify artisans, cultural experts, and community elders with relevant knowledge. After that, the study's goal was explained to the participants, and their consent was obtained. Additionally, semi-structured interview guides and observation checklists were developed to ensure a structured data collection process.

DURING

During the data collection, in-depth interviews will be conducted to gather narratives on the meanings and symbolism of Amakan patterns. At the same time, observations were carried out in artisan workshops to document the weaving techniques, materials, and cultural expressions involved. Field notes, photographs, and audio recordings will be taken with consent, and, where applicable, focus group discussions were held to explore shared cultural interpretations. Data triangulation was also employed by cross-checking information from multiple sources to enhance credibility. These cross-checks will evolve between the data from the Amakan artists, Tourism Staff, and customers.

AFTER

After data collection, all gathered data were transcribed, organized, and analyzed to identify recurring patterns and meanings. A member-checking process was conducted, where preliminary findings were shared with participants to validate interpretations. Finally, the research findings were compiled into a structured paper and shared with the class or at a conference to promote appreciation and preservation of the Amakan craft.

Data Analysis

Utilizing descriptive analysis, the researchers will identify recurring patterns in the data, focusing on the symbolic meanings of amakan designs, their cultural significance, and the effects of modernization on their preservation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2012). This approach enables the identification of patterns in qualitative data, providing insights into cultural symbols and their transformations. To explore the stories, meanings, and symbolism embedded within Amakan craft patterns, a descriptive qualitative research design combined with purposive sampling can be effectively employed. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the cultural significance behind these traditional Filipino woven bamboo patterns.

Trustworthiness Of The Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research on the tales and symbols behind Amakan craft patterns, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability must be maintained. Credibility is gained by authentically portraying artisans' opinions through member verification, long-term participation, and data triangulation. Transferability is strengthened by providing detailed descriptions and by accounting for participant diversity, enabling others to assess applicability in comparable circumstances. Dependability assures a rational, well-documented process through audit trails and peer reviews, whereas confirmability reduces researcher bias via reflexivity journals and data triangulation.

Ethical Consideration

Conducting a descriptive qualitative study on the stories, meanings, and symbolism behind Amakan craft patterns requires adherence to ethical principles to ensure respect, integrity, and fairness. Participants must provide informed consent, certifying their understanding of the study's objectives, methods, and their right to withdraw at any time. Researchers must also respect cultural heritage and intellectual property by acknowledging the ownership of traditional knowledge and obtaining permission before documenting or sharing sacred or private patterns. Additionally, confidentiality and anonymity should be maintained by protecting participants' identities unless they consent to being named.

To prevent exploitation, participation is voluntary, and artisans should be fairly compensated for their time and contributions, whether through monetary incentives or other forms of appreciation. Transparency is also crucial, with researchers maintaining open communication and ensuring that the findings benefit the community by sharing results in accessible ways, such as community reports or cultural exhibitions. Furthermore, ethical approval from relevant institutions should be obtained in accordance with the guidelines of ethical review boards and cultural organizations. By upholding these ethical considerations, the study ensures cultural sensitivity, respect, and fairness while preserving the integrity of the Amakan craft and its artisans.

Study Description. This study explores the stories, meanings, and symbolism behind the patterns of Amakan craft using a descriptive qualitative research design and purposive sampling. Through interviews and observations with skilled artisans, cultural experts, and community members, the study seeks to uncover the cultural significance embedded in these woven bamboo patterns. The findings aim to highlight the rich heritage of Amakan craft, preserving its traditional artistry while fostering a deeper appreciation for its role in Filipino culture.

Possible Risks and Discomforts. The researchers stipulate the foreseeable risks that can or should be reasonably anticipated before, during, and after data collection. Some will dwell on individual experiences, which will result in discomfort. It will be the researchers' responsibility to ensure that the risk is minimized through internal agreements between the respondents. Respondents will have the right to withdraw from the agreement if either party breaches or compromises it.

Benefits. This study helps preserve the cultural heritage of Amakan craft by documenting its meanings, stories, and symbolism while also recognizing and supporting local artisans. Additionally, it contributes to academic research, promotes community empowerment, and supports cultural preservation and policymaking.

Disclosure of Procedures. The research procedure was conducted transparently. Participants were given clear information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights before they agreed to participate. Data collection involved purposive sampling, interviews, and observations, with confidentiality maintained, member checking conducted for accuracy, and findings shared with the community for cultural appreciation.

Confidentiality. Confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the study to protect participants' identities and personal information. All data collected, including interviews and observations, were securely stored, and identifying details were omitted or replaced with pseudonyms unless participants provided explicit consent for disclosure.

Contact Information. For any questions or further information about this study, researchers can contact the researchers through the provided email or institutional affiliation. Participants may also reach out for clarifications, feedback, or access to the study's findings while ensuring their privacy and concerns are respected.

Incentives and Compensation. Participants were given non-monetary incentives, such as tokens of appreciation or certificates, to acknowledge their time and contributions. Additionally, the study aimed to support artisans by promoting their craft and cultural heritage through research dissemination and community engagement.

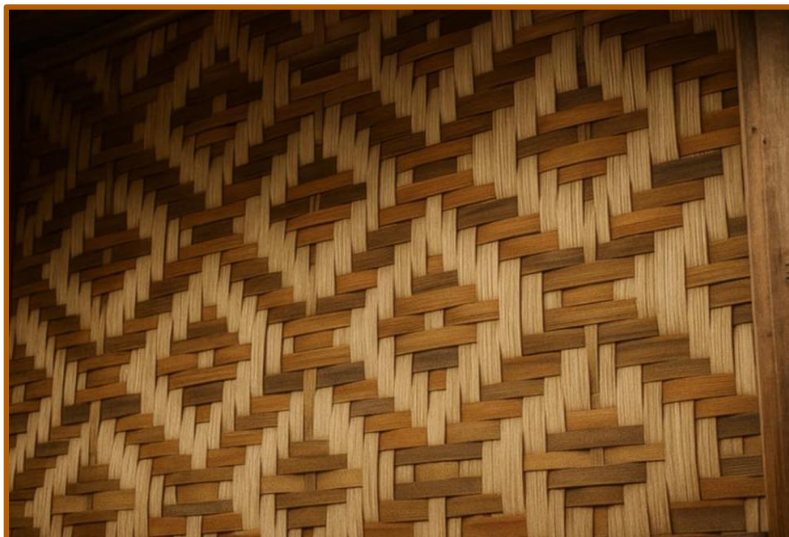
Results and Discussion

This part of the paper presents the results and discussion on the study entitled "Unveiling the Stories, Meanings, and Symbolism Behind the Pattern of Amakan Craft". It aims to provide a deeper insight into the underlying narratives, cultural meanings, and symbolic representations embedded within these patterns, thereby contributing to a richer understanding of their artistic and cultural significance.

Figure 1: The Stories, Meanings, and Symbolism Behind the Pattern of Amakan Craft

Types of Patterns in the Amakan Art Form.	Locale derivation of these patterns.	The symbolic meanings embedded in traditional Amakan patterns.	Patterns reflecting local heritage and craftsmanship.
Sawali (Diamond Pattern)	Derived from the idea of wealth and abundance in life.	Symbolizes wealth, abundance, and life's radiance, cherished for its beauty and significance. Families who embrace this pattern are often regarded as 'datoon' or prosperous, since the diamond is associated with gold, money, and treasure.	It shows how traditional artisans express wealth, wisdom, and cultural identity through their work, transforming simple bamboo strips into a meaningful design.
Sinadyap (Herringbone weave)	This "Sinadyap" weave pattern is derived from the old association of farming livelihood in Ginatilan.	Sinadyap has three meanings: (1) In symbolic terms, it is about livelihood & farming. It represents income from crops; (2) in materialism, it is the container for dried fish/ rice grains, and (3) it is the resemblance of plowing in farmlands and the famous "Rice Terraces".	This type of pattern mirrors the significance of farming & irrigation. Its landmark formation inspired the creation of Sinadyap, which artisans replicated, making it an intricate process.
Zig-Zag Pattern	Derived from the ups and downs of life	Symbolizes the challenges in life that show both struggles and successes, helping people become stronger and wiser.	It showcases how traditional weavers convey life's struggles and successes through their skill and creativity, transforming simple materials into meaningful cultural art.
Cross Pattern	Derived from the people's strong beliefs and faith.	Symbolizes the people's strong faith and beliefs, reflecting their spirituality and cultural identity.	It reflects local heritage and craftsmanship as it symbolizes strong faith while showcasing the community's creativity, skill, and cultural identity in weaving.
Balostre	This pattern is derived from a strong family bond.	Symbolizes the enduring solidarity and strong cohesion of the family that foster strength, resilience, and stability across generations.	The traditional style and its pattern was passed down through generations of the family, using indigenous materials and designs rooted in cultural symbolism.

Pattern 1: Sawali (Diamond Pattern)



(Image 1. "Diamond pattern")

The diamond pattern is one of the most well-known designs in amakan weaving, admired for both its appearance and the meanings attached to it. Several participants explained that it is relatively easy to make, though it takes time to complete. One shared, "Sayun ra. Sayun ra' diamond", (English Translation: "It is easy. The 'diamond' is easy.") while another mentioned, "Oh oh maong ng dugay pila kabook bangunon." (English Translation: "Oh, that is why it takes a while to build a few of them."). For some, it is even considered a personal specialty: "Akoa ang diamond rmn gyud." (English Translation: "The diamond is really just my own [specialty].").

When making the diamond, the participants focus on arranging the strips carefully so the shape will appear bright and clear. As one described, "Ang diamond kay kuan... hayag siyang tan awon og limpyo. Mao nang ... mahalin gyud ang diamond." (English Translation: "The diamond is... it looks bright and clean. That is why... the diamond really sells well.") The pattern also stands out from a distance, "Nindot man ang Amakan kay makita man nimo iyang disensyo. Diamond ba, bisag unsa ba, kay makita man nimo sa layo kaysa sa plywood. Labina imo silakan, nindot, samot ka nindot ang imo diamond ang silak." (English Translation: "Amakan is beautiful because you can see its design. Whether it is a diamond or anything else, everyone can see it from a distance, unlike plywood. Especially when it shines a light on it, it is beautiful, but a diamond's shine is even more beautiful.").

Participants consistently connected the diamond with prosperity and wealth. One explained, "Basta datoon ang pamilya nagpuyo," (English Translation: "As long as the family living there is rich.") while another added, "Datoon ang ilang pamilya kay diamond siya." (English Translation: "Their family is rich because it is a diamond"). A third emphasized its value, "Ang diamond akong nahibaw an kay kanang diamond mahal manang diamond kato man gold. Mao manay bout pasabot sa diamond. Datoon sila basta naay diamond kay kuan man kwarta gud nga diamond." (English Translation: "What I know about the diamond is that a diamond is expensive, it is like gold. That is what the diamond means. They are rich as long as they have a diamond, because it is like money, a diamond.")

Other interpretations also highlight its symbolic depth. The diamond is seen as representing wisdom and perspective, even

likened to the "Mata sa kaalam o sa patan-aw sa tanang angolo sa kinabuhi" (English Translation: "Eye of wisdom or looking at all angles of life.") or the four directions of life "amihan, habagatan, silangan o kasab-tan." (English Translation: "North, south, east, or west.") in some places.

Most participants shared that the diamond pattern symbolizes prosperity and abundance. It has been said to reflect the brightness and clarity of life, admired for its beauty and value. Hence, it shows how traditional artisans express wealth, wisdom, and cultural identity through their work, weaving simple bamboo strips into a meaningful design.

The diamond pattern is widely celebrated for its beauty and cultural significance, and it is a highly valued design in amakan weaving. The consistent finding of previous research on Philippine weaving also underscores the importance of the mata-mata, or diamond-eye-like pattern. According to Pasilan (2016), diamonds are also known as mata-mata or dinglu-dinglu. For instance, Ilocano weavers often incorporate diamond motifs into their inabel textiles. (Respicio 2015) further observed its enduring adaptability. (Luís Ibanez III n.d) Also added that the term "sawali" is more appropriately defined as twilled weaving patterns. It is further shown by the decorative tassels Ilocano weavers use to finish their pieces, as Cunanan 2015) described the value placed on skilled craftsmanship.

Participants in this study noted that the diamond pattern is relatively easy to weave but still requires significant time and patience. They explained that the careful placement of bamboo strips makes the diamond shape appear bright, clean, and visually striking from a distance. (Kerta 2015) described bamboo as widely available and practical due to the bamboo's potential in vernacular architecture. He also added that it is an aesthetically valuable material for wall construction, especially in disaster-prone regions. While durability concerns have often limited its use, traditional practices show that bamboo weaving can effectively balance function with visual appeal. Bamboo can be both a structural component and a medium for cultural artistry. Moreover, it reflects a broader architectural principle that places great value on the clarity and beauty of the diamond design.

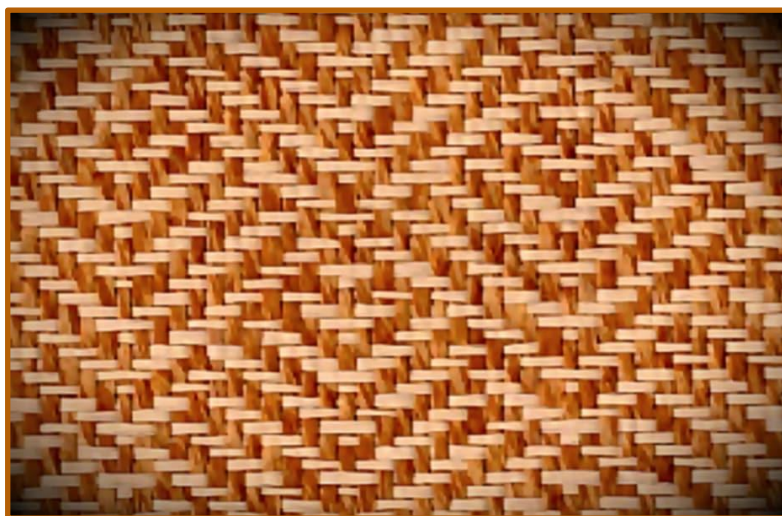
On the other hand, the link between the diamond patterns and their symbolic meaning is a prominent theme in the participants'

responses. Many explained that families who used these designs were considered wealthy, directly connecting the motif to material abundance. Similarly, Pasilan's (2016) findings on Yakan weaving traditions, in which diamond patterns are thought to symbolize rice grains, are a lasting sign of sustenance and wealth. The diamond is also tied to the harvest cycle because of its distinct appearance. Among the Yakans, the diamond-shaped star formations in the sky signal a good yield. Consequently, this was further reinforced by its combination with other motifs, such as clustered Xs that symbolize rice mortars. Moreover, the amakan weavers' view of the diamond as a sign of wealth and good fortune is shared in various Philippine weaving traditions. Hence, it clearly shows how this geometric design continues to represent both material and symbolic prosperity.

Besides prosperity, some participants also saw the diamond pattern as a symbol of wisdom, perspective, and direction. They even

called it the "eye of knowledge," which lets a person see things from different viewpoints, or a symbol for the four cardinal directions. Was aligned with the work of Ambalang Ausalin, a National Living Treasure known for her skill in the sinalu'an weave. Her textiles clearly demonstrate technical skill and convey deep meanings related to life, nature, and continuity (Pasilan, 2016). It also features complex arrangements of small diamonds, zigzags, and floral designs. Similarly, Delas Peñas, Garciano, and Verzosa (2016) showed that symmetries in indigenous weaving are more than just mathematical structures, as they also represent cultural traditions and symbolic belief systems. For example, the textiles of the Cordillera region signify social status and beliefs through symmetric motifs. Similarly, the diamond in amakan weaving symbolizes clarity and perspective, demonstrating how simple geometric shapes can have profound cultural and philosophical significance.

Pattern 2: *Sinadyap* "Herringbone weave"



(Image 2. "*Sinadyap* pattern")

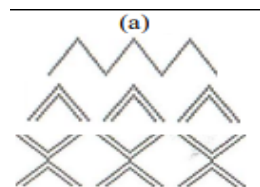
The Municipality of Ginatilan has acknowledged the production of Amakan crafts, and distribution has reached other areas, especially in Oslob, Cebu. Each Amakan product is unique and carries an aesthetic and emotional feel to a household; one of these is the "*Sinadyap* (Herringbone weave)". This *Sinadyap* weave pattern is derived from the old association of farming livelihood in Ginatilan. One of the artisans stated that "*naa na sa karaan ang Sinadyap*" (English Translation: "This *Sinadyap* pattern existed way before my time"). Its intricate weaving techniques continued, but few mastered it. Over time, more derivations were added to its symbolism, which resulted in three themes, namely, (1) In symbolic terms, it is about livelihood & farming. It represents income from crops; (2) in materialism, it is the container for dried fish/ rice grains, and (3) it is the resemblance of plowing in farmlands and the famous "Rice Terraces".

The second theme is the utilization of the design, where most households weave them into huge containers for their viands. Patterns like "*Sinadyap*" are primarily available as more practical than an aesthetic perception. One artisan mentioned that "*Oh, kay binutang man nato nag bugas!*" (English Translation: "Oh, we use this as a container for our rice grains!"). Another artisan added that "*Basta mao ng tinuhuan sauna Sa mga karaan sinadyap. Ang sinadyap bularanan sa bugas humay*" (English Translation: "According to the belief of our elders, '*Sinadyap*' is used for containing fried fish & rice grains"). For the third theme, it is a

visual analogy of plowing in farmlands and the iconic "Rice Terraces". The locals and artisans replicated the artificial or human-made irrigation into their artwork. In another statement, "*Sinadyap, naa may liko2 gyud. Mura cyag baol, rice terraces, Nindot cya tan-awon!*" (English Translation: "*Sinadyap* has curves—it looks like a chest, or like rice terraces. It is beautiful to look at!"). It shows the cows' tracks with the "*Araro*" (Traditional Plow). In general, the researchers concluded that this pattern reflects the significance of farming in Ginatilan. The tangible landmark formation inspired the creation of "*Sinadyap*", which artisans replicated through Amakan Weaving, making it an intricate process.

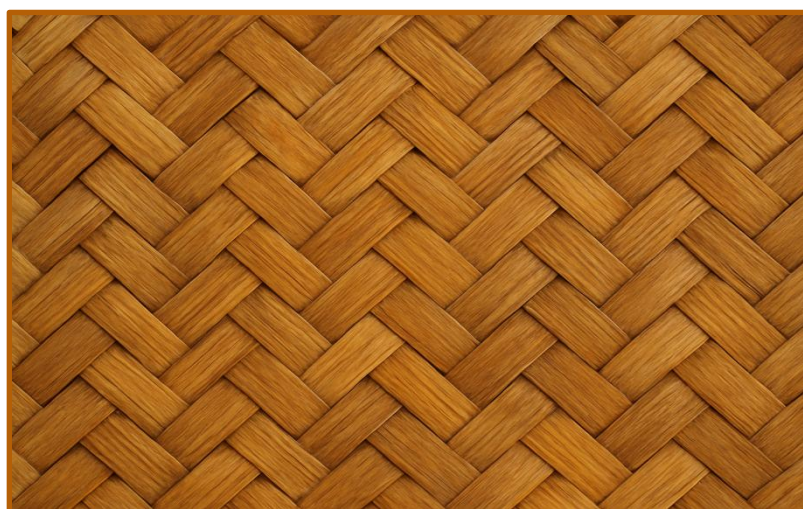
This pattern is internationally known as the "*Herringbone weave*". According to the Paisley Museum (2021), it is a "broken twill" fabric created by half-warp and half-weft strips of any textile. The word "*herringbone*" is derived from the skeletal structure of a Herringbone Fish, featuring its distinctive "Vh-aped pattern. This pattern was first identified at 130 AD by Gayet in the excavations of the necropolis of Antinoe. It is where cloth patterns signify an individual's gender, status, rank, and socio-economic class (Morgan, 2018). One notable fabric with this pattern is the "The Shroud of Turin" (*a huge linen cloth bearing a faint image, scholars believe to be the burial shroud of Christ*), for which the technical study by Professor Gabriel Vial revealed its authenticity and components (Lecuit, 2022). This pattern, embedded in the

Turin, is not a common feature in other fabrics from this timeline, since high-ranking families and Egyptian nobles could acquire such intricate designs. It later evolved into the designs for Roman road construction. As the centuries passed, it was adopted during the Renaissance, particularly among European aristocracy, as a motif of sophistication and refinement. It is widely used for decorating palaces and estates. Eventually, the herringbone pattern is labelled as a high-end design. It is experiencing a resurgence in popularity across homes, hospitality settings, and commercial spaces worldwide (Havwoods, 2025).



This pattern's history and symbolism contradict the Ginatilan locals' derivation. Emphasizing its sophisticated weaving pattern, it places greater emphasis on its aesthetic and superior appeal;

Pattern 3: Zig-Zag Pattern



(Image 3. "Zig-Zag pattern")

The Zigzag pattern is widely recognized among weavers for its strength and durability, even though it is considered one of the simpler designs to create. Respondents consistently highlighted that this weaving style stands out for combining simplicity with reliability. One interviewee explained, "*para nako sayon. Sayon siya paglala*" (English Translation: "*For me, it is easy. It is easy to weave*"), while another added, "*sayon ra tulo ramay bangunon [bakunon] diro gud*" (English Translation: "*It's just easy, you only need to lift (pick up) three strips here*"). When making the zigzag, a weaver also shared, "*Mag-andam ta atong mga saksak, kwan sigasyunan ko sa Kawayan,*" meaning they prepare the tools and then repeatedly work with the bamboo. They further explained, "*mag-alanglang pud ka, masayon raman maguba og dutay ra, makaporma raka. Kay mapadayunon nimog buhat*" (English Translation: If you hesitate, it easily breaks with just a little force. But you can still form it as long as you continue working on it). It explains that the weaving process may seem basic, but completing the design still requires patience, discipline, and persistence.

Beyond its practical use, the zigzag carries deeper cultural meaning. It is often seen as a symbol of life itself, full of ups and downs, struggles and victories, mistakes and lessons learned. One interviewee expressed, "*murag kinabuhi, kay naa gyud taas ug ubos*" (English Translation: "*It's like life, because there are really highs and lows*"). Another explained, "*Zigzag. Dili sayun ang panginabuhi. Usahay naay mga kapakyasan. Dili diretso*" (English

nonetheless, both agreed on its ancient origins. In local Amakan production, this pattern is quite old, and only a few remember its intrinsic meaning. Such claims oppose the view that this pattern signifies only farming, livelihood, and values as containers for viands (Cariño, 2025).

In the Philippines, a similar Sinadyap pattern is applied to fabric production. This particular clothing pattern is called "*tiktiko*," a V- or inverted-V-shaped or zigzag design that symbolizes the mountain ranges where the fields of the Bontoc people are located (Napanoy, 2019). Such symbolism relates to the "Sinadyap" in Amakan production; both designs replicated the irrigation and landmass formation in their localities. It values the presence of agriculture in their communities and applies it to their creative arts.

Translation: "*Zigzag. Life is not easy. Sometimes there are failures. It's not a straight path*").

Findings show that weavers view the zigzag as both easy to weave and strong in form, though it demands patience and persistence. They emphasized its symbolic meaning, representing life's challenges, triumphs, and resilience due to its pattern of ups and downs.

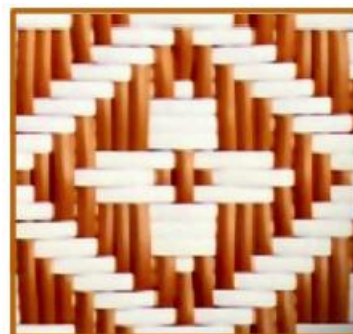
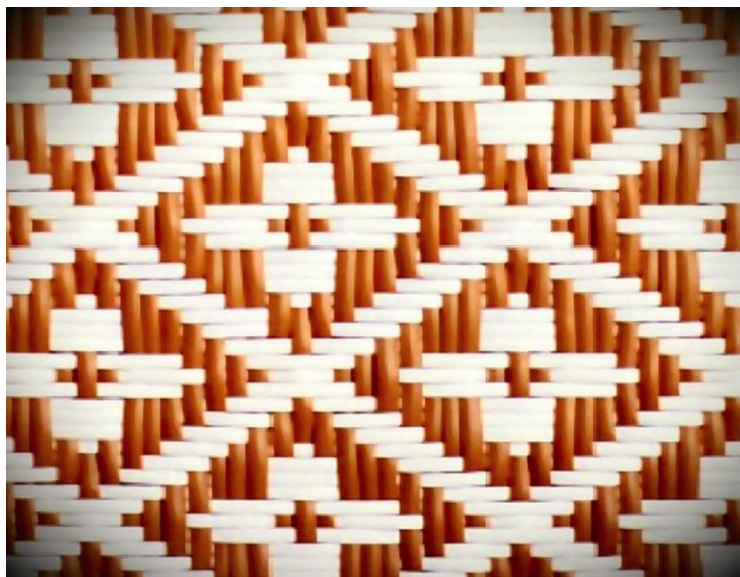
The Zigzag pattern is recognized for its durability despite being simple to create, as it is woven from split bamboo, which is a strong and resilient material traditionally used in Filipino housing. Findings from the interviews also show that weavers themselves view the zigzag as both easy to weave and strong in form, though it demands patience and persistence. According to Worrel & Co (2022), zigzag patterns have been around since as early as 1800 B.C. They were first used in cloth and basket weaving to strengthen the products. The sharp edges of the design helped keep the material from coming apart, prolonging its lifespan. From the start, the zigzag was already seen as a durable but straightforward pattern. A study by Bangoy et al. (2024) on "*Bambusa blumeana*," the bamboo used in Amakan, also showed that it is strong, flexible, and suitable for eco-friendly housing. These qualities make products like Amakan mats with zigzag weaving more durable.

More research shows that zigzag patterns really strengthen woven materials. For example, studies in materials science and green

building show that zigzag designs distribute pressure evenly, better support weight, and make the material more flexible. That means they are less likely to be damaged by factors such as wind or moisture (Material District, 2025; White & Franklin, 2024). The zigzag is also efficient because it uses less material while still making the product strong, which is important for both traditional weaving and modern, eco-friendly construction.

Altogether, findings from both cultural narratives and scientific studies support the idea that the zigzag pattern in Amakan is not just a simple design. It is actually a product of Indigenous knowledge, made to ensure durability, flexibility, and sustainability, while symbolizing life's challenges, triumphs, and resilience as expressed by the weavers themselves.

Pattern 4: Cross Pattern



(Image 4. "Cross Pattern")

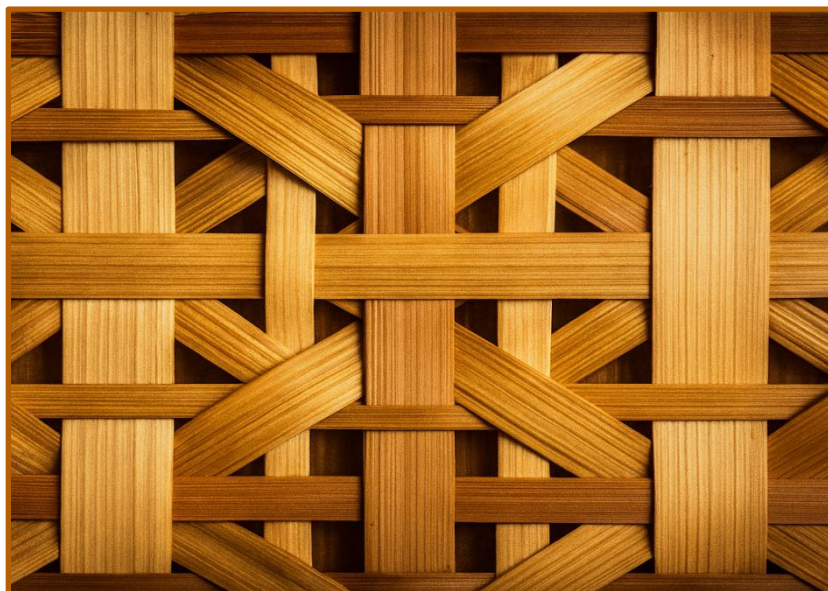
Cross Pattern in amakan stems from the community's deep convictions and faith, showcasing a woven design that forms intersecting lines likened to a cross, crafted through the precise placement of bamboo or palm strips. It is uncomplicated yet eye-catching, distinguishing itself from other designs due to its powerful symbolic significance. The cross represents defense against malevolent influences, as well as spirituality, strength, togetherness, and direction, illustrating how the community links their everyday lives and customs to their beliefs. Informant No. 1 stated, "*Ang krus kay kahadlukan sa dili-ingon-natu,*" (English Translation: Supernatural beings are afraid of the cross), while Informant 3 mentioned, "*Para kini sa pagbatok sa mga dautang elemento,*" (English Translation: It is for fighting evil forces), clarifying that the cross acts as a shield against harmful elements or evil entities. Other interviewee said, "*Para kining sa atong pagpuyo sa atong balay nga dili kita makuha sa dautang mga espiritu nga muabot.*" "*Krus man gud,*" (English Translation: This is for our home, to protect us from harm and keep evil spirits away). The cross symbolizes protection against evil spirits, bringing peace and security to the household. This design also emphasizes local traditions and craftsmanship, as creating it demands creativity, patience, and expertise. Handed down through the ages, the cross design both maintains cultural identity and highlights the creativity and skill of native weaving customs.

The cross-pattern design in amakan (woven split-bamboo panels) is among the most esteemed patterns in Philippine traditional architecture. It reflects the people's deep religious convictions, cultural identity, and beliefs, making it more than just ornamental.

Many communities view the cross formed by intersecting lines as a symbol of spirituality, solidarity, and resilience, as well as protection against bad intentions. Bamboo weaving customs in Antique are closely linked to spirituality and communal identity, demonstrating that amakan has cultural significance beyond its utilitarian function, according to the Barcelona-Amsterdam Conference on Arts, Media & Culture (2022). Amakan is a practical example of sustainable design; it is inexpensive, lightweight, breathable, and, due to its predominant use of bamboo, has a negligible environmental impact.

In a similar vein, the Mangyan community's "pakudos" design, which is based on the Spanish word *cruz*, which means "cross", uses symmetrical cross motifs in their crafts and embroidery. These patterns serve as markers of cultural identification and protection (Mangyan Heritage Center, n.d.; ResearchGate, 2019). Such overlapping patterns emphasize both artistic skill and spiritual profundity in the weaving traditions of Northern Luzon and Mindoro. Together, these themes represent prosperity, abundance, and the spirituality associated with agriculture, as declared by the Bangsamoro Commission for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage (BCPCH) in 2022 and the 7641 Islands in 2023. Additionally, Filipino weaving designs usually go beyond simple ornamentation. Their cultural identity, spirituality, and stories are encoded. (Pinas Culture 2023a, 2023b) points out that geometric patterns like stars, crosses, and serpentine shapes serve as a textile language, preserving cultural legacy and fostering community cohesion.

Pattern 5: Balostre Pattern



(Image 5. “Balostre pattern”)

“*Balostre*” pattern is known for its strong foundation and materials when used in traditional craftsmanship. It has two (2) primary geometric designs: circular and square. Due to its complex weaving, it is considered one of the most challenging designs in amakan. One of the interviewees said, “*medyo kuti ang paghimo aning square kay imo maning tarongon ug puwesto ang pag-lala ani kumpara sa circle*” (English Translation: Making this square pattern is tricky because you really have to arrange and position the weaving properly compared to the circular pattern. By its nature of its weaving process, it is regarded as a strong pattern that symbolizes the enduring solidarity and strong cohesion of the family that fosters strength, resilience, and stability across generations, because according to Informant Number 5, “*kay kana siya nag representar mana sa lig-on na pagpuyo sa pamilya, nga kanang nagkahiusa*” (English Translation: Because that represents a strong family bond, that stays together). Informant number 10 also emphasizes that this pattern symbolizes “*lig-on ang pamilya ug nagkahugpong ang pamilya*” (English Translation: the family is strong and bound together). The said pattern symbolizes a strong family bond and also a deep appreciation for life

.The *Balostre* pattern is considered one of the most intricate and robust types of amakan due to its material and pattern design. The *Balostre* pattern not only symbolizes a strong family bond but also represents the community's creativity and artistry. According to academics, the interlacing complexity of some designs necessitates a higher degree of dexterity, which has an immediate impact on their longevity and aesthetic appeal (De Guzman & De la Cruz, 2014). The two primary geometric designs highlight their own styles; the circular pattern is easier to create compared to the square pattern (Cariño, 2025). Patterns demonstrate the exactness and clarity of the designer's (weaver's) thinking, as well as their capacity to combine vertical and horizontal elements to produce the patterns of their designs (De Las Peñas et al., 2016). The material needs to be dried in the sun before shaping it into its final piece, making it strong and sturdy. Scholars point out that strength depends not only on design but also on material preparation, bamboo species, and traditional treatment methods, even though local weavers frequently associate denser patterns with greater structural integrity (Oriental Design & Gifts, 2023; arkitek Jon,

2019). It establishes a precedent for the occurrence of regional patterns such as *Balostre*, even if they are not recorded in the archives of major museums. According to anthropological and museum sources, the development of such intricate designs serves to transmit indigenous knowledge systems and constitutes a technological challenge (SFO Museum, Rebuelta-Teh, 2022).

Thus, this supports the claim that the *Balostre* pattern symbolizes enduring solidarity and strong family cohesion, fostering strength, resilience, and stability across generations through its complexity and longevity. All things considered, the “*Balostre*” pattern is a prime example of how practicality, cultural symbolism, and technical mastery come together to form a long-lasting craft and a timeless representation of indigenous knowledge systems. It also represents the close-knit family ties, tenacity, and inventiveness that characterize Filipino material culture.

Conclusion

This study revealed that the art of Amakan weaving is more than just aesthetic appeal; it is a living tradition that showcases the values and collective identity of the Ginatilan locals. All patterns, despite their distinctive weaving techniques, shared a common theme. All featured the authentic rural livelihood of Ginatilan, Cebu. From the mundane to the spiritual aspects, all emphasized the simplicity and value of life in the province. This generalization has prompted locals to recreate such experiences through art, making a tangible culture that can be sustained for generations.

Recommendations

In light of the study's findings and conclusions, several suggestions are offered to address identified gaps and enhance the applicability and usefulness of the findings. First, the Local Government Unit (LGU) and the Tourism Office should work together to promote and increase the usage of amakan, or woven bamboo matting, in the industry. It includes using amakan to promote sustainable materials and showcase local craftsmanship in tourist destinations, resorts, dining establishments, cultural villages, and gift shops. Another suggestion is that the LGU should give local artisans immediate attention and ongoing support. This assistance could take the form of financial aid, livelihood support, weaving

cooperatives, training sessions, and marketing channels to sell and display their woven goods, such as those from *Sugbo Centro*.

On the other hand, it is advised that educational institutions incorporate Amakan weaving into the curriculum, especially in courses like Social Studies, Arts, and Technology and Livelihood Education. Basic weaving patterns, including *Sawali* (Diamond Pattern), *Sinadyap* (Herringbone Weave), Zigzag Pattern, Cross Pattern, and *Balostre*, should be taught to students. By integrating these designs into formal education, young students will gain valuable skills and develop an awareness of sustainable practices and cultural heritage. To ensure that the younger generation acquires both cultural pride and a sense of responsibility for maintaining indigenous knowledge and environmental sustainability, this educational method will serve as a bridge between tradition and innovation. Future researchers are urged to investigate and document the entire amakan-making process, emphasizing both traditional methods and the cultural values ingrained in the art. Amakan weaving expertise can be preserved, disseminated, and made more widely available by conducting in-depth research and posting the results online, ensuring that future generations will continue to value this cultural legacy.

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