

# KINDS, USES, AND IMPLICATIONS OF WOVEN ETHNIC MATERIALS OF THE BENGUET PEOPLE<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Ethnic clothes and blankets are important elements of the Cordilleran culture. Benguet tribes of the Northern Philippines have a high regard for the woven ethnic costumes and blankets, as an identity of their culture. This study aimed to document the historical background of the woven ethnic materials in Benguet Province, Philippines; the different kinds, uses and implications of these ethnic woven cloths; and the potentials of improving them.

The different woven ethnic materials of the Benguet tribes are blankets and the clothes worn by men and women. There are two major tribes of Benguet that were considered in this study, the Kankana-ey and Ibaloi. These two tribes have the same attires and clothes but differ in the local term. Major blankets are the *pinaggagan*, *dilli/shendi*, *kuabaw/sarong*, *bayaong/kolebaw*, and *bandala/safey*. The *alahdang*, which used to be the blanket for the very rich, is seldom used. Other blankets like *manta* and *adefus* are the common ones. The *mabli* was used in the later years, mostly by the Kalanguyas, another Bengnet tribe. The different kinds of blankets implies the social status of the user. The social status can be inherited or acquired and have sub-levels that are determined by the number of eyes/eyelets embedded in the designs of the blankets.

The women's costume is a pair of *tapis*, which is composed of a wrap-around skirt and blouse (*kambal* or *sambra*). There are different kinds of color combinations of the *tapis*, while the ordinary one is a combination of the black and white. For the Kankana-ey tribes, aside from the common *tapis*, they also have another design called *lamna*. For the men, they wear G-string (*kuba/kuval*). The Kankana-ey have different kinds of *kuba*: the *baa*, *binoltong*, *pillac*, *pinangsas* and *sinulaman*. The Ibaloi's *kuval* are the *pinangsas/padasan* and *donas*. The kind of clothing worn by the men and women must also correspond with the blanket used, which implies the social status of the user. Originally, these clothings were used for casual wears by their ancestors. At the time of the study, they are used during special occasions, rituals, and festivals.

Benguet cloth is generally composed of red, black and white colors. The figures embedded in the *pinaggagan* blankets are X or the shield, man, snake and the eye-like design. Generally, the kind of cloth that they use especially for ritual offerings is inherited, meaning they follow what was used by their ancestors during their time. The exact meanings or implications of the designs and patterns of the ethnic cloths are not fully understood by the Benguet elders interviewed. Their perception is that if the cloths have better quality and have more complicated design, and with brighter colors, it is more expensive. This implies wealth and/or prestige for those who were able to buy and use it in the early days.

To sustain the cultural identity, there is a great potential in improving the ethnic woven materials to cope with the new trends of lifestyle/fashion. It is good to note that the uses of the native blankets and attires transcend from merely for ceremonial but also into other purposes. At present, gowns out of native cloth, decorations, and modified attires are out in the market. Different products like poncho/vest, dress, gowns, table runners, and clothes patterned from the original designs and motif of native attires are available in the markets.

*Keywords:* woven ethnic materials/costumes/ clothes; Cordillera Philippines

*Abbreviations:* Kn - Kankana-ey, Ib - Ibaloi

## INTRODUCTION

The foundation of every Cordillera tribe is its culture and tradition which paved the way to the retention of the talent and skill of weaving that had been passed on from generation to generation. History tells that Benguet people were not inclined to weaving. They were dependent on the clothing and blankets that were introduced by the Ilocano weavers and traders from Tagudin, Ilocos Sur. It was later in the 1980's, with the introduction of loom weaving industry to the Benguet people that they started weaving the ethnic costumes and blankets following usual design of clothing they used to buy from Ilocos. Each community group has their respective designs, colors, and symbolism. The blankets and articles of clothing that they produce by means of backstrap do not only fulfill a practical function but also play a part in religion and ritual (DTI Report, 2007). Miligard (1991) states that textile probably play one of their most important roles at the time of death as funerals necessitated the lavish use of cloth in each stage of the ritual. Records show that Lieutenant Colonel Guillermo Galvey, governor of the Igorot territory in 1882, climbed a section of Mt. Cabunian near Bakun, Benguet to visit Ifugao tombs and there he examined 'the cadavers inside 24 coffins and found them all wrapped in a wealth of good blankets (Scott, 1970 cited by Miligard, 1991).

The province of Benguet has two major tribes, the Ibalois and the Kankana-eyes. Other tribes found in the province are the Kalanguyas, Ikalahans, Ikarao, and the I-owak. These different tribes are rich in different culture. Clothing is the basic material culture that gives a distinct identity for the Benguet people. The basic clothing that the old people used to wear is the *devit* and *kambal* (skirt and blouse) for women and the *kuval* (G-string) for men. The color and design of

the attires are similar for all tribes. What differ among them are their lifestyles, rituals and beliefs. Even in the clothing of the people, the culture is embedded probably to serve as a way to pass on the culture and the innate artistry of the people. On this premise, the study aimed to: trace and document the historical background of the ethnic woven materials of the Benguet tribes; determine the different kinds, uses and implications the different designs patterns and symbols in the tapestry and determine the potentials of improving these woven material culture. This study is part of the baseline study on the textile industry of Benguet province.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study approach started with the collection of secondary data from published and unpublished reports, and from key informant interviews during reconnaissance field survey. This was followed by in-depth interviewing of individuals who have the knowledge on these woven fabrics used by Benguet people, mostly the old folks. The tools used in data gathering were semi-structured interview guides, direct observations, and focus group discussions. Photo documentations of the materials were collected. The respondents were delimited to the major tribes of Benguet - the Ibalois and the Kankana-eyes.

The key information gathered were: (1) What is the historical background of ethnic woven materials of the Benguet tribes; 2) What are the kinds, uses, implications or meanings of the different woven ethnic material culture; (3) What are the potentials of improving and sustaining these woven ethnic materials?

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Historical Background of Ethnic Woven Materials of the Benguet Tribes

Clothes and blankets are important elements of the Cordilleran culture. Benguet tribes likewise have a high regard for their ethnic costumes and blankets as an identity of their culture. Clothing and blankets are not simply used as attires which keep the body warm at night, but as a symbol of the social status of the user, more of his/her ancestors. More often, they are used as offerings during their rituals.

There is no specific literature on the Benguet clothing. Most literatures are focused on general situationer of the region on this matter. Secondary data available discussed more on Ifugao, Kalinga, and Bontoc tapestry. However, this may be supported by the findings of Roces (1991) that Ibaloi, Isneg, and Ilongot "do not appear to have enjoyed a weaving tradition per se. These three groups however contrived an extremely refined accessory repertoire applied to fabrics acquired through trade. Moreover, the Ibaloi seemed perfectly content with tailoring layered clothing from Ilocano plaids (Roces, 1991).

Another account was mentioned by Roces (1991). Generally, in the Cordillera, Conquistador Alonso Martin Quirante, wrote in 1624 of a way with clothing which was to change little in the next three centuries, for most of the Cordilleras. *The ordinary dress and costume of these people is a loose shock of disheveled hair that reaches below the ears, and certain bands about one foot wide made from the bark of trees. Having wound these about the waist, they twist to cover their private parts. These they call 'bahag', the chiefs wear Ilocano blankets...inherited from their ancestors; this garment is crossed from the shoulder to the waist, where they knot it. Thus, they go, without any other clothes or shoes whatever.*

Even in Spanish documents, production of textile or textile weaving in the country was mostly

done in the Ilocos and was specifically centered in the weaving towns of Amianan Northern Ilocos.

Aside from the fact that culturally, Benguet people are not inclined with weaving, there is also a view that there is no available artifact that would enlighten the history of textile in the province. Miligard (1991) also mentioned that there is inadequate archaeological evidence and document which precludes the reconstruction of the history of cloth production not only in Northern Luzon but also throughout the Philippines archipelago. It cannot be stated with certainty how textile traditions spread and developed both outside and within island areas.

Mrs. Evelyn S. Laway, of Tuba, retold the story of her great grandfather that of a rich man named Melo and his wife Shamja from Indonesia who traveled far away to get rid of a conflict. Bringing with them some important belongings, they begun their expedition passing through the Celebes Sea, they landed at Lingayen Gulf. Looking for a better place to live they find themselves settled at Loo, Buguias. Later, their daughter, Baksay married a man from Besao. Baksay, being the wife, was obliged to live with her husband's place. There, she passed the knowledge and skills on weaving. For that reason, skills on weaving were given to the people of the Mountain Province not to Benguet people. It was only in the later years of (1980's) that weaving was embraced by the Benguet people when they started weaving the ethnic costumes and blankets but still following the original design made by the Ilocanos.

Truly, Benguet people did not originally produce their woven cloth. Mr. Agu "Edison" Nagayus, 87, of Atok recanted that the use of woven clothing was introduced by the Tagudin traders. Accordingly, these products



are traded to the mountain areas, which later were accepted by the highland people. Woven products were then considered precious both to the Tagudin and upland people. The introduction earmarked a great trading relationship between the two groups.

Interviews with the weavers and traders of Benguet ethnic cloths reveal that aside from the supplies coming from the lowlands, there are now a number of local weavers who are making the Cordillera woven attires which includes Benguet costumes and blankets.

### Kinds, Uses, and Implications of the Different Woven Ethnic Materials of Benguet

Both Kankana-ey and Ibaloi tribes of Benguet have almost the same kind of blankets, clothing and accessories. These are used during rituals, ceremonies and special events in the community. The knowledge on the use of clothing, blankets and accessories is passed on by oral tradition. Kinds and uses of the different blankets and attires are discussed with photo documentation in the ensuing pages.

### Ethnic Blankets

Ethnic blanket is commonly referred to as the cloth being used to keep the body warm and protect against coldness especially at night. However, in the Benguet, it is a part of their material culture. Known as *ketap* or *ules* for the Ibaloi and *galey* for the Kankana-ey, these blankets depict the social status of the person using them. Thus, not anybody can use any kind of blanket especially the ones specified for the *babaknangs* (rich people). It is a taboo for the old folks because they believe that a family member might get sick or something not good will happen and that the spirits will require him to perform a *cañao* (cultural feast).

Mr. Sally Kayat, a *mambunong* (pagan priest) of Sablan stated that native cloth and attires are considered important as the flag. Blankets to be used must

be similar with what the ancestors have used, meaning the status is hereditary. When a person is dead, the kind of blanket that is used to wrap him will serve as an identification for him/her to be acknowledged by the ancestors in the spirit world.

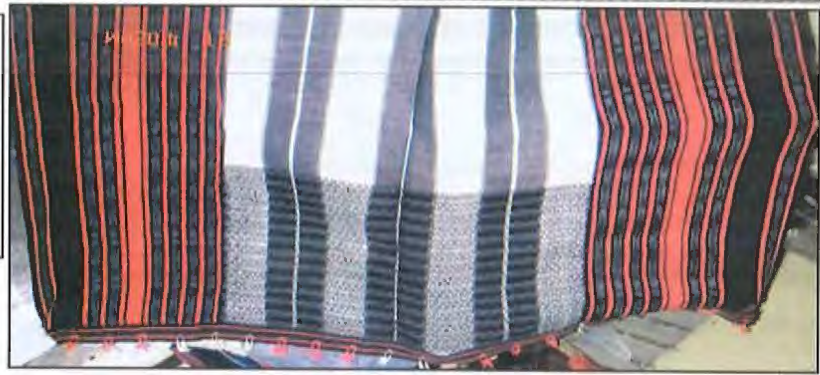
The different types of blankets that are used by the Benguet people are:

***Alahdang (Kn) Ala'shang (Ib )***. This is the highest kind of ethnic blanket that the richest among the rich families used. It was said that a man who performed a *cañao* by butchering 25 pigs at one setting can use this kind of blanket. Unfortunately there was no collection of *alahdang* found during the study, not even the old time weavers in the Lowlands have it, so, no photo was taken. According to the informants, this kind of blanket is very rarely used now a days. Accordingly, what makes it different from other blankets is that it is thicker, and the square design is bigger. *Alahdang/ala'shang* is known among the Kankana-ey tribe of Benguet and the Ibaloi tribe in Kabayan. This blanket is not used much in Bokod, Sablan, and Itogon, municipalities of Benguet, where most people belong to the Ibaloi tribe. In Mountain Province, it is likewise the highest form of blanket.

***Pinagpagan***. It is considered the second highest status blanket usually used by the Kankana-eyes and the Ibalois (Figure 1) though at present, it is now the highest in the absence of the *Alahdang*. The *pinagpagan* is more popular to the Kankana-eyes both from Benguet and Mt. Province as blanket for the *kadangyans* (rich). For the Benguet people, it is a blanket used only by a rich person who has performed the highest level of *cañao* called "*peshet*". The number of eyelet design of the blanket is an indicator which equates the number of animals butchered by the user during his most recent *cañao*. For the respondents from the municipality of Bakun, this is an ethnic blanket with a design of 11 to 15 eyes/eyelets or *batek*. It is a tradition that only the rich old men can use it. However, there are some considerations in their culture. *Pinagpagan* can also be used by an old man who passed the *cañao* tradition. A young man can also use it but he should have performed the



**Fig 1.** *Pinagpagan* has a color combination of red and black seen in both sides. Black and white is concentrated on the center part of the blanket  
 (Photo taken at Ailyn's store, Abatan, Buguias, Benguet.)



**Fig 2.** (below photos). Shows the different collections of *pinagpagan* from the different sources

Photo taken from Benguet Capitol Tourism Office



Photo taken at Tinongdan, Barangay Hall, Itogon, Benguet

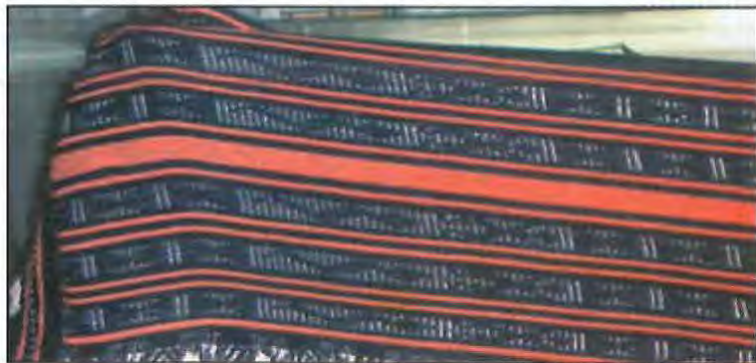


*Pinagpagan* owned by Ms. Aileen of Buguias



Owned by Mrs. Evelyn Laway of Asin, Baguio City

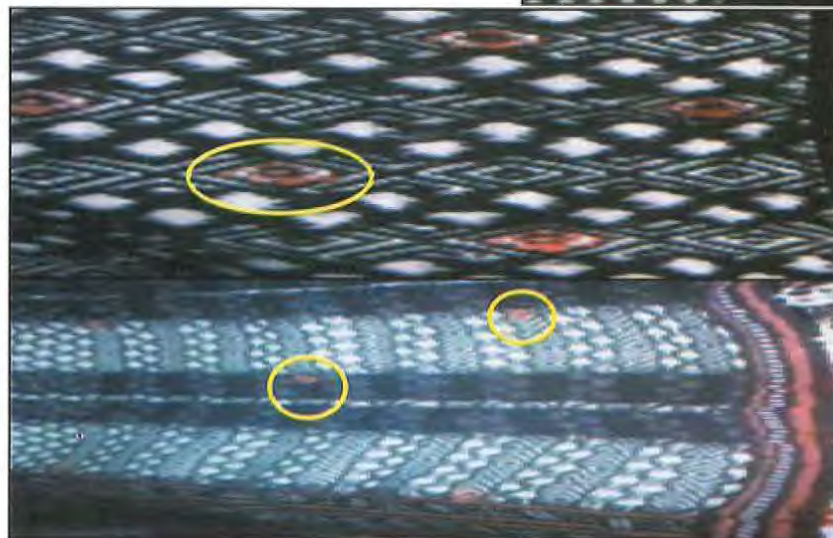




**Fig 3.** On both sides of the blanket are column panels with designs of X (shield), snake and man. The middle part of the *pinagpagan* blanket is plainly white with six columns of black strips.

Genuine attire can be determined by the arrangement of the X, snake and man. The position of the snake which should be chasing the man.

**Fig 4.** On both ends of the middle columns of the blanket are the eyelet designs. The number of eyelets is varied. There are 9, 11, 13 & 15. The difference in the eyelet design depends on the source of the blanket or weaver's design.



**Fig 5.** *Pinagpagan* blankets with eyelets embroidered in red design representing light.

**Fig 6.** The middle part of the *pinagpagan* blanket is white background with three wide black panels and white thin stripe dividing each black panel.



cañao required. Folks from Kibungan seconded that to them, *pinagpagan* is the second highest blanket next to *alahdang*. It has a sub-level by number of eyes such as 9, 11, 13 and 15. More, *pinagpagan* can be used as an offering or worn by someone who performed a cañao with 15 pigs butchered at one time. For a woman, 13 pigs can make her use such a blanket. A woman from Atok view *pinagpagan* as blanket used by a *baknang* (rich person) who have performed the *peshet* (a highest level of cañao).

**Dilli (Kn)/ Shendi/Chindi (Ib)** is one of the status blankets being used by the Benguet people (Fig. 7). To most Ibaloi areas, this is the highest blanket use by wealthy families. Though there are *pinagpagan* and *alahdang*, few have mentioned the existence of these two higher blankets in their respective Ibaloi communities. In the Kankana-ey areas, *dilli* is the third highest blanket. The *dilli/shendi* has sub-levels as distinguished in the number of eyelet found in it.

The number of eyes varies from 9, 11, 13 and 15 similar to the *pinagpagan*. This number of eyes corresponds to the number of pigs one has butchered during the latest performed cañao. According to the old folks, since this kind of blanket is a symbol of prestige, it is a requirement that the one who will use this must be someone who has performed the rich man's cañao (*peshet*).

Interpretation and usage of attires are not the same in different communities even those belonging to same ethno-linguistic group. The Ibalois have a higher regard on *shendi* since it is popularly recognized as their highest blanket. Like in Bokod, this status blanket is passed on to the next generation or inherited. Mr. Willy Velasco reiterated this during an interview that a dead person who may have perform several cañaos can not be wrapped with *shendi* upon death if his parents did not use the same blanket. In like manner, even one did not perform a rich man's cañao if his parents or grandparents who have gone ahead used *shendi*, then he has to have the same kind of blanket. Originally, Velasco's family roots came from Bokod but they settled in Tublay, hence, he has to carry the culture of his family from his origin. In the case of original people of

Tublay they are not very particular about these rules.

On the other hand, some people became flexible in using *shendi*. They may be entitled to use *shendi* when they have acquired wealth through their own effort. An example is the case of Mr. Apilis Manio from Kabayan. He was given the privilege to use/to have a *shendi* after performing a certain steps of cañao. Later, he acquired a *pinagpagan* blanket after performing the next higher level of cañao. This was seconded by Mr. Retonio Saguid of Kabayan, that *shendi* can be inherited or acquired by someone who had perform the *peshet*. In Bakun, *dilli/shendi* is known as the blanket woven from Ilocos. Combination of *dilli* blanket and a *salibobo* (head band) are commonly used in Buguias.

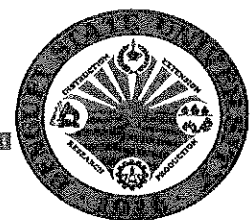
The documented uses of *dilli/shendi* are as follows:

*Dilli/shendi* blanket is used by men when performing the *tayaw* (native dance). A woman to be paired with the dancer must also belong to a wealthy family and should use the *sarong (Ib)/kuabaw (Kn)*- the status blanket for women.

When a dead person has a rich ancestor, *shendi* is placed beside or on top of the head of his corpse, with the belief that this blanket (spirit of the blanket) will be recognized by his ancestors.

Another view was mentioned by Mrs. Evelyn Laway of Tuba, that *shendi* is placed to cover the coffin so that the spirit of the dead person will know and accept that he is already dead.

For the Ikarao of Bokod, account on the use of *chindi/shendi* was lifted from the research study of Marvin Atos (1982). It says that there are two kinds of blankets used in cañao - the *chindi/shendi*, the status blanket of the men which is paired with a *kiyodog* a women's blanket when dancing. A pair of *kiyodog* and *chindi* is needed for *kasew* or *keshaw*, i.e. a ritual performed when the spirits ask an offering through dreams. For the rich dead, a





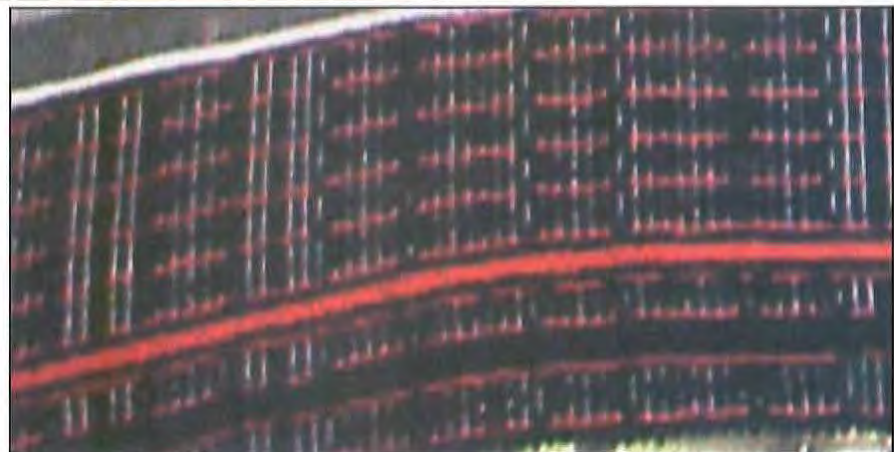
**Fig 7. Shendi/dilli.** The design of this blanket is simpler than the *pinagpagan*. The middle panel has the same design with that of the *pinagpagan* but with wider space in between the black columns. The difference is on the design of the side panels, which consist of red and black strips. Both ends of the *shendi* blanket have eyelet design which has varied number of eyelets.

**Fig 8. Shendi /dilli** owned by Mr. Luis Bongsiw of Bokod, Benguet.



**Fig 9. Shendi/dilli** owned by Mr. Willy Velasco of Bokod and Tublay.

**Fig 10.** The vertical sides of the *shendi/dilli* blanket has a design of red and black strips.





status blanket (*chindi*) is hung inside the room during his wake.

In Suyoc, Mankayan, and Buguias, as mentioned by Mr. Ago Nagayus, the use of *dilli* for a dead woman, is paired with *bayaong*, *lamma*, and *eten*. Meanwhile, *dilli* with 13 eyelets, two *salibobos*, and a *bayaong* are used for dead men. *Dilli* is used to wrap the corpse of a rich man. As part of the ritual, a male pig must be butchered and a cow or carabao can be added if the family can afford.

*Dilli* and *pinagpagan* can be used by both living and dead person. *Dilli* blanket is paired with *bayaong* to wrap a dead body or for offering during rituals. Interview with folks from Labey, Tublay mentioned that *dilli* has a level of 13-15 eyelets and must be paired with *bedbed/salibobo* (head band) having the same number of eyelets. *Dilli* with 13 eyelets is said to be the lowest level that can be use by old men having many grandchildren even if they did not perform *cañao*. In Kabayan, it is a must that a new *shendi* must be bought for the dead.

Maya Dimas, a *mambunong* from Guiset, Itogon disclosed that when two *shendi* blankets are used, it means that his ancestors have performed the highest *cañao* called *peshit/kedut*, wherein 15 pigs and animals are butchered at a time. The pigs are tied and lined up on the ground then they dance the *tayaw* (Ibaloi dance) around the pigs. A person who performed a lower form of *cañao* is allowed to use one *shendi* and a white blanket.

Figure 8 shows the picture of a *shendi* that is owned by Mr. Luis Bongsiw of Bokod. Accordingly, this kind blanket can only be kept or owned by someone whose family had performed a *cañao*. Another sample of *shendi* (Figure 9) is owned by Mr. Willy Velasco of Bokod and Tublay. According to him, the use of *shendi* is inherited. This blanket is used as an offering to his ancestors every time he performs *cañao*. He is also privileged to dance the *tayaw* with this kind of blanket when attending *cañao*. A person who did not perform a rich man's *cañao*, cannot dance the *tayaw* using this blanket.

**Kuabaw (Kn)/ Sarong (Ib).** This kind of blanket (Fig. 11) is said to be for rich women. It must be paired with *pinagpagan* and/or *shendi*. The Ibalois has similar rules on the use of this blanket. The use is inherited but can be acquired by performing some rituals.

In Bakun, another interpretation was given. The *kuabaw* is the generic term for *sinikwit* and *tinuang*. These two have the same figures but the difference is observed in the way the X is designed. The old folks also stated that *tinuang* can be used by older men and for the dead male person; while the *sinikwit* is used by younger men and can also be used in other occasions. Mr. Sally of Sablan said that *kuabaw* is a "*kadaanan nga enabel nga ada sinantatao na*", (oldest blanket with man-like design).

It is to note that the word *sarong* in Ibaloi is the dance performed by a woman using the blanket *sarong* (Figures 12 & 13) that is paired with the man dancing the *tayaw* with the *shendi*.

The photos in Figure 13 and 14 are taken from collections of two families.

**Bayaong (Kn)/ Safey (Ib).** It is the basic common blanket used by a person of any status. This is used as an ordinary blanket for the living people since it is the cheapest and only available design during the olden days. At present, they are used for offering during rituals and for wrapping the dead. *Bayaong/safey* is ordinarily paired with *bandala/kolebaw*. If a dead person is rich or had performed the *kedot* or *peshet*, his/her corpse is wrapped with three kinds of ethnic blankets: the *bayaong/safey*, *banadala/kolebaw*, plus *shendi/dilli* or *pinagpagan* or *alahdang*. *Bayaong* is also used to wrap the corpse of a person who died at young age and those who have no children. This blanket is usually offered during death-related rituals. For most, it is usually paired with the *bandala/kolebaw*.

Further, Bakun folks mentioned that *bayaong* is used for dead person at age 30-50 years old while *bandala* is for 20-30 yrs old. Both blankets are





**Fig 11.** The figures and color combination of the *kuabaw* is similar with the design of the sides of the *pinagpagan*. Red and black colors dominate the whole blanket. The designs of X, snake and man are placed in the row. It has two wide black panels at the middle.

**Fig 12.** *Sarong (binakket type)* owned by Mrs. Evelyn Laway of Asin Rd. Baguio City. This is a simpler type of sarong which is plain stripes of red, black, and gray without any figure design.



**Fig 13.** *Sarong* owned by Mr. Bongsiw of Bokod is similar to that of with the Velasco's. This type is the old/original one, consisting of the X, snake and man figure.

**Fig 14.** *Bayaong (Kn)/safety (lb)*. It is a black-dominated blanket with two white stripes at the middle part of the blanket. Sometimes the dominating color is dark blue depending on the availability of threads the weavers can avail of. Photo taken from the Bongsiw's of Ambuklao, Bokod, Benguet



originally produced by the Ilocanos particularly from Tagudin, Ilocos Sur and Bangar, La Union.

**Bandala (Kn)/ Kolebaw (Ib).** This is the most common and basic blanket that is usually paired with the *bayaong/safey*. This is said to be the blanket for the poor or ordinary people either living or dead. It is because the design is simple and it is the cheapest kind of blanket that they can avail of in the early days. As mentioned earlier, these blankets are also used by people of higher status together with any of the appropriate blankets for higher status. It is noted that people with higher status when they die, are wrapped with 3 to 4 layers of different kinds of blanket while the ordinary or younger people are wrapped with only one or two blankets

### Other blankets

**Manta.** This is a blanket in pure white with bird's eye designs in it made by the Ilocanos in Ilocos Province. According to Lakay Adawi, *mambunong* of Tublay, the *manta* or white blanket is included with the *kadaanan* or oldest blankets when the dead person is half-Christian or those individuals still believing in old practices. For some, this blanket is added in the middle layer of blankets to wrap the corpse of the person with higher status. This also offered during rituals. Some people prefer to use this especially for dead children.

**Adefus/adipospos (Ib),** This is a plainly woven thin blanket, some have colored strips or checkered designs. This is a popular ordinary Ilocano blanket. This is used by ordinary people or young children when dancing the *tayaw* and *sarong*. One pair is used by men hanging on their shoulders while dancing the *tayaw*. For women, one blanket is wrapped around their body then they dance the *sarong* following the steps of the man. After serving its ceremonial purposes, it can be used as an ordinary blanket or as *eban* (strap to carry babies).

**Mabli.** This is another design of a blanket (Fig. 16) which is said to be used by the kalanguya's of Kabayan and Buguias. It is said that this design was introduced later after the WWII, probably an innovation of the *bak-ke* design of a blanket

with added yellow strips. This is used as offering during rituals for dead ancestors who have used this blanket.

In Sapuan, Tublay, it is a part of the Kankana-ey culture that the dead person is not clothed but wrapped with the proper blanket. Pants and upper garments are placed on top of the corpse. *Wanes* (G-string) is also included regardless of whether the dead person have used one or not. For women, *inad-adug/bakket* is included.

### Women's Attire

**Tapis** is the generic term for the complete woman's attire (Fig. 17). This is composed of a wrap around skirt called *eten/devit* in Ibaloi and a blouse called either a *lamma*, *sambra* or *kambal*. Unlike blankets, the use of *tapis* does not have rules. To some people, it signifies the social status of the user. On the other hand, it is a majority perception that *tapis* was used as an ordinary clothing of women. It is only in the present days that *tapis* is used during special events because of the availability of so many kinds of clothing.

There is no exact interpretation given as to the color of the *tapis*. In the early days, black and white *tapis* are commonly used (Fig. 18). Accordingly, black and white was the original *tapis* for women. Although some, particularly in Tuba and La Trinidad, say that the black/gray and white strip design is usually for the poor. The bright colors are associated with the higher class. Later, more color combinations like red, white, and black stripes made up the *tapis*. At present, green and yellow stripes are included denoting that the user is rich or of Kankana-ey origin or both.

Leano (1958) added that the poor Ibaloi woman wore a single *divit* of Ilocano cloth with dark blue borders called *kulebaw*. An Ibaloi woman could wear a many-layered *divit* as wrap around skirts but she must celebrate *peshit* to show she can afford to use one - otherwise she wears the single *kulebaw* even if she is the wife of the rich man. *Divit* is generally wide consisting at least six layers of woven cloth excluding the foundation cloth





**Fig 15.** *Bandala (Kn)/ Kolebaw (lb)* is a thin white (dirty white) dominated blanket with two wide black strips at the center with equal distance. This weaving design originated from Tagudin and Bangar, Ilocos Sur.

**Fig 16.** The *mabli* blanket which has a similar design with that of the Benguet *bak-ke*t but the black is more dominant than the other colors. It has stripes of different colors such as red, white, yellow, blue, and black.



**Fig 17.** On the left is a Benguet woman wearing Benguet tapis during the Strawberry festival in La Trinidad, Benguet; right photo shows the new style of tapis with yellow or green stripes

**Fig. 18.** The first design of a pair of tapis, with black and white color combination.



to which the layers are attached. The cloth that has black, white, and red strips is called *bak-ke*t, the checkered parts is *kambayashu*.

Some old women nowadays prefer to use the lighter modern sewing of *tapis* rather than the use of *katsa* and the layering of several cloths, the reason why the old kind of *tapis* were so thick. Also, with the availability of more colors, the ethnic designs are being modified to adopt with the present trend. Various color combinations are now out in the market.

With the entry of other beliefs and religions, Benguet people are not compelled to cloth their dead people with the native attires. Others prefer to use Barong Tagalog and white T-shirt or any polo for men. To some, native attires and/or blankets are just used as pillows, placed near the head, put on top of the corpse or simply laid beside the corpse inside the coffin.

#### Men's Attire - G-string

**Kuba (Kn) / Kuval (lb).** This man's clothing has undergone several changes. In the olden days, men's G-string was made from beaten barks of trees followed by the introduction of woven cloth G-string. Even the Ilocano's of Tagudin wore G-string in the earlier days as recalled by Mr. Edison of Atok. Old women in Bokod perceived that even in the late twenties, the *eten* and *kuval* woven cloth are already worn. The year when old men stopped wearing G-string differs from each area. To areas nearer Baguio like in Atok, it was in the late 1940's that the *kuba* was seldom worn. In the municipality of Kibungan, old men from barangay outskirts ceased to wear *kuba* in the late 1980's. In Kabayan, it was in the early 1970's that the use of *to-to*, a *kuval* made out of pounded bark trees ended. The *kubal* disappeared when the Americans introduced the *khaki* short pants. The old men easily adopted the use of *khaki* shorts that outdated the *kuval* until the emergence of maong pants that again outdated the *khaki* shorts. Apilis Manio of Kabayan added that when President Magsaysay opened the trade for other cloth products, the demand for woven products from Ilocos slowly declined. As he recalled, the price per blanket at that time was PHP3.00.

There are no meanings and interpretations of the colors of the *kuba*. The general rule is that, the *kuba* to be worn or offered during rituals should also be the kind of *kuba* his father or ancestors have used. There are more *kuba* in the Kankana-ey areas than in the Ibaloi side. Kankana-ey have the *baa*, *binoltong*, *pillac*, *pinangsas*, and *sinulaman*. The Ibalois have only the *pinangsas*, *padasan*, and *donas*.

*Baa* is all pure black or dark blue in color; the *nawanisan kuba* is dark blue or black with three red stripes distributed evenly into columns; the *binoltong* or *etuling* is dark blue with white stripes at both sides and the *pilak kuba* or *padasan* is white in color with black stripes at both sides. The *padasan* is used by ordinary men and young men until 1960's. It was used for offerings to the spirits of the dead relatives and usually worn or placed in the coffin of a dead male person. *Kuba* (G-string) is usually included with the blankets as offerings, worn by dead people or placed inside the coffin. Live persons can also wear *kuba* during special events and by the different groups when performing activities depicting Cordilleran culture.

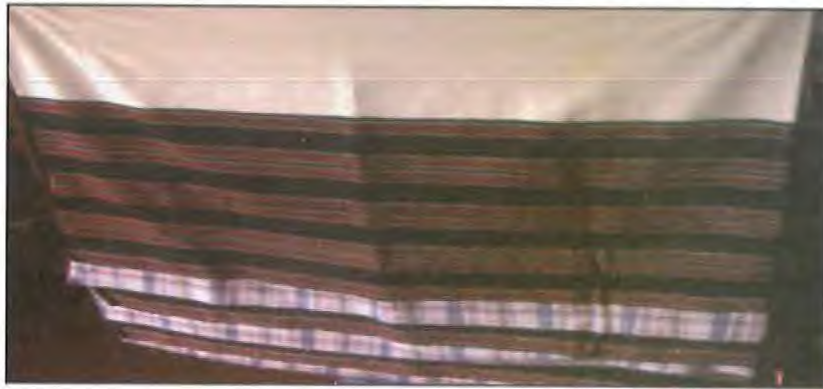
#### Head Turban and Handkerchief

**Salibobo/ bedbed (Kn) / Sadvovu/ shenget (lb).** For the Kankana-ey, *salibobo* is paired with the status blanket like *pinagpagan* and *dilli*. The *salibobo* is used by the old men who are member of the rich clans and the leaders of the communities. It has levels as determined by the number of eyes from 11, 13, and 15 which is paired with the same status blankets. Ibalois in Kabayan often use this garment which they call as *sadvovu*. Most Ibalois make use of the *konshiman* or the pure red-colored kind, and the *binajek*-red and white checkered design. Both are also used as *panjo* or handkerchief. For the women, any cloth can be used as head band or *shenget*. Women have mentioned that the head band is used to hold the tobacco pipe.

#### Binajek and Konshiman.

The *binajek*, and the *konshiman* handkerchiefs or *bandana* also take part in the





**Fig 19.** The *divit* or *eten* is made up of layers of *manta* as the base, the red strip and black strip called *bakket* and checkered combination of different colors like green, yellow, blue and white called *kambayashu*.

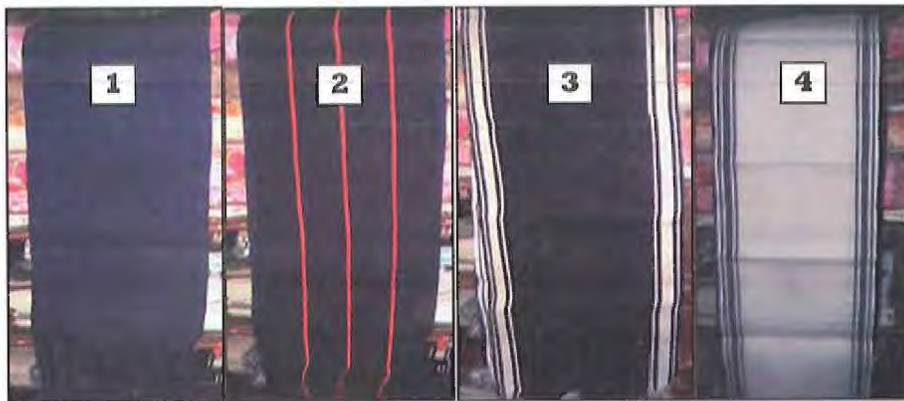
**Fig 20.** The upper garment is called *kambal/sa-dey (lb)*. Just like the skirt it is made up of layered cloth from *manta* as the base and the combination of *bakket* and *kambayashu*.



**Fig 21.** (above) *Lamma*: white blouse for women striped with dark blue at the ends of the arm sides, and with red and blue along the edges. This usually used by the Kankana-ey women.

**Fig 22.** Recent design and style of a pair of *tapis*, with a combination of more colors. It is lighter because the materials were not layered and the skirt not completely wrapped around.





**Fig 23.** 1) Baa (Kn);  
2) Nawanisan (Kn);  
3) Binoltong(Kn)/  
Etuling (lb);  
4) Pinangsas (Kn)/  
Padasan(lb)

**Fig 24.** Young Benguet men wearing *kuba/kuval* during the Adivay festival.



**Fig 25.** (Below) The *salibobo* is used by the old men who are member of the rich clans and the leaders of the communities.



**Fig 26.** (a) *Binajek* – checkered red and white and the (b) *konshiman* - pure red used as handkerchief or bandana.



rituals and ceremonies along with the blankets, rice wine, gabi, animals, and money. According to Lola Maya of Itogon, *binajek* is used by women while the *konshiman* is used by men only for ceremonies. There are also instances that a *mambunong*/ pagan priest uses the *konshiman* while officiating a ritual

**Bakget (Kn)/ Balkes (Ib).** In the Kankanaey areas of Benguet, they have the *bakget* (*inakguling* or *sinulaman*), a waistband used by women. However, among the Ibaloi's, *bakget* is not a common accessory for the women. In Itogon, the *donas* or the G-string of the little boys are also used by the women as their waistband or *balkes*.

**Binongkod** is a black cloth wider than the *kuval* (g-string). Usually, it is placed inside the coffin as a pillow for the corpse.

### Potentials of Improving the Ethnic Woven Materials

At present, Benguet cloth has many variations as to color combination, designs, and uses. These native clothes and attire are still out in the market. Though it had changed gradually, cultural beliefs on the significance of blankets and attires still prevail among the old folks, which made these woven products survive. With the presence of other religious belief and for practical reasons, the demand for these attires is decreasing. Presently, native blankets used during rituals and ceremonial activities are still valuable for as long as the belief of an afterlife of their dead ancestors prevails.

As observed by some old folks, they have seen the changes in the designs. One for example is the *kulebaw* wherein the black strip on both sides became wider than the original ones

With the introduction of weaving as alternative source of income in the city and in the province, there is an influx of woven products that include the native cloth. Though there are alterations from the original designs, these clothes are considered

native or indigenous products. In order to utilize the availability of these produce, businesses are using these as decorations and accents in other products. The tailoring shops for example are making this native cloth into gowns; others are adding native cloth as motif to gowns, Barong Tagalog and other clothing. To some, the inclusion of native accent can be made according to specifications and preference of the customers. Aside from the native cloth, the *ikat*, another indigenous process or design is making its way in the fashion world.

Native products from the different provinces are commercialized at Baguio City, being the center of trade in the region. Inevitably, these native clothes, blankets and accessories need to cope up with the new trends and fashions to continually sell in the market. Producers are finding ways for these woven materials to be more useful and be sustained despite the changing culture. Designs of native cloth are modified which can be sewn into table runners, bags, decorations and curtains.

Special events like the *Adivay Festival* of the Province of Benguet, the *Panagbenga* of Baguio City, and the *Strawberry Festivals* of the Municipality of La Trinidad is made colorful with the use and trade of the native attires, blankets, and accessories. Collection of blankets like *pinagpagan*, *shengdi*, *kuabaw*, *bandala* and *kulebaw* are used as curtains and decorations. Native cloth and attires like *tapis* and *kuval* are displayed as part of the material culture found among the ethnic communities.

Since, meanings of the symbols and designs were not passed on or disseminated to the present generation, the designs and uniqueness of the native clothes and attires have been modified. *Pinagpagan*, *dilli* and *kuabaw* are not limited as blanket nowadays. These are sewn into poncho or vests and *tapis*.

Even the users have their preference. An old woman from Ambuklao disclosed that she prefers modified *devit* sewn as skirt for daily use or during special events because skirt is lighter and more convenient to use.









**Fig 31.** This photo shows the new trend of utilizing the native blankets. Designs of the *tapis* of Mt. Province and Kalinga are made into upper garment for women. Likewise, the *pinagpagan* blanket is made into upper garment.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

Based on the finding, the following conclusions were arrived at:

1. Clothes and blankets are important elements of the Cordilleran culture. Benguet tribes have a high regard for the woven ethnic costumes and blankets, as an identity to their culture. History tells that Benguet people were not inclined to weaving. They were dependent on the clothing and blankets that were introduced by the Ilocano weavers and traders from Tagudin, Ilocos Sur. Lately, some Benguet women became interested in loom weaving resulting to ethnic materials woven locally.

2. Both Kankana-ey and Ibaloi have the same attires and clothes but differ in the local term. Major blankets are the *pinagpagan*, *dillishendi*, *kuabaw/sarong*, *bayaong/kolebaw*, and *bandala/safey*. The *alahdang*, being the highest rank or rich man's blanket is seldom used. There are also other blankets like *manta*, *adefus*, *mabli* which were used in the later years. The different kinds of blankets implies different social-economic status of the user. The social status can be inherited or acquired and have sub-levels determined by the

number of eyes/eyelets embedded in the designs blankets.

The women's costumes are a pair of *tapis*, which is composed of a wrap-around skirt and blouse (*kambal* or *sambra*). There are different kinds of color combinations of the *tapis*, while the ordinary one is the combination of the black and white. For the Kankana-ey tribes, aside from the common *tapis*, they also have another design called *lamma*. For the men, they use G-string (*kuba/kuval*). The Kankana-ey have different kind of *kuva*: the *baa*, *binoltong*, *pillac*, *pinangsas* and *sinulaman*. The Ibaloi's *kuval* are the *pinangsas*, *padasan*, and *donas*. The kind of clothing worn by the men and women must also correspond with the blanket used, which implies the social status of the user. Originally, these clothing were used for casual wears by their ancestors. Today, they are used during special occasions, rituals, and festivals.

Benguet cloth is generally composed of red, black and white colors. The figures embedded in the blankets are X or the shield, man, snake and the eye-like design. Generally, the kind of design and color of the cloth that they will use especially for ritual offerings is inherited, meaning they



follow what was used by their ancestors during their time. Benguet elders interviewed cannot fully interpret the meanings of the designs and colors. Their perception is that if the cloths has better quality and have more complicated design, it is more expensive. This implies wealth and/or prestige for those who were able to buy and used it.

3. To sustain the cultural identity, there is a great potential in improving the ethnic woven materials to cope with the new trends of lifestyle. It is good to note that the uses of the native blankets and attires transcend from merely ceremonial into other purposes. During the conduct of this study, gowns out of native cloth, decorations, and modified attires are out in the market. Different products like poncho/vest, dress, gowns, table runners, and other accessories, which are patterned from the original designs and motif of native attires are being commercialized.

### Recommendations

Continuous skills training on the development of ethnic cloth weaving is recommended in order to enhance the talents and skills of the younger generation and sustain the availability of the ethnic material culture of the people of Benguet.

The use and appreciation of the ethnic woven cloth should be encouraged in order to sustain the identity of the Benguet tribes. Maintaining the School for Living Tradition of the Local Government Unit would be a great avenue for the local elders to teach the young ones learn and appreciate their unique culture.

More improvement and modification of the designs and style of the ethnic costumes is recommended in order to cope with the modern trends of attires and encourage people to wear or use them more often.

In-depth study on the uses and implications of the designs and patterns of the Benguet ethnic woven material culture is recommended.

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