Beads of Change:

Investigating the Shift in Mangyan Jewelry-Making Practices in the Age of Commercialization

An Undergraduate Thesis

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

Bachelor of Arts in Philippine Arts

Major in Arts Management and Cultural Heritage

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APPROVAL SHEET

This undergraduate thesis, entitled *Beads of Change: Investigating the Shift in Mangyan Jewelry-Making Practices in the Age of Commercialization*, prepared and submitted by Gabrielle Ann R. de Leon, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Philippine Arts, is hereby accepted.

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Abstract

Mangyan culture is deeply grounded in artistic traditions such as weaving, pottery, and jewelry-making that carry symbolic meaning tied to their identity and spiritual beliefs. Among the Hanunuo Mangyan of Oriental Mindoro, jewelry-making has long involved the use of natural materials such as plant seeds. However, in the 21st century, contemporary Mangyan jewelry has shifted toward commercial materials. This study investigates how this transition has influenced their craft, focusing on changes in (a) materials, (b) design patterns and symbols, (c) construction methods, (d) production processes and the factors contributing to this transition, as well as the perceptions of Mangyan artisans regarding its impact on their cultural identity and heritage.

Adopting a qualitative and descriptive approach, the study draws on interviews with four Hanunuo Mangyan artisans and two non-profit organizations, the Mangyan Heritage Center and Christian Help Center Philippines. The analysis is grounded in Adorno's theory of the Culture Industry, supported by Formalistic Aesthetics Analysis and Social Aesthetics to examine both aesthetic evolution and socio-cultural dimensions of Mangyan jewelry-making.

Findings reveal that while the shift has introduced new design possibilities and expanded market opportunities, core cultural values remain embedded in their craft. Artisans actively negotiate between tradition and innovation, allowing their craft to evolve while remaining rooted in cultural meaning.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background of the Study

The Mangyan, the earliest inhabitants of Mindoro, are a culturally rich indigenous people in the Philippines comprising eight distinct groups: Iraya, Alangan, Tadyawan, Tau-buid, Bangon, Buhid, Hanunuo, and Ratagnon. While sharing a common heritage, each group has unique languages, customs, and beliefs.

Mangyan culture is deeply rooted in artistic traditions such as weaving, pottery, and literature, which reflect their social identity and spiritual beliefs. Their crafts, beyond functionality, hold symbolic meanings closely tied to their cultural traditions. Furthermore, their traditional jewelry and attire hold deep significance, reflecting identity, status, and spiritual beliefs. Each group showcases unique styles and materials, from intricate beadwork to minimalistic yet emblematic adornments, with both men and women wearing necklaces and bracelets crafted from natural or trade materials.

The Mangyan have traditionally crafted jewelry using plant seeds as beads, a practice deeply rooted in their history and craftsmanship. Plant seeds such as *tigbe* or *Job's Tear–a seed named after its distinct tear-drop shape from the grass family* ("Coix lacryma-jobi", 2023)—are dried before being used to create intricate necklaces and bracelets. However, in the 21st century, the emergence of jewelry marketed as Mangyan-made indicates a shift toward commercial beads–mass-produced and ready-to-use materials–fundamentally altering the design and production process of

Mangyan jewelry. Most shops or businesses showcasing Mangyan jewelry now predominantly feature pieces that have vibrant-colored commercial beads arranged in distinct patterns. Even if these designs reflect motifs that are uniquely Mangyan, it may overlook the tradition of using plant seeds or other raw, organic materials carefully gathered and prepared by artisans. This transition raises questions about the commercialization's impact on preserving their cultural identity and the significance of their jewelry-making practices.4

Statement of the Problem

This study examines how the shift from traditional plant seed-based jewelry to commercial materials has influenced the representation of Mangyan culture by exploring changes in materials, processes, aesthetic considerations, the factors contributing to this transition, and the perceptions of Mangyan artisans regarding its impact on their cultural identity and heritage.

The following questions are answered by this study:

1. How do Mangyan artisans experience the shift from traditional seed-based jewelry to commercial materials, and how has the shift affected the cultural identity and significance of their jewelry-making practices?
    A. What are the traditional jewelry-making methods of Mangyan artisans and how do they compare to contemporary practices?
    B. What materials were used in traditional Mangyan jewelry and in contemporary Mangyan jewelry and how are they sourced?

C. Which processes and materials have been preserved, modified, or entirely replaced in the shift from traditional to contemporary Mangyan jewelry-making?

D. What are the formalist aesthetic characteristics of both traditional and contemporary Mangyan jewelry? What are the similarities and differences?

2. What factors have contributed to the shift in traditional practices and material usage in Mangyan jewelry-making?

   A. What are the artistic influences that contributed to the shift from traditional to contemporary jewelry-making?

      a. How have contemporary design trends influenced the aesthetics of Mangyan jewelry?

      b. How have contemporary jewelry-making techniques influenced traditional Mangyan processes?

      c. How do Mangyan artisans combine traditional with contemporary aesthetics in their jewelry-making?

   B. What are the environmental influences that contributed to the shift from traditional to contemporary jewelry-making?

      a. How has the availability of traditional materials changed over time?

      b. What environmental factors have affected the sustainability of using natural materials for jewelry–making?

      c. How have environmental changes impacted the production of Mangyan jewelry?

C. What are the economic influences that contributed to the shift from traditional to contemporary jewelry-making?
    a. What role do consumers, middleman, or artisans play in shaping the designs and processes of Mangyan jewelry-making?
    b. How has the commercialization of Mangyan jewelry affected the livelihood of Mangyan artisans?
    c. How has the shift to commercial materials been financially beneficial or limiting for the Mangyan artisans?
    d. What role do external markets play in shaping the production of Mangyan jewelry?

3. How has the commercialization of traditional jewelry-making represent contemporary Mangyan culture?
    A. What are the direct influences of commercialization to the cultural significance of their jewelry-making practices?
    B. How do Mangyan artisans perceive the impact of commercialization on the cultural significance of their jewelry-making practices?
    C. How has the commercialization of Mangyan jewelry-making reinforced or altered their cultural identity?

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study is focused on Hanunuo Mangyan artisans from Mansalay and Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro, thereby excluding the processes and experiences of other Mangyan groups, which may vary significantly. The consumer participants are also limited to the select non-profit organizations including the Mangyan Heritage Center and Christian Help Center Philippines, which may have different processes on how they collaborate with the Mangyan artisans. This study is confined to beaded jewelry, specifically adornments like necklaces and bracelets, and does not extend to other Mangyan handicrafts such as bags or clothing. Moreover, the methods applied in the creation and the symbolic meanings of the patterns seen in their jewelry are addressed in a preliminary manner, offering only a surface-level introduction and excluding its historical background. While the contemporary jewelry of the Mangyan may show visual similarities to the beadwork traditions of other ethnolinguistic groups, this study does not engage in a comparative analysis between these cultural practices. These limitations reflect the study's intent to provide a focused and in-depth examination of the transition in jewelry-making practices within the selected scope.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the understanding of how commercialization impacts the cultural heritage and traditional craftsmanship of indigenous communities, specifically the Hanunuo Mangyan artisans.

For the Hanunuo Mangyan community, the study emphasizes the cultural and historical importance of their craft, encouraging its recognition as both a livelihood and an integral part of their cultural identity. It aims to encourage preservation and innovation in their jewelry-making practices while retaining their cultural essence.

For consumers, the study fosters awareness of the cultural significance of Mangyan jewelry, viewing purchases as connections to a rich heritage, potentially boosting demand and sustainability for Mangyan artisans.

Methodology

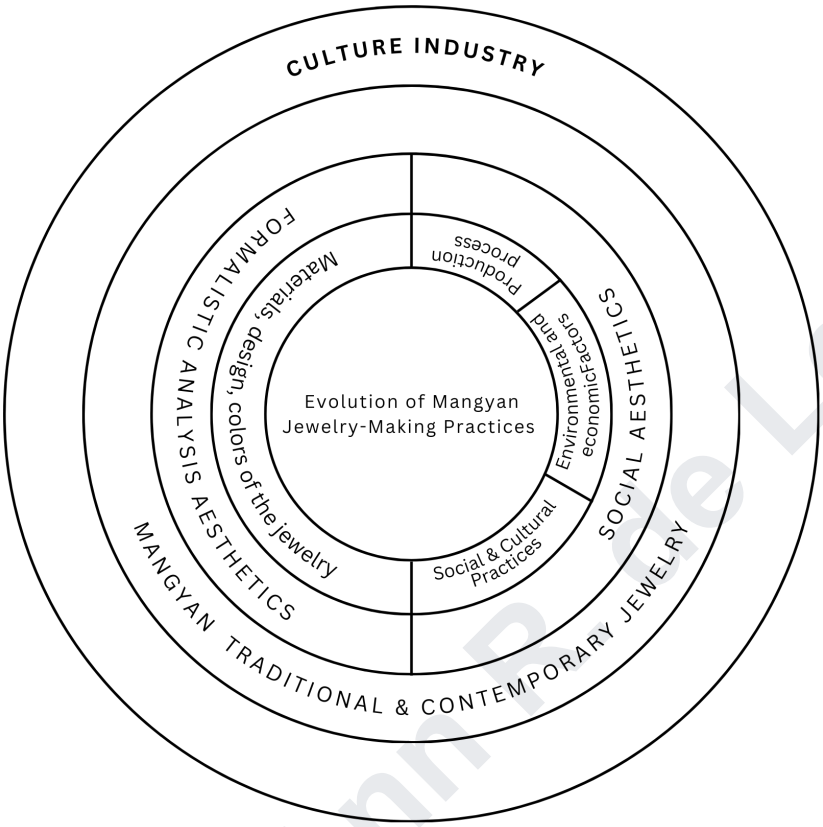
This qualitative study employs a descriptive approach, integrating ethnography and phenomenology to examine the artistic, environmental, and economic aspects of Mangyan jewelry-making. Ethnography explores traditional and contemporary jewelry-making practices, focusing on craftsmanship techniques and their evolution under commercialization. Phenomenology delves into the lived experiences of Mangyan artisans and middlemen, highlighting the personal and cultural meanings of shifting materials and practices.

Data will be collected through observation and photograph documentation during visits of pop-ups or places wherein Mangyan jewelry made by the Hanunuo is present and through semi-structured interviews with Mangyan artisans from Oriental Mindoro, representing traditional, contemporary, and transitional practices. Additional participants including the “middlemen”, specifically executive directors of Mangyan Heritage Center

and Christian Help Center Philippines from the non-profit organizations, will provide additional insights into the craft's evolution, cultural identity, and value. Purposive sampling will be used to ensure participants are selected based on their expertise and direct involvement: artisans for jewelry-making experience and middlemen for their engagement with Mangyan artisans and consumers.

The collected data will be analyzed using Formalistic Analysis Aesthetics and Social Aesthetics to comprehensively understand the aesthetic and socio-cultural dimensions of Mangyan jewelry. Formalistic analysis will document visual elements, alongside design principles such as form and composition, to trace changes in materials, design, and production techniques. Social Aesthetics will explore the Mangyan artisans' experiences, artistic influences, economic pressures, and environmental factors that influence their jewelry-making, revealing how evolving practices reflect adaptation, survival and cultural continuity.

Conceptual Framework



In their critique of capitalistic society, Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) describe the Culture Industry as a system in which cultural works are no longer valued for their meaning or use, but rather for their marketability. Through commodification, cultural materials are transformed into products or exchangeable commodities with exchange value. When this process aggravates and the primary goal shifts toward maximizing profit, the ‘Culture Industry’ is pressured to reduce costs and change its production process to enhance efficiency, it goes through the process of standardization. Moreover, Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) argue that under capitalism, genuine artistic expression and cultural significance are often sacrificed to meet the demands of the market.

Theodor W. Adorno's critical theory of the *Culture Industry* offers a framework for examining how the concepts of commodification and standardization may be present in the shift from traditional seed-based jewelry to commercial materials and how it affects Mangyan's cultural identity and the significance of their jewelry-making practices.

The framework shows how commercialization pushes the shift in Mangyan jewelry by identifying the similarities and differences of traditional and contemporary jewelry-making practices in design and production. It discusses how social and cultural practices changed over time due to artistic, environmental and economic factors. Because of these external influences, it is inevitable to retain the same production process and dynamics especially if a middleman is now involved. The middleman, in this study, are the non-profit organizations and small businesses that give assistance to the Mangyan community to offer and sell their jewelry in Metro Manila. The Mangyan jewelry becomes commodities whose *exchange value* or market price overrides their *use value* with personal and cultural significance (Marx (1996; 1993). There are new considerations that may arise such as consumer preferences, which products and designs sell and what do not. After considering the consumer preferences and the middleman's requests, the Mangyan jewelry goes through the process of standardization wherein cultural products become simplified–replacing materials that are more accessible and processes that are faster, raising questions about retaining the representation of Mangyan identity and the value of jewelry-making practices.

Traditional and contemporary Mangyan jewelry pieces are examined through formalistic analysis aesthetics and social aesthetics. To organize and compare the collected data, sections and categories will be created to highlight the similarities and differences of (a) jewelry-making processes and techniques, (b) materials used and their sources, (c) designs, (d) aesthetic considerations in design creation, and (e) other considerations in production. Traditional and contemporary Mangyan jewelry-making practices are analyzed through social aesthetics, focusing on the change in aesthetic concentration influenced by social and cultural practices. Moreover, contemporary products are analyzed through the same theory, considering the evolving artistic, environmental and economic factors that influence jewelry-making, along with shifting production processes and consideration of Mangyan artisans in response to market demands. On the other hand, the materials, designs and color choices of both traditional and contemporary jewelry are analyzed through formalistic analysis aesthetics to highlight the visual and structural evolution of their craft. At the end of these investigations, this study concludes by tracing the evolution of Mangyan jewelry, illustrating the shift from their traditional practices to the contemporary adaptations.

Theoretical Framework

This study applies the concept of the Culture Industry by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (2002) in “Dialectic of Enlightenment”, specifically in the chapter, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”. This theory critiques the ways in which cultural production becomes standardized and commodified under capitalist systems, shaping both producers’ and consumers’ behaviors. To support this theory,

formalistic analysis aesthetics and social aesthetics are combined to discover how the Mangyan jewelry-making practices evolved.

A key question posed by Herrington (2014) in “Adorno’s Culture Industry: The ‘Thing’ with Commodifying Creativity”—“Does contemporary society embody the same characteristics and stifled creative possibilities that were observed in the decades of Adorno’s critical theories regarding the culture industry?”—guides this study’s inquiry into Mangyan jewelry-making. Adorno argued that within a capitalist society, autonomous artistic expression becomes constrained, as cultural producers are compelled to conform to market-driven expectations. Applying this to the Mangyan artisans, this study seeks to understand how their craft has been shaped, altered, or even restricted by industry demands and commercial pressures. Through interviews with Mangyan artisans and middlemen, the study will explore the extent to which the Culture Industry has influenced their jewelry-making. While Adorno was primarily concerned with how mass production affected artistic integrity rather than the authenticity of the artist, this study also considers the implications of these changes on the representation of Mangyan cultural identity.

Formalistic Analysis Aesthetics will focus on the visual and physical characteristics of Mangyan jewelry, examining elements such as line, shape, color, texture, and form as well as principles like balance, contrast, emphasis, and unity. This includes identifying the specific materials used–whether natural seeds or commercial alternatives–and their textures. The structure and construction of the jewelry will also be assessed, including techniques for assembling pieces, the intricacy of beadwork or weaving, and how elements are arranged to create patterns or symbolic motifs. The analysis will consider

the evolution of design choices, such as shifts in color palettes, the complexity of patterns, and the size of pieces, to highlight how artistic decisions have adapted to changing cultural and commercial influences. This analysis will help document the artistic characteristics of traditional and contemporary Mangyan jewelry, illustrating changes in design and material choices, as well as production techniques.

On the other hand, Social Aesthetics is an approach to understanding art that emphasizes the relationship between aesthetic expression and the social and cultural environment in which it exists. It views art not just as an isolated object of beauty but as something shaped by and actively shaping the society surrounding it. It considers how aesthetic values and preferences are influenced by cultural norms and lived experiences. It also focuses on how art is communicated, received, and interpreted by people in specific social settings, making the connection between aesthetics and social life central to the analysis (Nielsen, 2001).

By applying this analysis to the shift in Mangyan jewelry-making practices, it can examine how shifts in the community's cultural and economic environments have influenced what is considered beautiful or valuable in jewelry, affecting its formal qualities. It helps reveal that the change from traditional to contemporary practices is not only about the material or technique, but also about the changing aesthetic preferences shaped by broader social forces. In this way, jewelry becomes both an artistic and social object, one that reflects the evolving identity, values, and conditions of the Mangyan community.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

Beadwork in Philippine Indigenous Culture

Beadwork and personal adornment are integral aspects of many indigenous cultures in the Philippines, reflecting deep connections to identity, social status and spiritual practices. These adornments go beyond mere decoration and serve as tangible expressions of their cultural heritage, symbolizing community ties and personal achievements, and spiritual beliefs. The materials used, the techniques of creation, and the contexts in which these objects are worn reveal complex layers of meaning, illustrating how material culture, such as jewelry, functions as both art and narrative.

Carlson (2013) in *From the Philippines to The Field Museum: A Study of Ilongot (Bugkalot) Personal Adornment* described the Ilongot people, one of the ten primary cultural groups in Northern Luzon, from Sierra Madre and Caraballo Mountains, as being known for their headhunting ornaments that reflected their social status and life stages. On the other hand, their beadwork, in particular, commonly used glass beads, likely acquired through trade with West Asian or Indian spheres, are incorporated into intricate necklaces, bracelets and waist ornaments which carry social and spiritual meanings. For instance, the *panlaw nun pinanlunpunan*, a long-beaded necklace adorned with horse hair was worn in ceremonies and dances which embodied the agility and energy of the Ilongot hunters through the constant dynamic movement of its beaded strands. It is composed of hollow bamboo pieces, black seeds, and colored

glass into a plant-based woven cordage with brass wire clasps. Moreover, their beadwork extended beyond personal adornment. Beaded strands were sometimes used to wrap sacrificial offerings, symbolically compensating forest spirits or the deceased's *amet* or soul ensuring proper spiritual balance (Carlson, 2013)

Similarly, in *Body Modification and Adornments among the Agta of Northeastern Luzon, Philippines. Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, Griffin and Salvador-Amores (2020) introduced the Agta people of Northeastern Luzon have a rich tradition of body modification and adornment, with beadwork playing a significant role in expressing status and identity. While many Agta designs show similarities to Ilongot motifs, their jewelry developed distinct features tied to their way of life. Necklaces, such as the inəkət, were crafted from colorful beads strung on nylon fishing line, often arranged in geometric patterns. These intricate necklaces, worn by men, women, and children, were valued for their beauty and symbolic significance during social gatherings and rituals

Beadwork extended to other forms of adornment, like the *biskal* or arm decorations and *kəlwat* or beaded forehead bands. The *biskal*, typically made from wild banana fiber strings, with seed beads occasionally woven into the fibers and worn from infancy up until their death. The *kəlwat* was more common among young men, especially those living upriver, and was tied around the forehead. The Agta also wore simple beaded accessories like the *manek*, a multi-colored beaded necklace with a *kinabig* or pendant, made from materials like engraved abalone shells or plastic. Despite these specific beadwork pieces, their beaded adornments mostly supplement their other adornment such as the *kealaloy* or ear decoration and *biskal*. (Griffin & Salvador-Amores, 2020)

Moreover, In *Polyhedron and cultural value in the Kalinga Heirloom Beads (Bongey)*, Lalin (2016) discussed that the Kalinga people of the Cordillera region hold heirloom beads, known as *bongey*, as treasured cultural items imbued with beauty, memory, and social significance. Traditionally crafted from natural materials like seeds, wood, shells, bones, and stones, these beads evolved to include glass and plastic, shaped and polished to adorn the body or decorate objects. Historians suggest that glass beads arrived in the Philippines through trade with India, China, Indo-China, Malaysia, and Arab countries, exchanged for metals, textiles, and other valuable goods as early as the 15th century.

For Kalinga women, heirloom beads are sacred possessions passed down through generations, symbolizing familial wealth and prestige. While each family's collection of beads may differ, they play vital roles in social and ceremonial life, serving as markers of ethnic identity and social status. Bead designs often incorporate mathematical principles, with shapes ranging from polyhedrons to forms inspired by fruits. Specific bead names vary across Kalinga communities, like *faringot* and *ong-ong* in some areas, or *finlash* in Sadanga. Regardless of their local names, these beads remain essential elements of Kalinga cultural identity, linking past and present through their enduring presence in personal adornment and communal traditions. (Lalin, 2016)

In Mangyan culture, jewelry and traditional attire hold significant meaning, reflecting identity and spiritual beliefs. Each group features distinct styles and materials, ranging from elaborate beadwork to simpler symbolic pieces. Both men and women adorn themselves with necklaces and bracelets made from locally sourced or traded materials.

According to the website of Ethnic Groups of the Philippines (n.d.), the Hanunuo Mangyan create vibrant-colored bead jewelry with magical, religious, and judicial importance, such as white beads used in healing rituals or as fines. The Alangan Mangyan favor simpler jewelry such as necklaces made of plant seeds for children and protective charms for adults. Social status is also marked, with unmarried individuals wearing distinct trade bead jewelry. The Buhid Mangyan emphasize status in their attire and jewelry, with unmarried women wearing belts made of braided *nito*–a vine-type fern–,beaded headbands, and long necklaces, while men wear g-strings with chokers and bracelets. The Iraya Mangyan wear belts, headbands, and necklaces made of *tigbe seeds*–as part of their traditional attire. Other groups, such as the Ratagnon and Tawbuid, incorporate bead necklaces and bracelets, reflecting a shared cultural appreciation for beadwork while maintaining unique tribal interpretations.

Across these indigenous groups, beadwork serves as a powerful medium of cultural expression–symbolizing social roles, life stages, spiritual beliefs, and historical ties to trade and inter-community relationships. While each group's adornments are distinct, they share common threads: beadwork is not just about the aesthetics but about storytelling, embodying personal histories, collective identities and cultural resilience. Understanding these practices surrounding adornment or jewelry, helps illuminate the cultural significance of jewelry-making traditions, such as those of the Mangayn, highlighting the intricate ways material culture carries and preserves heritage across generations.

The rich tradition of beadwork across indigenous Philippine cultures highlights how adornments or jewelry functions both as a cultural material and a living narrative of

identity, spirituality, and community ties. The enduring use of organic materials like seeds, shells and fibers, alongside evolving techniques influenced by trade and environmental shifts, reflects the dynamic interplay between heritage and adaptation**.** Understanding how other indigenous groups navigated changes in material use and other influences offers a broader context for examining the shift of Mangyan jewelry from traditional–use of plant seeds and other organic materials–to contemporary–use of commercial materials.

Seeds as Beads in Other Cultures

The use of plant seeds for crafting jewelry is a long-established practice shared across cultures, extending beyond the Philippines. Some of which include Buddhist, Indian and Indonesian traditions. Seeds are naturally durable and easy to access, making them ideal materials for crafting necklaces, bracelets, and other adornments for thousands of years (Li et al, 2014).This widespread practice reflects not only aesthetic preferences but also deeper cultural, spiritual and symbolic meanings.

One of the most commonly used plant seeds in jewelry is *Coix lacryma-jobi*, also known as Job's tears. In *Seeds used for Bodhi beads in China*, Jiang, et al., (2008) describe this annual herb, native to Southern and Eastern Asia, as hard, glossy, ovoid seeds, making it ideal for necklaces, bracelets, rosaries, and other decorative items. In Buddhist culture, these seeds along with other plant species are used to craft *Bodhi beads*–prayer tools for mantra counting and are also worn as amulets for protection and blessings. This spiritual function closely parallels a spiritual significance of Mangyan

jewelry, which is believed to ward off evil spirits. (Li, et al, 2014) This highlights the shared cultural practice of infusing seed-based jewelry with spiritual or religious meaning.

In *Plants as Human Adornment in India*, Francis (1984) mentioned that variety of plants have been used for adornment in India, either as an ornament or for cosmetics. Ornaments such as beads, pendants, rings, and bangles are worn or pierced on various parts of the body, while plant-based pigments and oils are applied to the hair, skin, teeth, and nails. Among the many plants used, Job's tears seeds have been particularly significant, with archaeological findings indicating their use in jewelry as early as the last centuries B.C. (Dikshit, 1952a, Deraniyagala, 1972). This long-standing tradition of plant-based adornment highlights the connection between nature and material culture in Indian society.

Similarly, in another work of Francis (1991), *Beads in Indonesia*, stated that the use of organic materials for bead-making dates back thousands of years, with archaeological discoveries highlighting the region's early craftsmanship. A notable discovery in Eastern Timor revealed a pierced *Coix lacryma-jobi* or Job's tears bead, dating back to before 3000 B.C. (Glover, 1979). This early example of seed jewelry reinforces the idea that the natural beads have been valued for both their aesthetic appeal and cultural significance across generations. Additionally, historical records indicate that Job's tears were cultivated as early as the prehistoric period, with origins linked to Manchuria, Northeast India, and the Indo-Malaya region, including Indonesia's larger islands (Watt, 1908; Vavilov, 1950). The widespread use of this plant for adornment also suggests a shared material culture that goes beyond geographical boundaries.

Aside from plant seeds, Indonesian artisans also crafted beads from more durable organic materials such as shells and bones. Excavations in Gilimanuk, Bali, in 1964 uncovered shell beads made using the *heishi* technique–a method wherein a flat shell is chipped into circlets, perforated, strung on fibers or a stick, and polished using a flat or grooved rock, to produce beads that are similar to size. This technique, which originated in the Upper Paleolithic period in India, spread across Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand, where similar beads served as currency in the *Kula ring*–a ceremonial exchange and commodity bartering system in the Trobriand Islands of southeast Melanesia (Barone, 2020). The practice even appeared in distant regions like America and Africa, showing a shared tradition of transforming natural materials into meaningful adornments.

The use of plant seeds and other organic materials in jewelry-making is a global tradition, demonstrating how different cultures have adapted natural resources for adornment and spiritual significance. The use of seeds in Mangyan jewelry connects them to this broader cultural practice, illustrating the enduring organic beadwork. However, as external influences such as trade and commercialization introduce new materials, the shift from traditional to commercially available materials raises questions about cultural adaptation and heritage preservation. Understanding these parallels with other cultures offers valuable insight into how indigenous jewelry-making traditions evolve while maintaining its cultural significance and identity.

Indigenous Art in the Contemporary Period

In *Surviving 'The Contemporary': What Indigenous artists want, and how to get it*, McLean (2013) describes the period we are currently in as “the contemporary”, beginning roughly around 1990, is presented as a distinct era that differs fundamentally from the earlier period of “Modernism”. A major driving force behind this shift is the transformation of global capitalism, specifically the “deterritorialisation of capital” which refers to the money and investment moving exponentially freely across international borders. This then has led to capitalism functioning as a “universal world system”, wherein “everybody silently accepts that capitalism is here to stay”.

In another work of McLean (2013), *Contemporaneous Traditions: The World in Indigenous Art/Indigenous Art in the World,* he mentioned a key theoretical response to these conditions is the idea of ‘*multiple modernities’*, proposed by Shmuel Eisenstadt (1999). This concept challenges the Eurocentric view of modernity as a singular Western trajectory and instead recognizes that different cultures experience and shape modernity in diverse ways. Traditions, once seen as remnants of a pre-modern past, are now understood as dynamic foundations for contemporary expression and innovation. Rather than being discarded, they are reinterpreted to meet the demands of the contemporary world.

However, indigenous art continues to navigate complex challenges in this landscape. Scholars such as Ian McLean and Osborne (2013) note that the concept of “the contemporary” itself is shaped by shifting art markets and global capitalism to favor works that align with the dominant aesthetic and conceptual trends. This often hinders

indigenous artists, whose work may be grounded in local indigenous knowledge systems, materials, and traditions. Indigenous art is frequently misread, either romanticized as a relic of the past or exoticied under an ethnographic gaze. As McLean (2013) suggests, many indigenous artists are caught in a paradox to be accepted as contemporary. They must adapt their practices to the standards of the global contemporary art, which may require altering or commodifying their traditions.

This tension mirrors the concerns within Mangyan jewelry-making practices. Traditionally rooted in local knowledge and sustainable practices, Mangyan artisans crafted jewelry from plant seeds and other natural materials readily available in their environment. These were not merely decorative pieces but embodied cultural values, beliefs and practices. However, the growing demand from contemporary markets may have led to a shift toward commercial materials which are more familiar to the masses. The shift in materials is not just a practical adaptation but may also reflect the pressure indigenous artisans face to conform to commercial and aesthetic expectations shaped by the external market.

Moreover, Mangyan jewelry today could represent a form of neo-traditionalism wherein traditions are not simply preserved but renewed and adapted to assert identity in the contemporary period. As Bell (1990) points out, indigeneity can be made contemporary not by abandoning its roots but by positioning itself within contemporary traditions. Mangyan artisans may adapt to new commercial materials not only for practical or economic reasons but also to continue expressing cultural identity in a form legible to new audiences. Thus, rather than simply a loss of tradition, the shift may represent an evolving negotiation between heritage and innovation (McLean, 2013).

The commercialization of Mangyan jewelry highlights the complexities indigenous communities face as they navigate global capitalism, preserving cultural identity while remaining economically viable. Their jewelry becomes a medium of cultural expression and a product shaped by market forces, raising questions about its authenticity and the evolving identity of indigenous art. In this lens, indigenous art in the contemporary period should not be understood as a static tradition or full-scale negotiation, but as a space for negotiation. It embodies the interplay between preservation and adaptation, between cultural meaning and the pressures of global commerce and market demand.

The Commercialization of Traditional Crafts

Commercialization significantly reshapes traditional crafts, shifting their cultural and spiritual significance to align with modern market demands. This transition, often driven by socio-economic pressures and tourism, blends traditional techniques with mass production, introducing new materials, designs, and purposes.

In *The Commercialization of Ethnic Crafts*, Cohen (1989) explains the two types of commercialization that can be adapted in indigenous art—spontaneous commercialization and sponsored commercialization. In spontaneous commercialization, the artisans themselves start modifying and producing items that may attract the consumers in their area, whereas in sponsored commercialization, the artisans are physically away from the consumers so intermediaries are essential to guide them in marketing and selling the products.

Traditional crafts such as Thai textiles and baskets in Thailand and Chaco textiles in Argentina have adapted to cater to consumer preferences, enabling market access and income generation but often at the expense of traditional significance and cultural authenticity.

Moreover, Chutia & Sarma (2016) collected research related to the commercialization of traditional crafts to provide a holistic view of the topic in *Commercialization of Traditional Crafts of South and South East Asia: A Conceptual Model based on Review of Literature*. One case mentioned is the resettlement of the Meo and Yao tribes in Thai refugee camps during the political upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s created conditions that drove the sponsored commercialization of their textiles. (Cohen, 2000). The Thai Hill Crafts Foundation played an important role in this process as an external agent. Cohen stated that it was a collaborative effort of artisans and intermediaries which led to the standardization of the craft. At the same time, spontaneous commercialization was taking place in the highland villages that are accessible to tourists. "*Pa Ndau"* or the traditional Hmong textile squares showed both spontaneous and sponsored responses to external demand under the aegis of NGOs and missionaries, the intermediaries in this case, and direct tourist demand. Conventional designs were being transformed into innovative forms because of the tribe's need to adapt to the environment they are currently in, given that they move from one place to another. Moreover, sponsorships from various NGOs led to the production of different products such as coin bags, tablecloths, and bedspreads using these 'batiked' squares. Major innovations took place along with the introduction of a wide range of colours suiting Western tastes and new raw materials, which eventually led to 'standardization' and 'routinization' of the

products. In this case, the artisans had no direct communication with the market (Cohen, 1993).

Another case in Thailand is with their traditional basket-making wherein their artisans responded to the demand of foreign customers who wanted to replace the material of bamboo with plastic strips. There is a direct interaction between the producer and the customer, resulting in a spontaneous commercialization (Chartniyom, 2013) While traditional craftsmen spontaneously reacted to the substitution of material of products, these items can only reach the foreign audience by a middleman. There are some cases wherein the middleman brings specific designs requested by customers and encourages the artisans to adopt it to their product. This is how a middleman can facilitate a sponsored commercialization.

Similarly, in *“Not From Their Culture”: The Influence of Artisanal Promotion Agents in the Production and Commercialization of Indigenous Crafts in Chaco, Argentina*, Perret (2022) explained how the production and marketization of Chaco textiles from Argentina came under the management of state agencies and non-governmental organizations, representing another case of sponsored commercialization. The commercialization of Chaco textiles illustrates how external influences shape the perception of tradition. The NGO, Fundación Gran Chaco, encouraged the Wichı peoples of Formosa to produce textiles in the "traditional" colors–white, black, and brown–to align with consumer expectations, as buyers were more likely to purchase products that matched their preconceived notions of the tradition. Buyers, unfamiliar with the diverse dyeing properties of Chaco plants, rejected products outside this narrow color range, pressuring artisans to simplify their processes for marketability at the expense of

creative expression and authentic tradition. This tension is also evident in the production of *yicas*–a bag made of the *chaguar* plant, where white is chosen for durability when crafted for personal use, but colors shift to meet market demands for exchange.

Beyond color preferences, artisans were further pressured to adapt their practices due to material decomposition, which caused products to deteriorate before even being sold. In response, Collaborative Design Tables (CDTs) were established to reduce product returns and improve market readiness. These meetings brought together indigenous and non-indigenous artisans to experiment with prototypes, modify designs, and reimagine products that failed to sell. Artisans were also encouraged to consider buyer lifestyles and product functionality, adjusting their products accordingly. This process mirrors Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff's concept of "product lines", where items with higher demand were expanded, and those with little market interest were discontinued. In some cases, artisans substituted scarce materials like chaguar with industrial wool, though this choice is still sometimes contested by the local organizations (Perret, 2022).

In *Bagong Sinaunang Habi: Aesthetics of Contemporarized Traditional Philippine Weaving in Selected Social Enterprises*, Hilario (2024) discusses the commodification of traditional Philippine woven textiles in the 21st century, particularly as they became popularized and adapted to meet the aesthetic preferences and functional demands of contemporary markets. This commodification is framed not merely as a loss, but as a form of cultural preservation seen through a different lens facilitated by social enterprises that actively shape how these products are produced, marketed, and consumed. Central to this process is a negotiation involving changes in patterns, colors, uses, functions, and even production methods. This dynamic mirrors the transformation

in Mangyan jewelry-making, where traditional practices and materials have given way to new, commercially available components that are now integrated into contemporary designs.

The commercialization of traditional crafts reveals the complex interplay between cultural heritage and market demands, as seen in Thai, Chaco, and Philippines textiles. Artisans adapt materials, colors, and designs to meet consumer expectations, sometimes sacrificing creative autonomy and tradition for economic survival. The dynamic relationship between artisans and external forces highlights how tradition evolves alongside social and economic realities, even as commercialization risks boxing indigenous culture into fixed definitions of authenticity. Similarly, Mangyan jewelry-making, once deeply tied to spiritual and social practices through materials like *tigbe* seeds, is now shifting toward market-driven production. This transformation reflects the broader tension between preserving cultural identity and navigating commercialization, where artisans must continually negotiate the space between honoring tradition and securing sustainable livelihoods.

Adorno's Culture Industry

The concept of Culture Industry by Theodor Adorno is complex, but for the purpose of this study, it will focus on his ideas about production and material culture, including the roles and behaviors of producers and consumers. This will allow us to understand how cultural goods are shaped, marketed and consumed with capitalistic systems, and how these dynamics affect traditional practices like the jewelry-making of the Mangyan.

In *Tourism and Culture Industry*, Meurs (2014) explained that Adorno's critique highlights how the mass production of cultural goods manipulates audiences through repetitive art, promoting passive consumption, numbing critical thinking, and replacing authentic cultural engagement with mindless entertainment.

Similarly, in *Adorno's culture industry: The "thing" with commodifying creativity*, Herrington (2014) discussed how mass media, through films, music, and advertisements, blur the boundary between art and everyday life, leading to a society where people unconsciously conform to capitalism systems. Having market-driven goals suppresses alternative ways of thinking and behaving within society. Instead of artists freely expressing their culture through their craft genuinely, they are pressured to conform to the standards set by the "Culture Industry"—standards dictated by a capitalized society. This manufactured culture strips art of its spontaneity and the artists' freedom, as they are reduced to a commodity made for profit.

The Culture Industry thrives on repetition. For example, action movies often follow predictable plots with interchangeable characters, reinforcing audience expectations and discouraging intellectual engagement. This repetition, while familiar and comforting, gradually erodes the audience's capacity to question or seek authenticity (Meurs, 2014). Art becomes a tool for social control, where people accept what is presented without critically exploring alternative perspectives. Jean Baudrillard (1988)'s concept of simulation further complements Adorno's critique. The Culture Industry not only mass-produces art but also simulates reality, replacing the "real" with carefully curated images and experiences. This is particularly evident in the tourism industry, where travel agencies present pre-selected attractions as the essence of a place, denying tourists

the opportunity to explore and understand the culture beyond these surface-level representations (Meurs, 2014).

These ideas resonate with the commercialization of Mangyan jewelry. When Mangyan accessories are marketed to tourists or even local consumers, they are often reduced to a singular image–intricate beaded patterns symbolizing tribal identity. However, this representation overlooks the use of organic materials of Mangyan jewelry and its significance in their jewelry-making practices.The shift from seed-based materials to commercial beads with the possible reason of a wider market appeal could reflect the influence of the Culture Industry–where indigenous art is transformed into a commodity and authenticity is sacrificed for marketability. This process mirrors the repetitive production cycles criticized by Adorno, as unique cultural expressions that are flattened into predictable, easily digestible products.

Moreover, the curated image of Mangyan jewelry perpetuated online and pop-up stores parallels the simulated experiences in tourism. Consumers are presented with an aestheticized, romanticized version of indigenous art, detached from its cultural roots. Just as tourists passively consume packaged cultural experiences, buyers of commercialized Mangyan jewelry may unknowingly contribute to their diminishing traditional jewelry-making practice. This highlights the dual nature of the Culture Industry–while it increases cultural visibility, it also risks distorting and commodifying heritage.

Amidst this shifting landscape, policies like Republic Act No. 11904, or the Philippine Creative Industries Development Act, help safeguard indigenous artisans' rights and

cultural practices. Declared on July 28, 2022, the law emphasizes the state's commitment to supporting and protecting creative industries–including artisans and indigenous groups–by strengthening their capacities, ensuring financial-enabling mechanisms, and creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. The act also establishes a Creative Industries Development Council to oversee long-term strategies for promoting Filipino creativity and safeguarding traditional practices.

Mangyan jewelry-making fits within two domains defined in the law: the Design Domain, which covers the "...envisioning, planning, creation, and manufacturing of symbols, images, and products, whether for industrial or aesthetic purposes, spaces and systems, whether static or for interactive experiences, at the heart of which is creating solutions that address a need or a problem in various fields such as..fashion and accessory making…" and the Traditional Cultural Expressions Domain, which includes "tangible products and intangible customs, practices and expressions of traditional Filipino culture and heritage, including arts and crafts…". As the Mangyan community navigates the shift from organic materials to commercial beads, this law could serve as a protective measure–encouraging sustainable practices, fair compensation and recognition of their craftsmanship. While the Culture Industry may encourage repetitive production for marketability, policies like the RA 11904 open possibilities for empowering indigenous artisans to assert control over their artistic narratives. By acknowledging Mangyan jewelry as both a contemporary product and a living cultural expression, this policy could help ensure their heritage is preserved, rather than diluted, in the market.

Understanding the Culture Industry's impact is crucial to examining the evolving practices of Mangyan jewelry-making. It frames the shift from organic to commercial

materials not just as a practical adaptation but as a complex interaction between cultural survival, economic necessity and the pressures of a capitalist market. By recognizing these dynamics, the study aims to explain how indigenous communities navigate the tension between preserving tradition and adapting to the demands of the market.

CHAPTER THREE

Presentation of Data

I. The Hanunuo Mangyan

The Hanunuo are one of the eight Mangyan groups inhabiting the island of Mindoro. The word “Hanunuo” translates to “true”, “pure”, or “genuine”, and community members refer to themselves as Hanunuo Mangyan to assert their identity as the authentic Mangyan. This label gained wider use during the administration of Manuel Ellizalde who led the Presidential Assistance on National Minorities (PANAMIN), who met a group of lowland Mangyan, and referred to them as Hanunuo. Eventually, those living in the upper or mountainous areas adopted the term to identify themselves.

The ancestral domain of the Hanunuo Mangyan lies within one hundred forty-four (144) villages or *barrios* located in the municipalities of Bulalacao, Mansalay, and Roxas in Oriental Mindoro, as well as one community or *barangay* in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro (“*Pagkilala*”, 2020). These areas have long constituted the foundation of Hanunuo life, shaping their identity and ways of living. They also have sustained various cultural expressions, including jewelry-making, which embodies not only artistic craftsmanship but also the Hanunuo’s deep-rooted connection to nature, community, and cultural heritage.

II. Hanunuo Mangyan Jewelry-Making

Jewelry-making is an overlooked yet significant cultural tradition among the Mangyan. More than just ornaments, these handcrafted pieces historically served as symbols of identity, beliefs, and protection. Jewelry-making was traditionally passed down through generations. They used locally-sourced natural materials such as plant seeds, fibers and leaves. Some pieces reflected not only aesthetic values but also cultural beliefs (Mandia, 2004).

As times changed, so did the conditions surrounding this practice. The Hanunuo Mangyan in the 21st century are now seen adorned with jewelry made not from traditional materials but from commercial materials. This evolution raises questions about how traditional and contemporary jewelry-making practices compare, and what these differences might reveal about the changing cultural and economic landscape within Mangyan communities.

This study draws on interviews with four Hanunuo Mangyan artisans who actively practice beadwork and contribute to the continuity of jewelry-making traditions in their respective communities. Uyan Daay is a 44-year-old artisan from Sitio Arasaas, Brgy. San Roque, Bulalacao. She has been doing beadwork as early as Grade 1 and has maintained a close working relationship with the Mangyan Heritage Center (MHC). Nhelsa Luzon Luna, age 31, is from Sito Galang, Mansalay, who has been engaged in beadwork for around 10 years of experience. She collaborates with Christian Help Center Philippines (CHCP) and maintains additional connections for selling her products. Nayhan Using, a 67-year-old artisan, also from Sito Galang and the

grandmother of Nhelsa is likewise working close with Christian Help Center Philippines but still has other connections in selling their products. Lastly, Eping Mayot, a 53-year-old Hanunuo Mangyan artisan, has been practicing beadwork for approximately 46 years. She is widely recognized not only as a jewelry-maker but also as a culture bearer, weaver, and non-traditional teacher within her community (Adrada, 2020; Marinduque State University, 2023; Mayot, 2025). Like Luna and Using, she has been working closely with Christian Help Center Philippines but still has other connections in selling their products.

All four of these artisans will hereafter be collectively referred to as 'the Mangan Artisans' unless otherwise specified.

III. Traditional Hanunuo Mangyan Jewelry-Making Practices

Traditional Mangyan jewelry-making practices are deeply influenced by both their environment and cultural beliefs. The materials used in crafting jewelry, such as plant seeds, fiber and leaves, were readily available in their surroundings, making them essential components in their artistic expressions. Beyond their practical use, some materials also carry cultural significance. While for the Mangyan children, creating jewelry with these materials was often seen as a playful activity, elders would caution against fiddling with certain plant seeds due to the beliefs attached to them, adding depth and meaning to the craft, discussed in the following sections.

A. Materials Used in Making Traditional Hanunuo Mangyan Jewelry

i. Plant Seeds as Beads

Among the natural materials utilized in traditional Hanunuo jewelry-making are several types of plant seeds, including *tibak*, *tigbe*, *saga and pili.*

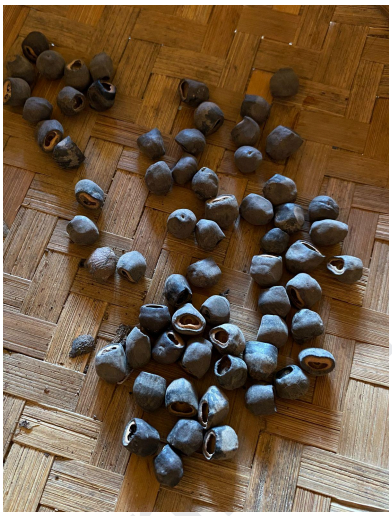


Figure 1. Dried tibak seeds as beads

According to all artisans (2025), *tibak* is from a species of banana that is dried. Mayot (2025) added that it is specifically a wild banana that is not edible. Daay (2025) mentioned that this banana grows below, near the ground, like a clustered pile.

There were traditional materials that were not specified which plant they came from but based on the description of the Hanunuo Mangyan artisans and description from sources about the following plants, we presume that these are the ones used in their jewelry-making.

Figure 2. Musa balbisiana seeds size reference. From http://herbarium.bh.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/bhbase/cubic_gallery_public.pl?start_at=0&taxon_name=Musa+balbisiana

Tibak, according to the Hanunuo Mangyan artisans came from a banana plant and is **presumably** *Musa Balbisiana Coll*a, a species of wild banana. Locally known as *butuhan,* which translates to “with seeds”*,* this variety is typically considered inedible due to the presence of large, hard seeds (Sachter, 2025). Despite its inedibility, the seeds are repurposed for jewelry-making, valued for their natural form and accessibility within their environment. Moreover, it is documented to appear in Mindoro (Pelser, Barcelona & Nickrent, 2025).

Moreover, Mangyan elders would often caution children against playing with *tibak seeds,* as they were believed to be a “*pamparaya*”, which translates to “to free”. Fiddling with the *tibak seeds* was regarded as causing abdominal bloating and discomfort. (Using, 2025)

Left: Figure 3. Coix lacryma-jobi plant. From

https://www.nparks.gov.sg/florafaunaweb/flora/1/8/1834

Right: Figure 4. Tigbe Seed Necklace

T*igbe*, as referred to by the Mangyan, is commonly known in Oriental Mindoro as *adlay*, and more widely recognized as Job's Tears or *coix lacryma-jobi*. The name "Job's Tears" stems from the distinctive tear-like shape of its seeds. It belongs to the grass family, Poaceae, which also includes staple crops such as rice, corn, and wheat. Tigbe grows abundantly in upland areas and is typically harvested after five to six months ("Coix lacryma-jobi", 2023; "*Gabay sa Produksyon ng Adlay*", n.d.).

Based on "Gabay sa Produksyon ng Adlay" by the Agricultural Training Institute—MiMaRoPa (n.d.), there are two known forms of *adlay*: one with soft outer skin which was once consumed as food, and another with a hard glossy coating, often

found in forested areas and the one used in jewelry-making. In traditional practices, the threshed and hulled form of the seed is typically used as beads (see Figure 4).

Beyond its material function, *tigbe* carries cultural significance within the Hanunuo community. Similar to *tibak*, the children were prohibited to play with these since *tigbe seeds* are believed to possess a quality of "*pamparami*", meaning to increase the likelihood of bearing many children. (Daay & Nayhan, 2025) Notably, the men in their community wear the jewelry made of *tigbe* seeds Luna (2025).

Saga, described by Daay (2025) is smaller than *tigbe*. Its color is green and turns bright red when it becomes ripe. Further, she mentioned that this seed looks like an "eye" with a little white on it. She also mentioned that during the summer, the leaves disappear and it has flowers.

There are two types of *saga* that appears to be used as beads–Adenanthera pavonina and Abrus precatorius Linn. But closer to the description of Daay (2025) is the latter which are bright red in color with a distinct print that resembles an "eye".

Left: Figure 5. Abrus precatorius. From https://sylviatramos.blog/2017/06/25/saga/

Right: Figure 6. Saga seeds. From https://www.stuartxchange.org/Saga.html

Saga, scientifically known as *Abrus precatorius Linn.*, is a flowering plant belonging to the *Fabaceae* family. It is described to be a slender, twining, and extensively branched annual vine that can grow up to approximately 9 meters in length. Each pod typically contains three to five seeds. The seeds are glossy, round to slightly oblong in shape, and are easily recognizable by their vibrant red color marked with a distinctive black tip (Stuart, 2024)–resembling like a red bead dipped in chocolate, with an “eye” on the black end.

Although widely used in traditional beadwork and jewelry even in other countries, the saga plant is known to be toxic. Various studies have shown that nearly all parts of the plant including its leaves and roots and particularly the seeds contain poisonous compounds. The toxin is released when the seed’s hard outer shell seed is pierced or damaged, such as through chewing or drilling to be used for jewelry-making. While

exposure to the toxin can lead to severe consequences such as death in severe cases, the more common risk associated with its use in jewelry involves prolonged skin contact, which may lead to allergic reactions like contact dermatitis. (Stuart, 2024)

Lastly, pili, was briefly mentioned by Luna (2025) that is strung around their waist.

ii. Plant Fibers as Strings

Beyond the plant seeds used as beads, the construction of traditional Mangyan jewelry also involved natural fibers that served as stringing material to hold the beads together. Commonly used materials are from a*baca*, *burak* or cotton, and banana–each valued for their pliability and accessibility within their surroundings.

Figure 7. Hanging dried abaca fibers at Sitio Galang

Abaca, widely known as the “Manila hemp” and scientifically known as *musa textilis*, is a tree-like herb that belongs to the Musaceae family, and resembles a banana (Saldua, 2012). The abaca fiber became known because of its strength and resistance to water which is seen in the plant's stalk. Daay (2025) mentioned that the abaca fibers they use are smaller than usual. Moreover, while Daay says that abaca is used in weaving, Mayot (2025) disagrees.

Another plant fiber used as string in their jewelry is the *burak* or cotton threads which are also used in making their textiles.(Daay, 2025) Lastly, is dried banana fibers, similar to that of the Ilongot people which they call *biskal*. (Griffin & Salvador-Amores, 2020)

Aside from using plant seeds as beads and natural fibers as strings, the Hanunuo also incorporated *nito* and *buli* in their traditional jewelry, particularly for crafting wristbands. These materials, commonly associated with basketry and jar-making, were similarly woven into wearable forms, showcasing the community’s versatility in using available plant resources for both functional and aesthetic purposes (Cabigas, 2014).

B. Traditional Process of Hanunuo Mangyan Jewelry-Making

The raw materials used in traditional jewelry-making are typically gathered from nearby areas, including forests and lowland fields where certain plants naturally grow. According to the Hanunuo Mangyan artisans interviewed in this study, seed collection usually takes place during the summer time. However, harvesting remains possible

during the rainy season although it is generally more convenient to process the materials in the dry season due to the need for drying.

After collection, the seeds are cleaned by dusting or washing to remove dirt and debris (Daay, Mayot, 2025). The drying process involves repeatedly laying the seeds out under the sun and bringing them indoors at night. This cycle continues until the seeds are sufficiently dried for use as beads (Daay, 2025).

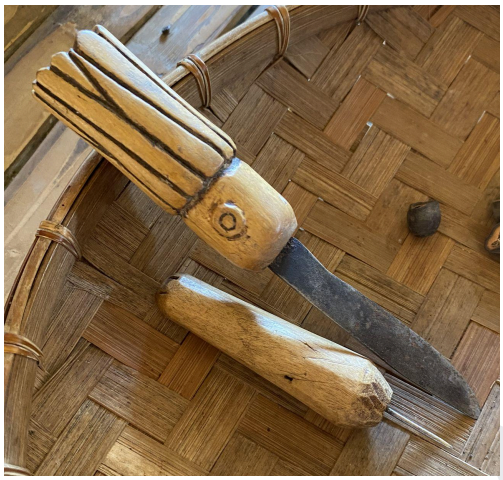


Figure 8. Piercing Tools

To prepare the beads for threading, the seeds are initially pierced using a knife, referred to as *siyaw*, to create an entry point. A second tool, often a makeshift or household items such as *tingting* from the broom, thorn from a tree, safety pin, or *alambre* (Daay, Luna, Mayot, 2025)—a piece of metal wire, is then used to poke a hole through the seed, from one end to the other. In some cases, the seed is pierced directly using only the second tool (Mayot, 2025). This process highlights the artisans' resourcefulness in utilizing everyday objects as tools for their craft.

Some seeds such as *tigbe*, are easier to pierce due to the presence of a natural hole that only needs to be pierced through. In contrast, *tibak* seeds are more difficult to work with because of their hardness (Daay, 2025). It was also mentioned that in some cases, the seeds are soaked for it to be softer, making it easier to pierce (Luna ,2025) .

A similar preparation process is followed for plant fibers. These are harvested and thoroughly dried before being used to string the beads and assemble the jewelry. Once enough seeds have been processed, the beads needed are placed on a *bilao* or what they call *nigo*–a flat, round woven tray. Then, the beads are skewed onto the selected plant fiber, typically arranged in a single line–creating a jewelry that is simple in form.

C. Formal Qualities of Traditional Hanunuo Mangyan Jewelry

i. **Bracelets made with Tibak Seeds**

Left: Figure 9. Bracelet made from *tibak (*new)

Right: Figure 10. Bracelet made from *tibak* with additional new beads (old)

Tibak seeds are generally round but with irregular edges, uneven surfaces, and inconsistent color. While their base tone leans toward brown or taupe-gray, patches of darker and lighter hues appear throughout, giving each seed a unique appearance. They are relatively uniform in size and are typically strung together in a single strand to form jewelry. Moreover, a distinctive quality of *tibak* seeds is their transformative nature wherein they gradually become smoother, shinier, and darker, eventually turning black, with regular use. This natural polish enhances their visual appeal over time.

Traditionally, these seeds were strung with a "*lubid*", a cord made of plant fibers. In contemporary practices, this has been replaced with a nylon string. The overall physical characteristics of this type of bracelet remain consistent, with only the underlying string substituted for longer-lasting wear.

iii. Necklace made withTigbe Seeds

The necklace, composed entirely of *tigbe* seeds, reflects a simple and minimal design that emphasizes natural form and material. It features no added patterns or symbols. Its visual interest lies in the consistent arrangement and organic qualities of the seeds themselves.

The *tigbe* seeds are light gray to nearly white, with naturally occurring brown or darker shades of gray across its surface, That vary from bead to bead. The seeds are smooth, hard,

Figure 4. Tigbe seed necklace

and shell-like in texture, with an ovoid shape that resembles an egg more than the commonly described teardrop shape.

The *tigbe* seeds are light gray to nearly white, with naturally occurring brown or darker shades of gray across its surface, that vary from bead to bead. The seeds are smooth, hard, and shell-like in texture, with an ovoid shape that resembles an egg more than the commonly described teardrop shape.

The seed feels dense since there is no opening besides the holes for the string. Moreover, because only one type of seed is used, the piece displays little to no contrast in both color and form, resulting in a consistent or uniform aesthetic.

The composition of this necklace is notably similar to that of the bracelet made of *tibak* seeds. Both are designed as a single continuous loop of closely strung natural beads. The main distinction lies in the length and beads used: while the bracelet wraps around the wrist, the necklace is made to be worn around the neck so it tends to be longer. Still, necklaces made of *tibak* are often shorter in length since the seeds are harder to pierce, making extended strands more difficult to produce.

Traditional Mangyan jewelry is characterized by its use of purely natural materials and a limited color palette of white, brown and black, often marked by subtle variations in shade or patches or other natural hues. These pieces emphasize the organic qualities of their materials–from the irregular surfaces and shapes of seeds to coarse textures of dried fronds. Further, the Mangyan artisans mentioned that use of plant seeds and red-colored beads were believed to ward off evil spirits.

IV. Contemporary Hanunuo Mangyan Jewelry-Making Practices

In contrast to the traditional ways rooted in natural materials and manual techniques, contemporary jewelry-making among the Mangyan artisans shifted to using commercialized and synthetic materials producing colorful outputs.

Their contemporary jewelry-making reflects a shift influenced by changing circumstances and external factors. While some aspects of the craft remain, newer practices now incorporate synthetic materials and a variety of designs, signaling a transformation in both process and intent.

A. Materials Used in Making Contemporary Hanunuo Mangyan Jewelry

Contemporary Mangyan jewelry primarily uses commercially available materials such as seed beads and nylon thread, according to the Hanunuo Mangyan artisans (2025). These materials are inexpensive, accessible and easy to work with, making them well-suited for current jewelry-making practices.

Figure 11. Undone beadwork with seed beads and nylon string.

These beads are evident in the 21st century jewelry and are commercially called “seed beads” but referred to by the Mangyan as *uno* (Using, 2025). They are small, round and

looks like it is made of plastic because of its characteristics being lightweight, opaque, in contrast to the sheerness and clearness that glass beads posses. These are widely available in the market and are among the most affordable options. They are lightweight, opaque and come in a variety of colors, allowing for more diverse design choices. (Patel, 2023; LANCUI, 2025)

According to Using (2025), when it was introduced, there were only two colors used–orange and yellow. In the 21st century, there is a wider range in color, with differences, hues, tints, tones, and shades.

Just like the use of plant seeds, the use red-colored beads were believed to ward off evil spirits, while a combination of black and white beads symbolized "*kalinisan*", translated as cleanliness, or in a deeper sense, purity (Using, 2025).

To string the beads, a clear nylon thread is used, which is made of synthetic materials. It is favored for its strength, thinness, and its natural stretch. It provides almost an invisible finish, which helps highlight the beads themselves without distracting from the overall design. It is also soft and lightweight, suitable for beading techniques that involve draping, loomwork or intricate beadweaving. (邢宇琦, 2025; *The Ultimate Guide to Jewelry Stringing Materials*, n.d.)

B. Contemporary Process of Hanunuo Mangyan Jewelry-Making

Contemporary jewelry-making among the Mangyan begins with acquiring materials–primarily seed beads and nylon thread–which are bought from the local city or

town of Mindoro or from Metro Manila. Before use, the quality of beads are checked through a particular process which involves checking its colorfastness to ensure they do not fade or stain when exposed to light, washing, or friction (Catapang, 2025) .

It is worth noting that all the Hanunuo Mangyan artisans mentioned that there are no differences between the traditional processes and the contemporary processes The distinction lies only in the materials used.

Despite all the Hanunuo Mangyan artisans saying that there is no difference between the traditional and contemporary practices in assembling, it is evident in the form and structure of the jewelry that they produce. The traditional jewelry is known for stringing its bead in one line but the contemporary jewelry has multiple rows of beads that are strung together.

Based on these observations, the creation process may involve bead weaving, a technique where beads are interlaced to form flat, fabric-like bands or even three-dimensional shapes such as balls or tubes (Bellomo, 2019). This approach allows for more consistent appearance and detailed patterning seen in contemporary jewelry.

Although the specific beading technique was not explicitly mentioned, research and observation suggest that it closely resembles the right-angle weave technique, that reflects in their flat wristbands and necklaces. For the rounded forms of jewelry, such as the tubular bracelet, the technique appears similar to the tubular peyote stitch.

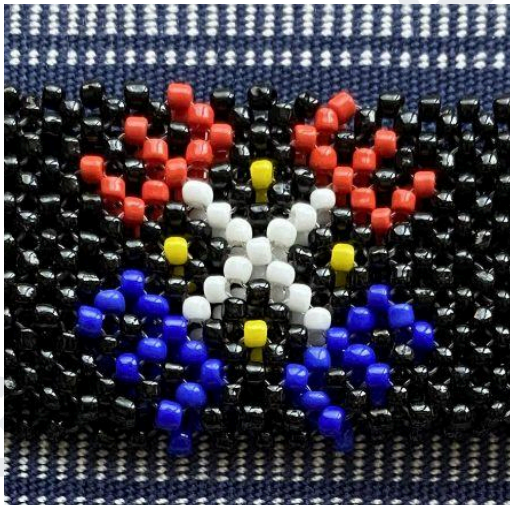
The method is reminiscent of the beading techniques demonstrated in a Youtube tutorial (“How to make a Kenyan Bracelet”, 2022) by Mumbe Muassa, also known as Bead Centeric, who specializes in Kenyan bracelet-making (2021). Similar to the Hanunuo

Mangyan, her process involves the exclusive use of seeds beads and nylon string, without relying on beading needles and other beading thread, unlike other practices that use more complex tools.

Moreover, Daay (2025) mentioned that some of these designs or patterns are drawn from the *ramit*—their textiles, as well as oral traditions, and storytelling. Moreover, Using (2025), mentioned that the red-colored beads were believed to ward off evil spirits and combination of black and white beads symbolized "*kalinisan*", translated to as cleanliness, or in a deeper sense, purity.

C. Formal Qualities of Hanunuo Mangyan Jewelry-Making

i. Contemporary Bracelets



Left: Figure 12. Close-up pakudos on bracelet

Right: Figure 13. More pakudos bracelets.

The bracelets showcase a "*pakudos"* symbol which means "cross" in Hanunuo. It is a traditional iconwith significant cultural meaning. It consists of a central body formed by two symmetrical and intersecting diagonal lines that form an "X" shape. At the end of each line, a perpendicular line is added from which three short lines branch out–one at the center and one at each end–creating a trident-like form. This is mirrored across all four ends of the body, resulting in a balanced and cohesive form. Additionally, a single dot is placed within each of the four spaces in between and around the body.

Written in the book "*Pagkilala*" (2020), the *pakudos* is a common motif in Mangyan embroidery and crafts, particularly on traditional garments, placed at the back, almost occupying the whole surface. Moreover, it is believed to drive away evil spirits (Daay, 2025). Additionally, these symbols are also seen in their agriculture. They draw this cross symbol on the soil where they intend to plant. For instance, there are 7 holes where the seeds are planted, if a plant dies, it signifies a negative outcome for the planting (Daay, 2025).

In terms of the bracelet's physical attributes, it is flat, and measures about one inch in width, with nine beaded rows. The size of the bracelets varies but still close to the length of each other, as there is no standard sizing system like small, medium, large with exact measurements. Instead, individuals must find the size that fits them best, with the design they like. The material is bendable with a natural and minimal stretch, unlike the rigid *nito* wristbands.

The *pakudos* symbol is repeated across the bracelet, with the same color composition for each symbol, leaving enough space between each one. In terms of texture, the

bracelet has a mix of bumpy surfaces due to the roundness of the beads, though the beads themselves have a smooth finish. When the bracelet is laid flat, similar to Figure 12 and 13, its shape appears rectangular.

The color scheme of this bracelet includes black as the base color, with the *pakudos* symbol highlighted in red, blue, yellow and white. These colors could symbolize the Philippines, as they mirror the hues of the Philippine flag. The dual symbolism links the Mangyan identity with a broader Filipino identity, suggesting that the artisan who made it is both. While most bracelets feature two colors, some may include three or four as seen in this example. Typically, the contrasting colors of the outline and background are chosen to ensure that the design stands out clearly.

In terms of spatial composition, the bracelet uses positive space effectively. The black background dominates, allowing the pakudos symbol to stand out. Moreover, the arrangement of beads follows a staggered or offset pattern–each bead in a row is not placed directly beside or above the bead in the next row. Instead, the beads from the adjacent rows are positioned slightly in between the beads of the previous row, creating a subtle diagonal alignment. This results in visible gaps between individual beads when viewed up close. These gaps are a characteristic of the bead weaving technique used.

Figure 14. Bracelets with diamond patterns.

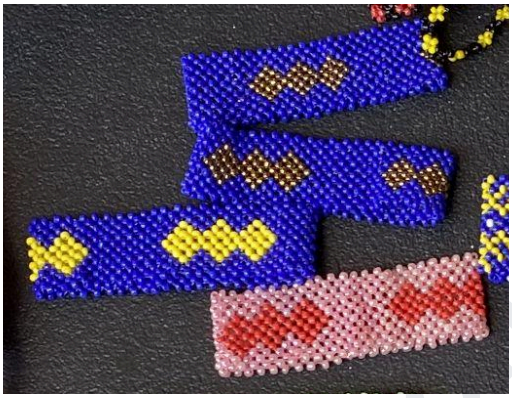


Figure 15. More bracelets with diamond patterns

This set of bracelets has the same size, form and texture as the *pakudos* bracelet but showcases variations in design through the use of diamond motifs. While the designs remain repetitive, each bracelet exhibits a distinct composition using the shape.

In Figure 14, the upper bracelet features large black diamonds that occupy almost the entire width of the band, each outlined in metallic gold or bronze, making the shape more prominent. The lower bracelet in the same photo also shows large diamonds with outlines but the arrangement appears more continuous. Rows of diamonds seem to extend above and below the central row, with the diamonds in the top and bottom rows slightly offset. In this example, the colors are reversed with violet as the base color and the diamonds with color yellow and black contrast against it.

Figure 15 presents another variation, where the diamonds are smaller and arranged in clusters of three, intersecting at a single bead. These clusters are evenly spaced and repeated throughout the band, with a larger amount of negative space between each.

Figure 16. Bracelet with mini flowers.

This bracelet features a symmetrical design that reflects balance in both bead arrangement and overall composition. At the center of the band is a repeating simple floral motif created with violet beads, across the band. These beads form a rounded shape that resembles mini flowers found in nature–each violet bead represents a petal. The design is framed by white beads as base, with two small black beads placed vertically along the edges of the band, spaced both horizontally and vertically from the central flower. This creates a sense of rhythm and guides the viewer's eye along the length of the bracelet.

Measuring approximately half an inch in width, this bracelet is thinner than most, while still maintaining a structured form. Due to the combination of colors and patterns, the bracelet appears chunkier, yet it remains relatively flat. Its rectangular shape is consistent with other contemporary bracelets but distinguishes itself through its slimmer profile.

In terms of composition, unity and harmony are achieved through the thoughtful use of color and repeating pattern that shows a clear sense of hierarchy but still maintains visual balance. The violet beads or the flower motif serves as the focal point, despite being repetitive. It draws immediate attention due to the contrast between the color

violet and neutral hues of white and black. Moreover, the crisscrossing lines formed by the surrounding beads of white create a diamond-like base that encases the flower, reinforcing a sense of depth and enclosure that gives focus surrounding the central motif. These lines are also thin, one bead wide, and continuous, adding movement and flow to the composition. Despite the difference in design and patterns, the bracelet maintains the same texture similar to the first piece.

Some bracelets also feature striped patterns, typically composed of two even alternating colors. In certain designs, one color dominates while a thinner stripe in a contrasting color provides visual variation. Additionally, there are bracelets with an arbitrary sequence of bead colors, resulting in a more spontaneous aesthetic. These two types of designs are commonly observed with narrower or smaller widths.

Figure 17. Bracelets display at Mangyan Heritage Center.

ii. Tubular Bracelets

Figure 18. Tubular bracelets at MHC

The most notable distinctiveness of this type of bracelet lies in its structural form. Unlike the earlier examples, which are flat, these bracelets have a three-dimensional, tubular form. Despite the change in form, similar patterns and designs–such as the diamonds and flowers–remain present but are now adapted to a curved surface.

Vertical line patterns are particularly prominent in this style. A common design features pairs of closely spaced vertical lines that repeat along the band, separated with a wide negative space with the base color. In some variations, an additional color is used to fill the narrow gap between the paired lines, different from the base color. Similar to the other bracelets, these tubular pieces also vary in size, and thickness.

iii. Pakudos Necklace

Figure 19. Pakudos necklace

In contrast to the traditional necklace, the contemporary necklace features a focal point, at the bottom of the necklace which is the *pakudos*. The rendition of the pakudos is more intricate than those seen on bracelets. Rather than using a single bead to represent the “dot” or circular element, this version is composed of four beads arranged around a small central space, appearing more boxy than round.

The lace of the necklace incorporates various patterns and symbols, including stripes, zig zags and a simplified, more compact version of the *pakudos*. Below the focal point is a set of fringes or tassels, referred to as *raway*, featuring alternating black and white beads along their vertical structure. This alternating color pattern concludes with a triangular or three-bead arrangement at the tips.

The necklace exhibits a symmetrical composition, with the left and right sides mirroring each other. The visual flow of the lace is dynamic wherein each time a new pattern is introduced, the directional orientation appears to shift, transitioning from horizontal to vertical, creating a rhythm that disrupts a uniform flow and adds to the piece's visual interest.

iv. Necklaces with pendants

Figure 20. Heart pendant necklaces and its lock

There are also contemporary necklaces that resemble the typical structure of a necklace–featuring a single chain or lace with a pendant. A pendant is defined as an ornament that hangs loosely from a necklace, usually attached through a small loop. ("Pendant", 2025)

In the examples shown, the lace is a single beaded string with a pendant that takes the shape of a heart. Multiple colors are used to outline the heart, while another color fills its

interior. This contrasts with the pakudos necklace which features a continuous lace. This type has two distinct ends: one shaped like a ball, with clustered beads and the other a hole, serving as a clasp when the ball is inserted into the hole.

v. Earrings

Figure 21. Pakudos Earrings

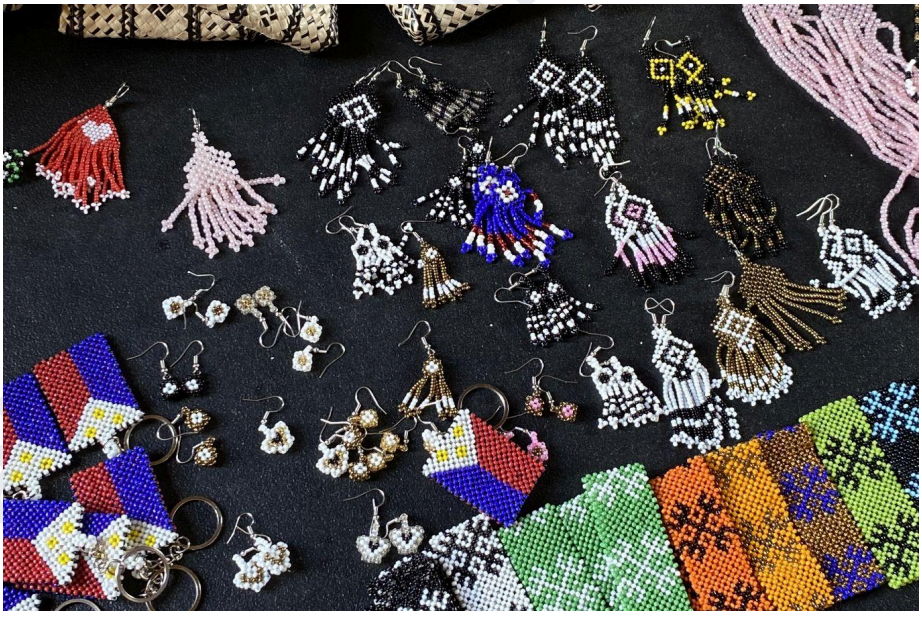


Figure 22. Earrings display for sale at Oriental Mindoro Heritage and Cultural Center

With the wider range of materials now available for jewelry-making–not just limited to beads and strings–Mangyan artisans have expanded their craft to include earrings.

These pieces typically use stainless steel hooks, onto which nylon strings are tied. Beads are then threaded and woven into patterns similar to those found in their bracelets and necklaces, such as *pakudos*, diamonds, flowers and even the structure of *raway* or fringes. The common patterns seen in bracelets and *raway* featured in necklaces are now often combined in both design and structure of the earrings. Some newer designs also feature hearts, characterized with softer curved lines and rounded shape with a pointy bottom, that reflect a more modern aesthetic.

There are also earrings that use only one color for the beads and do not emphasize patterns but instead draw attention to the structure itself including its length, shape or fringes. The earring sizes and number of fringes vary. Moreover, some earring structure begins with a pointy or triangular top portion while some are more boxy or rectangular in form. In some cases such as in Figure 24, the brown beads used are less opaque than the usual, giving off a crystal- or glass-like appearance, adding another visual layer to the design.

All the earrings are *danglers*, a type of earring designed to hang freely below the earlobe and move or swing with motion, including a focal point. (Danglers Definition - Glossary of Common Jewelry Terms - Joseph Jewelry Guide | Joseph Jewelry Bellevue Seattle Custom Jewelry, n.d.) This form may be the most appropriate in showcasing intricate beadwork and patterns, reflecting the same detailed craftsmanship found in their usual necklaces and bracelets.

vi. Choker

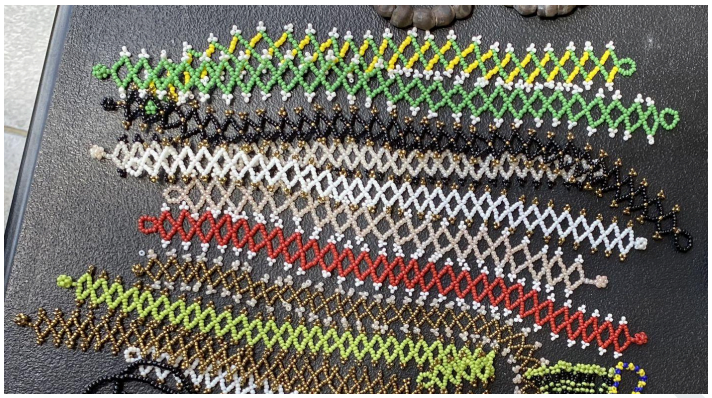


Figure 23. Choker necklaces

A choker is a type of necklace that wraps and fits closely around the neck, similar to a collar. (“Choker”, 2025) For the chokers made by the Mangyan, a different beading technique appears to be used, resulting in a net-like structure characterized with diamond-shaped openings. These chokers typically use two colors: one that serves as the base for the entire band and another that accents the tips of each diamond shape. Furthermore, the choker has ends that function as a clasp, similar to the necklace with a pendant.

vii. Headdresses and headbands

Figure 24. Headdresses

Figure 25. Headbands

The headdress resembles the contemporary flat bracelets but is longer in length to wrap across the top of the head. Meanwhile, the headbands share the structure of the tubular bracelets but are shaped to fit around the head. Both types of jewelry feature patterns similar to those previously discussed.

Contemporary Mangyan jewelry features a wide variety of materials, including plastic seed beads, steel hooks, and synthetic threads sourced in their local market or in Manila. These pieces are often vibrant, showcasing a wide spectrum of colors. Unlike traditional styles, contemporary jewelry now features patterns, symbols, and motifs, adding more visual complexity and design variation.

V. Organizational and Entrepreneurial Influences in Contemporary Hanunuo Mangyan Jewelry-Making

Several non-profit organizations and social enterprises contribute to improving the economic well-being of the Mangyan people while raising awareness about their craftsmanship. Two key organizations included in this study are the Mangyan Heritage Center (MHC) and the Christian Help Foundation Philippines (CHCP).

A. Mangyan Heritage Center

Mangyan Heritage Center is a non-profit organization based in Calapan City, Mindoro, dedicated to the preservation, promotion, and celebration of Mangyan Indigenous

Cultural Legacy. Their mission is grounded in six core actions: collecting, preserving, understanding, sharing, celebrating and advocating for Mangyan culture and heritage (Odoo, n.d.).

It traces its origins to the early 1960s, when a missionary priest, Antoon Postma, deeply inspired by the rich cultural traditions of the Mangyan communities in Mansalay began documenting their heritage and eventually established the Mangyan Research Center (MRC) in Panaytayan, Mansalay. Despite expanding knowledge through collaborations, the MRC struggled with accessibility and sustainability due to its remote location and reliance on Postma's personal funding. In 1999, Quint Fansler joined Postma and Dinter in establishing the Mangyan Heritage Center (MHC) in Capalan City to preserve the MRC collection and make it more accessible. With a newly formed Board of Trustees, the MHC held its first meeting in April 2000 and officially opened on November 14, 2000, later gaining recognition as a registered non-profit and earning multiple cultural and organizational accreditations (Odoo, n.d.).

According to Emily Catapang (2025), the executive director of MHC, one of their major initiatives is a community-based revitalization program focused particularly on the Hanunuo Mangyan, known for their traditions in weaving, basketry, and beadwork. The center collaborates with Mangyan artisans including weavers, embroiderers and beadworkers, to revive traditional designs that are no longer in use or seen in their craft. They facilitate knowledge transfer by identifying artisans familiar with these older techniques and designs and encouraging the reproduction of traditional pieces.

Other key programs include their Mangyan Library and Publications which houses over two thousand Mangyan-related documents, and public engagement efforts such as cultural exhibits and projects on documentation and advocacy (Odoo, n.d.).

B. Christian Help Center Philippines

On the other hand, Christian Help Center Philippines, based in Muntinlupa City, is a non-profit organization whose mission is centered on three pillars: Education, Livelihood, and Disaster Response. Executive Director, Carina Pe (2025) shared that although initially not focused on the indigenous communities, their work shifted in 2017 when she was inspired to support the Mangyan after a personal encounter and a dream that affirmed her calling. Since then, CHCP has been serving the Hanunuo and Alangan Mangyan communities for over eight years.

CHCP supports the Mangyan by purchasing their organic produce and handicrafts in bulk and promoting them through online platforms and pop-up stores. Their goal is to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities and improve the economic conditions of the Mangyan people. They also facilitate skills-building workshops, which are conducted in response to the needs and requests of the community.

C. The Role of the Non-Profiit Organizations as Intermediaries or Middleman

These non-profit organizations, referred to as the “middlemen” in this study, play a critical intermediary role. MHC sells the jewelry of the Hanunuo Mangyan, along with

other crafts made by other Mangyan groups at the center while CHCP facilitates market access by organizing pop-up stores, promoting the products online, and conducting photoshoots to showcase the beauty and craftsmanship of Mangyan jewelry. These organizations also act as liaisons between consumers and artisans, relaying customization requests, handling logistics and assisting artisans in pricing their products more fairly.

In some cases, they suggest design improvements. While some artisans are open to these suggestions, others decline if they feel they lack the ability to do so. Moreover, even if the artisans are typically asked to set the price of their products, the middlemen may adjust prices upward if they believe the artisans undervalue their labor. The middlemen also manage production timelines and make accommodations, considering that every piece is handmade and other livelihood responsibilities of the artisans that they prioritize more, such as farming. Requests from consumers must be negotiated in advance since artisans cannot always meet tight deadlines due to these. Organizations typically provide a lead time of one to two weeks to account for these scheduling constraints.

The involvement of non-profit organizations add another layer to the complexity of contemporary jewelry-making practices. While they provide crucial support in marketing, logistics, and pricing, their role as intermediaries also shapes the production process and even design decisions. This dynamic not only reflects changing modes of cultural transmission but also illustrates how external influences continue to reshape the creative and economic dimensions of Hanunuo Mangyan jewelry in the contemporary period.

This chapter presented the data gathered through interviews and observations with Hanunuo Mangyan artisans as well as executive directors of non-profit organizations, focusing on traditional and contemporary jewelry-making methods, material sources and their formal qualities.

In terms of processes, the Mangyan Artisans have significantly shifted both their materials and techniques–moving from natural materials such as plant seeds and fibers to commercially available materials such as plastic beads and nylon string. Their assembling processes of jewelry pieces have shifted from one-line beading to more intricate designs with multiple rows of beads.

The data also revealed that revealed that cultural beliefs are embedded in the materials used in their traditional jewelry, particularly the plant seeds, while in contemporary jewelry, these beliefs are more often reflected through the design patterns and symbolic motifs.

This shift of from traditional to contemporary jewelry-making reflects broader external factors such as environmental challenges and economic pressures. These factors may have not only influenced their production processes and aesthetic choices but also the artisans' perceptions and goals of their craft.

As these external factors and sociocultural shifts continue to affect the community, the formal qualities of their jewelry have also undergone modifications seen in color preferences, design motifs and overall visual composition. These emerging patterns suggest that the visual language of Hanunuo Mangyan jewelry is evolving in response to both material changes and shifting social landscape.

The following chapter will examine these aesthetic transformations more closely, analyzing the formal aesthetic differences between traditional and contemporary practices, the external factors that drive these changes and what they reveal about the evolving cultural identity and significance of jewelry-making among the Hanunuo Mangyan.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis of Data

Aesthetic Evolution of Hanunuo Mangyan Jewelry

The shift from traditional to contemporary Mangyan jewelry-making practices is evidently reflected in the pieces themselves. Changes in (a) material choices, (b) design patterns and symbols, (c) color schemes, and (d) construction methods reveal an ongoing aesthetic shift influenced by both cultural continuity and external factors. By observing the form, composition, texture, line, shape, and spatial arrangement of the jewelry, one can trace the evolution of visual language across time–identifying both enduring traditions and emerging styles that characterize Mangyan jewelry today.

I. Similarities and Differences in Formal Qualities between Traditional and Contemporary Hanunuo Mangyan Jewelry

A. Similarities

Despite the evident evolution in form and aesthetics, contemporary Mangyan jewelry retains some aspects of traditional practices. One similarity lies in the absence of standardized sizing. Jewelry pieces, whether traditional or contemporary, are not produced with fixed measurements, resulting in varied dimensions, especially in length, from one piece to another.

Some design approaches have also been retained, particularly in jewelry that continues to use pure plant seeds in a design, where simple, single-row compositions are still evident (See Figure 4 & 9). However, more elaborate designs have emerged alongside them using commercial materials.

B. Differences

B.1. Materials used

The distinctions between traditional and contemporary jewelry-making practices are more significant. Most notably, there has been a considerable shift in the materials used. Traditional jewelry relied on plant seeds and fibers which limits the jewelry to its natural colors–typically black, white, and red. In contrast, contemporary pieces often use entirely synthetic materials such as plastic seed beads, nylon thread and colored threads. These materials introduce a broader and more vibrant color range which allows finer detailing and more complex beadweaving arrangements.

B.2. Patterns, symbols and color

Contemporary jewelry often features repeating patterns and symbols, including triangles, diamonds, flowers and the *pakudos* symbol. Other motifs that are rounder in shape are introduced such as the heart. These patterns and symbols are made possible through the deliberate use of color contrasts and more intricate arrangements, showcasing not only aesthetic development but also the influence of external artistic and commercial forces.

On the other hand, traditional jewelry, especially those made purely of plant seeds, generally lacked decorative patterns, except for the *nito* and *buli* wristbands.

Figure 26. Nito and Buli Wristbands (Cabigas, 2014) From https://langyaw.com/2014/07/09/beautiful-handicrafts-mangyan-village/ .

The wristbands exhibit strong geometric characteristics, with patterns dominated by linear, triangular, diagonal and cross-like forms, similar to the contemporary jewelry using seed beads. These motifs appear in various arrangements: some are spaced evenly with one motif repeating and others are with grouped motifs. Other wristbands have defined borders marked by dark lines at the edges of the band while some seem to extend infinitely across the surface without clear boundaries. Additionally, the width of each wristband varies–some are thicker than others.

To achieve contrast and pattern visibility, the artisans make use of *nito* and *buli* fibers. Nito, being the darker material, is frequently used to highlight the designs against the lighter buri used for the background. In some cases, such as the second wristband in the left (see Figure 26), the use is inverted wherein nito forms the base, while *buli* is

used to show zigzag patterns that result in darker triangular shapes along the bottom of the band. These strategic uses of positive and negative space emphasize the intricacy of the designs.

Furthermore, the wristbands are also cylindrical in form, with a flat surface. But its difference with contemporary jewelry is that it cannot be bent or stretched due to their tightly woven construction. This rigidity gives them a fixed, ring-like shape similar to bangles, which maintains its shape over time, unlike the contemporary jewelry's flexibility.

In terms of composition, some wristbands feature more open space between patterns, such as those with diagonal or zigzag lines. Others, like the design on the farthest right in Figure 26, composed of four closely grouped crosses, repeated with consistent spacing–a larger gap follows each set before the pattern begins again.

The texture combines a rough-edged feel from the woven fibers with a relatively smooth, flat finish on the surface. Lines are sharp and straight, with no use of curves, contributing to an angular aesthetic. Color-wise, the wristbands rely on a simple yet effective palette: a light cream or beige from the *buri* and a deep brown from the *nito*, creating a strong visual contrast and aiding pattern definition.

Since the contemporary jewelry use beadweaving techniques, it is most likely that the designs from the traditional woven jewelry of the *nito* and *buli* wristbands are applied to the contemporary jewelry, but now with the use of beads.

Essentially, while traditional Mangyan jewelry emphasized simplicity and the use of available natural resources, contemporary jewelry reflects a blending of cultural

continuity with innovation–responding to changing artistic preferences, material access and market influences.

II. Combination of Traditional and Contemporary Formal Qualities

Left: Figure 27. Earrings with tibak seeds

Right: Figure 28. Earrings with tibak seeds and raway

The combination of traditional and contemporary is evident is in these earrings (see Figures 27 & 28) made by Eping Mayot. Similar to the other contemporary earrings, these are also danglers, however, they are distinguished by the use of *tibak* seeds as the focal point, despite the dominance of commercial materials in quantity. The pair shown in the Figure 27 features a simple structure, composed of a single vertical strand of seed beads and two *tibak* seeds at the end. In contrast, the pair in Figure 28 exhibit a more elaborated design, beginning with two *tibak* seeds and ending with *raway*. The seed beads used incorporate three to four colors, typically with one dominant color and

the remaining colors positioned at the ends, creating a stripe-like appearance that enhances visual contrast and rhythm.

Moreover these designs resemble a combination of the structures of both traditional and contemporary–the simplistic one-line from the traditional jewelry and the *raway* in the contemporary jewelry. It is also noteworthy that necklaces which exhibit both methods exist as well.

Moreover, the structure of traditional bracelets and necklaces characterized by a single line of plant seeds remains evident in the contemporary period (see Figure 4 & 9). While the form is retained, the use of plant fibers has been replaced with nylon string to enhance durability and ensure longer-lasting wear.

III. External Factors and Influences to Hanunuo Jewelry-Making

The evolution of Hanunuo Mangyan jewelry-making practices cannot be fully understood without examining the external factors that shape and influence them. While rooted in cultural traditions and indigenous knowledge systems, these practices have increasingly been impacted by a range of external forces that contribute to both opportunities and challenges for the community. These influences can be categorized into three dimensions: environmental, economical, and artistic. These external influences shape not only the aesthetic qualities of Mangyan jewelry but also the socio-cultural, environmental and economic contexts in which these crafts are produced and sustained. The following sections will explore each of these factors in detail to

better understand their role in the transformation of Mangyan jewelry-making traditions through the lens of Social Aesthetics Analysis.

A. Environmental factors and challenges

Environmental changes related to the traditional materials used in jewelry-making had little to no significant impact on the shift from traditional to contemporary jewelry-making practices among the Hanunuo Mangyan. The plants that provide seeds and fibers for jewelry are still available in their forests, some of which have become overgrown due to underutilization. However, all Mangyan artisans except Mayot have substantially chosen not to use them anymore, favoring commercially available materials instead.

Geographic differences do play a role in the abundance of these resources. For instance, Mangyan groups such as the Alangan, who live in higher elevations, or near rivers with cooler climates, may have more consistent access to healthy vegetation. In contrast, the Hanunuo, who reside in lower areas, are more exposed to the effects of rising heat indices, which can dry out the plants and affect its growth. Nonetheless, these effects have not made traditional materials entirely unavailable.

One reason these materials are left unused is because the Mangyan no longer harvest actively. Plants are sometimes cut down when they overgrow and encroach on spaces, due to land management or disuse. The shift away from using them is less about scarcity and more about convenience.

Furthermore, some plant seeds traditionally used as beads, such as the *saga*, may no longer be favored due to health concerns since its toxicity poses potential harm to both the artisan and the wearer. Other seeds like *tigbe* and *tibak* are avoided not for physical danger, but because of the cultural beliefs associated with them. Some artisans choose not to use these materials out of respect for traditional beliefs, fearing the possible spiritual consequences that may result from handling them.

Another environmental factor is the vulnerability of plant seeds to insect infestation, especially if they are not dried properly. Daay (2025) mentioned instances where seeds were damaged by *bukbok* or rice weevils. This adds another layer of difficulty to the traditional process, which already involves harvesting, drying, drilling, and assembling, which require significant time, effort and care. In contrast, commercial materials like seed beads and nylon thread are ready-made, durable and more convenient to use.

Even though the natural materials are still accessible, the shift occurred largely due to the availability of new materials and the desire to reduce labor and increase efficiency, which mirrors the standardization aspect of the Culture Industry.

The environmental changes, while present, served more as minor considerations rather than major causes. The shift from traditional materials is rooted in preference, convenience and adaptation to contemporary practices–not environmental necessity.

B. Economic influences and considerations

The shift from traditional to contemporary jewelry-making among the Hanunuo Mangyan is deeply influenced by the economic factors, particularly the community's growing need for financial stability that would be beneficial to their accessibility of education. Jewelry-making, which was once a practice rooted in cultural meaning and personal adornment, is now viewed as a potential source of livelihood. This shift has inevitably changed how jewelry is made and how it is perceived. Traditionally, the Hanunuo used natural materials sourced from their environment, such as plant seeds, plant fibers, and other forest products. These were often collected, traded, or shared within the community. However, with the growing need to earn money, there arose a preference for more accessible and economically viable materials.

As a result, what were once culturally embedded crafts used solely within their community were gradually transformed into cultural products meant for exchange. Commercial beads, particularly the plastic seed beads, became a practical choice for many artisans. While these have been present since the childhood of older artisans like Using (2025), their use became more widespread due to convenience. These beads are easier to manipulate, especially when producing items in large quantities. Furthermore, the shift is reinforced through formal education, where younger generations are taught jewelry-making with seed beads instead of traditional materials. This exposure leads to a gradual neglect of traditional techniques, especially when commercial products are perceived as more practical and profitable.

Furthermore, consumer preference significantly influences the materials and styles chosen by the artisans. Customization requests that are often relayed through the middlemen, typically lean toward contemporary designs may be due to their familiarity and affordability. However, requests for non-traditional designs may be declined if the design requested contradicts traditional values or if no artisan is capable of producing them. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of consumers are aware of or interested in traditional jewelry, such as those using *tigbe* or *tibak* seeds (Catapang & Pe, 2025). These more conscious buyers often prefer traditional pieces for their uniqueness and cultural significance, and as a way of supporting local heritage (Mayot, 2025). This small yet significant demographic suggests that if consumers were more educated about Mangyan jewelry traditions and practices, the demand for traditional jewelry could increase, possibly reviving older practices.

As mentioned, the involvement of MHC and CHCP introduces key economic dynamic into the jewelry-making practices of the Hanunuo Mangyan. By facilitating product promotion, managing market access, and handling logistical concerns, these organizations serve as intermediaries that aid the artisans navigate the commercial landscape. They assist in pricing decisions to ensure fair compensation and occasionally propose design changes that align with market trends. Furthermore, they accommodate the artisans' varying production capacities, acknowledging other livelihood responsibilities such as farming. These efforts not only influence how jewelry is produced and sold but also reflect the broader economic considerations shaping contemporary practices.

However, the artisans themselves remain the core of the production process. They determine design execution, labor time, and importantly, the value of their work. Some designs are influenced by middlemen or peers, while others are distinctly individual. For example, Mayot proudly developed a unique style of dangling earrings made with *tibak* seeds (see Figure 27), making her work immediately recognizable. Nonetheless, many artisans now prefer using commercial beads simply because they are easier to work with, widely available, and higher in demand. Practical considerations influence their decisions. When artisans observe that certain items sell better than others, they naturally prioritize making those products. This demand-driven system encourages the creation of jewelry that aligns with popular taste rather than cultural authenticity.

The commercialization of Mangyan jewelry has, in many ways, improved the artisans' standard of living. By monetizing what was once a culturally significant practice, artisans are now able to earn income from their craft. This shift was once frowned upon by elders, who viewed the jewelry as items meant only for the Mangyan. Today, however, selling jewelry has become an accepted part of their livelihood.

This process of commercialization is not without constraints. While the income generated has helped uplift the community, the market for Mangyan jewelry remains relatively small compared to that of other indigenous groups because of limited consumer awareness. As Catapang (2025) notes, *pakudos* necklaces, uniquely tied to the Hanunuo Mangyan identity, are among the most popular pieces. Despite their cultural uniqueness, the visibility and demand for Mangyan products remain low compared to those of other indigenous groups.

Material sustainability is also a concern. Non-timber forest products like *buli* and *nito* are difficult to harvest and process, and organizations like MHC avoid accepting bulk orders involving them to prevent depletion of stocks and waste. On the other hand, commercial plastic seed beads are prone to fading and quick deterioration, requiring quality checks before assembly. Nylon thread, however, poses no current issue.

Another challenge lies in competition with other indigenous artisans, especially when grouped in one market. While many groups use beads, distinction often comes down to motifs, symbols and quality. The Hanunuo Mangyan, for instance, take pride in the polished, sturdy finish of their high-quality products. Yet, these differences are not always obvious to consumers, considering the broader issue of standardization in the indigenous crafts market.

The process of adapting jewelry for commercial purposes can be seen as a form of commodification and standardization of culture, concepts central to Adorno and Horkheimer's Culture Industry (2023). Cultural works risk becoming standardized under capitalist symptoms, with creative processes turned into routinized operations aimed at maximizing profit and efficiency (Lou & Lou, 2023). In the context of Mangyan jewelry-making, this manifests in how certain designs are repeatedly produced to meet consumer demand, and how the shift to plastic beads facilitates quicker production. When cultural products become commodified, the artistry behind them may become reduced to a “mechanized line operation,” stripping away nuances of tradition, meaning, and individuality in favor of economic gain. However, it is important to note that their contemporary jewelry remain handcrafted by the Hanunuo Mangyan artisans. While production processes have become more efficient and somewhat standardized, the act

of handcrafting suggests that the jewelry-making does not fully conform to the mechanization characteristics of the culture Industry.

C. Marketing and Production Processes

The shift from traditional to contemporary Mangyan jewelry-making practices has been significantly shaped by material accessibility, external knowledge and evolving aesthetic preferences of the market.

One of the primary drivers of change is the availability of new materials, particularly the plastic seed beads and nylon strings, that are now widely accessible and affordable in the market. Unlike before, when artisans had to harvest, dry and pierce plant seeds to use as beads, they can now purchase ready-made materials and begin assembly upon arrival. This not only reduces the time and labor involved but also introduces more vibrant color options beyond the natural colors of plant seeds. Previously, the only colors available for commercial beads were limited to orange and yellow, further restricting design possibilities. Now, they have a full range of colors to choose from.

Moreover, nylon thread has now replaced natural fibers in all jewelry pieces due to its durability and natural stretch, for easier wear. The widespread shift to these commercial materials also coincides with a change in design aesthetics. Traditionally, Mangyan jewelry had a minimalist approach, often comprising a single line of beads without intricate patterns. In contrast, contemporary jewelry showcases elaborate bead-weaving

techniques, intricate geometric and symbolic patterns, and more varied color combinations.

As mentioned, it is evident in the form and structure of the contemporary jewelry that the techniques used for assembling the beads are different from the traditional techniques. The traditional jewelry is known for stringing its bead in one line but the contemporary jewelry has multiple rows of beads that are strung together. The creation process may involve bead weaving, which allows for more consistent appearance and detailed patterning seen in contemporary jewelry.

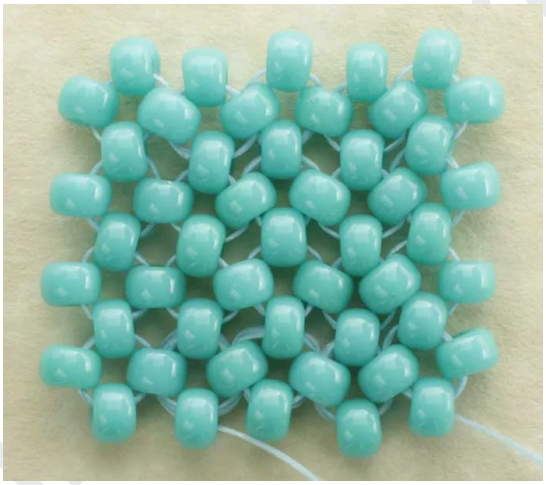


Figure 29. Right-Angle Weave (RAW). From https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/about-bead-weaving-stitches-340498

Although the specific beading technique was not explicitly mentioned, research and observation suggest that it closely resembles the right-angle weave technique. If looked closely, the first column of beads face horizontally so the string moves vertically but it goes the opposite direction for the next column, beside it and so on. This structure of

beads is observed in their flat bracelets, necklaces and earrings, headdresses (See Figure 16, 22, 24 & 27).

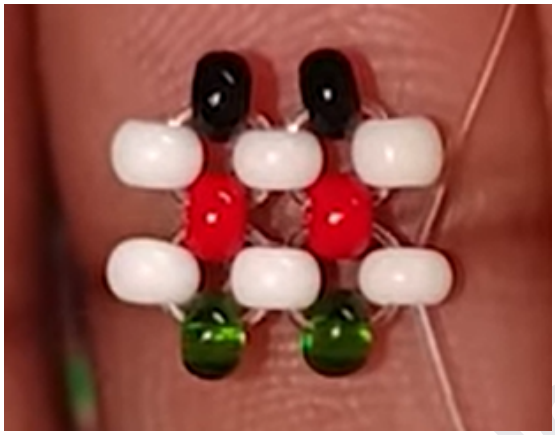


Figure 30. Kenyan bracelet. Screenshot rom

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPMzw67Tq0s

Moreover, the structure is reminiscent of the beading techniques demonstrated in a Youtube tutorial (“How to make a Kenyan Bracelet”, 2022) by Mumbe Muassa, also known as Bead Centeric, who specializes in Kenyan bracelet-making (2021). Similar to the Hanunuo Mangyan, her process involves the exclusive use of seeds beads and nylon string, without relying on beading needles and other beading thread, unlike other practices that use more complex tools. Hence, the possibility of using the technique without the use of needles.

For the rounded forms of jewelry, such as the tubular bracelet, the technique appears similar to the tubular right-angle weave. In Figure 31, the beads used per column were two instead of one.

Figure 31. Tubular Right-Angle Weave.

Screenshot from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l314QmgknGE

This evolution has been further encouraged by external sources of knowledge, including workshops, NGOs, and formal education. Both male and female Mangyan artisans are now trained in contemporary jewelry-making techniques, which the community generally appreciates as a valuable addition to their indigenous knowledge. Through this exposure, they gradually discovered the potential for jewelry-making to serve as a source of livelihood. Recognizing this opportunity, cultural beliefs and perspectives began to shift from viewing these jewelry as exclusively for Mangyan-use, to feeling a sense of pride in seeing non-Mangyan people wearing representations of their culture. The craft of jewelry-making became commercialized then which affected artistic choices. Considering that contemporary designs with plastic seed beads tend to sell better, this prompted artisans to focus more on them despite the complexity involved.

This shift also reflects the process of commodification in Adorno's Culture Industry, where the jewelry transitions from having use value linked to tradition and meaning, to acquiring exchange value in a market-oriented system. The emphasis on profit

encourages more efficient and cost-effective production. Traditional jewelry-making involves tedious processes like plant seed preparation and manual drilling, which artisans describe as painful and time-consuming to do. In contrast, the contemporary process is easier in terms of preparation but more challenging in design execution, as it involves meticulous bead weaving techniques to show patterns in design using diverse bead colors.

While this exposure to new materials, techniques, and designs has enriched their knowledge, it has also led to the gradual decline in traditional practices, as contemporary jewelry-making methods are often more profitable and easier to produce.

Furthermore, opinions among artisans differ: some find traditional methods harder due to labor intensity, while others find the intricate designs of contemporary pieces more difficult to execute. These perspectives often reflect their familiarity with specific materials or techniques. For example, artisans exposed to softer seeds may find traditional methods manageable, while others dealing with harder seeds may find them physically difficult. Although the use of plant seeds as beads continues today, the traditional stringing material has been replaced with nylon thread to improve durability and longevity of jewelry. Still, if you look at a shop that caters Mangyan jewelry, you would barely see pieces that incorporate the seeds.

Over time, many have become accustomed to using commercial materials and techniques. Commercial materials, such as beads and nylon are inexpensive, accessible and easy to work with, making them well-suited for current jewelry-making practices influenced by market demands and evolving aesthetics. Nevertheless,

traditional motifs, such as the *pakudos*; symbols inspired by nature like flowers, mountains; and geometric shapes such as diamonds and triangles; continue to appear in contemporary jewelry.

As mentioned, Daay, (2025) points out some of these designs or patterns are drawn from the *ramit*—their textiles, as well as oral traditions, and storytelling. Beyond visual characteristics, the use of color and material in their jewelry held cultural meanings. The use of plant seeds and red-colored beads were believed to ward off evil spirits, while a combination of black and white beads symbolized "*kalinisan*", translated as cleanliness, or in a deeper sense, purity. This continuity is often encouraged by the middlemen or organizations who aim to preserve cultural identity through visual language.

Figure 32. Necklaces with emojis. Figure 33. GMA logo lace

Furthermore, design inspirations now come from various sources. Some patterns are taught by NGOs, training programs, formal education in Mangyan schools, or through the artisans' own experimentation. Given their frequent interaction with non-Mangyan

individuals and organizations, it is inevitable for the Hanunuo Mangyan to gradually adapt certain elements from outside their own traditions. This exposure, whether through daily encounters, technology or media, has influenced some artisans to incorporate aspects of contemporary culture or pop culture into their work. In rare cases, symbols such as emojis and finger hearts, even logos have appeared in their jewelry designs. However, such designs remain uncommon in public displays or market offerings, as middlemen prioritize showcasing pieces that emphasize original or traditional motifs and symbols.

Despite this visible continuity of tradition, the ideological function of the Culture Industry becomes increasingly relevant. As Luo and Luo (2023) argue, cultural products often serve as a mask for the dominant ideology. The Culture Industry wraps commodities in the tenderness of cultural heritage and identity, concealing the mechanisms of capitalism beneath. In this context, the traditional use value of Mangyan jewelry rooted in spirituality, protection and storytelling becomes a front. These jewelry are transformed into cultural commodities designed for exchange and consumer appeal. The spiritual and symbolic meanings remain, but they are now mediated through market demands.

This results in what Luo and Luo (2023) describe as a false sense of cultural satisfaction wherein consumers feel their cultural and aesthetic needs are fulfilled through the purchase of these products, while unconsciously reinforcing the capitalist system. Jewelry that seems to celebrate indigenous identity may, in fact, serve to pacify critical engagement. The culture appears preserved, but it is increasingly bound to the logic of production, consumption, and profit. As Adorno contends, when culture is

objectified and commodified, its deeper values become obscured, reduced to aesthetic surface rather than lived meaning.

However, while these critiques expose the ideological risks embodied in the commodification of cultural products, it would be reductive to conclude that the artistic expression of the artisans is entirely suppressed. Contrary to Adorno's assertion that the Culture Industry inhibits creativity, the lived contemporary practices of Hanunuo Mangyan artisans show evidence of expansion and adaptation.

Among the artisans, Eping Mayot stands out as the only artisan actively combining traditional and commercial materials and practices. Her pieces incorporate plant seeds as the focal point with supplementary commercial beads, making her style uniquely hybrid. She sees this integration as a way of honoring and preserving traditional jewelry-making while embracing innovation and cultural progress. For her, this combination also serves to educate non-Mangyan people, demonstrating the Mangyans' skill, adaptability and cultural pride. However, her approach is not widely adopted. Unless passed down, her method of combining traditional and contemporary ways risks the loss of these types of jewelry once she stops production.

This suggests that although market dynamics has influenced what is produced and sold, the artisans maintain a degree of agency. They selectively blend tradition and innovation, navigating both cultural preservation and commercial viability. Their participation in a capitalist system does not entirely negate their creative expressions or cultural continuity but reflects an evolving dialogue between heritage and adaptation in a globalized and commercialized world.

This interplay between creativity and market demands also highlights the issue of standardization in the Culture Industry. Mangyan jewelry increasingly takes on more standardized forms through the use of commercial materials and motifs, and begins to resemble the crafts of other indigenous groups. Despite subtle differences, these products may no longer be visually distinct to the general public. As mentioned by both Catapang and Pe (2025) in their experiences at pop-up stores or fairs, Mangyan jewelry is often overlooked in favor of more popular or recognizable groups of indigenous peoples from other regions. This strongly indicates that even other indigenous groups adapt to market demand, and the importance of appealing to the masses, contributing to the standardization in the world of the Culture Industry.

In this context, artistic influence is not solely about visual aesthetics–it is also tied to cultural expression, economic necessity, and identity negotiation. While contemporary influences have expanded the Mangyans' creative range, they have also introduced risk of losing distinctiveness in the broader culture industry. Balancing innovation with preservation remains a challenge, and the artistic decisions of individual artisans and middlemen, in consideration of the market demands, will continue to shape how this delicate balance evolves.

IV. Hanunuo Mangyan Cultural Identity and the Significance of Jewelry-Making

Jewelry-making among the Hanunuo Mangyan has always been a significant part of their daily life and cultural identity. Traditionally, jewelry was worn both casually and ceremonially. Some individuals reserve their jewelry for special occasions to preserve

their delicate construction, as they were made from natural, fragile materials such as plant seeds and fibers (Using, 2025). Artisans had the freedom to choose when and where to wear them, and these pieces served personal, spiritual, and social functions within their communities.

However, the introduction of commercial materials alongside growing commercial interest in their crafts, led to the gradual shift in how jewelry-making is practiced and perceived. While these materials were initially introduced before commercialization, the transformation of their craft into marketable products accelerated significant changes in its cultural significance.

One of the most visible outcomes of commercialization is the emphasis on incorporating cultural symbols, such as the *pakudos*, into jewelry designs. These motifs serve as visual links to Hanunuo Mangyan heritage and beliefs. Yet, even as these symbols are used to assert cultural identity, they are also subject to standardization. Because commercial materials are more accessible and easier to work with, even other indigenous groups have adopted similar materials. As a result, to outsiders unfamiliar with specific patterns or meanings, the visual distinction between the jewelry made by the Hanunuo Mangyan and other indigenous groups becomes blurred.

This shift has both enabled and challenged the preservation of cultural identity. On one hand, commercialization has allowed Mangyan jewelry to reach wider audiences and generate income for artisans and their communities. Consumers are often more drawn to contemporary jewelry, prompting the artisans to adapt their production accordingly. Economic need pushes the community to focus on what sells, even if that means

prioritizing contemporary aesthetics over traditional practices. Consequently, while some elements of their heritage are maintained through commercial success, the traditional jewelry-making practices risk being lost or diluted.

For many artisans, the cultural significance of their jewelry has become secondary to its practical value as a source of livelihood. Their main concern lies in whether the craft can support their families and sustain their way of life. In contrast, non-Mangyan middlemen and NGO-affiliated advocates are more conscious of preserving the deeper cultural meanings embedded in the craft. They often encourage artisans to incorporate traditional materials, methods and motifs, not only to preserve heritage and promote environmental sustainability, but to help market the jewelry as authentically theirs.

There are artisans, however, who see commercialization as an opportunity for artistic expression and cultural innovation. Mayot, for example, finds ways to express her creativity through new materials without abandoning traditional practices altogether. This shows that the integration of modern elements does not automatically mean the erasure of tradition but can also be a form of continuity and adaptation.

Jewelry-making, though deeply embedded in Hanunuo Mangyan culture, is only one among many traditions that define their identity. For some, this may explain the lack of immediate concern over the slowly disappearing traditional jewelry-making. The broader cultural framework including their language and other handicraft traditions continues to be upheld in other ways.

Recognizing the risk of cultural loss, various efforts have emerged to revitalize traditional practices. Non-profit organizations support initiatives like Mangyan schools,

where children are taught their history, language, and crafts, including jewelry-making. Parents also take part in transmitting knowledge to the next generation, underscoring the community's agency in preserving their identity. Still, artisans are faced with the challenge of crafting jewelry that is both culturally rooted and marketable. They must think creatively to appeal to buyers while retaining meaningful elements of their heritage.

In the past, Mangyan jewelry was not created for external sale. It was worn exclusively by community members, and its commercial use was discouraged. Today, this belief has shifted. Artisans now welcome non-Mangyan wearers, seeing their support as a form of recognition and promotion. The jewelry has evolved from being a personal and community-based expression into a symbol of cultural pride made visible through commerce.

Through the commercialization of their crafts, the Mangyan people are able to promote their culture, assert their artistic identity, and demonstrate the value of their Indigenous knowledge. However, this transformation also reveals the delicate balance between preservation and adaptation.

This study has shown that the most influential factor in the shift and ongoing maintenance of Mangyan jewelry-making practices is the consumer. It is ultimately the buyers or consumers' preference that drives artisans to modify and maintain the usage of materials, techniques, and designs. While commercialization has opened up avenues for cultural promotion and livelihood, it also puts artisans in a position where survival sometimes outweighs preservation. Although Hanunuo Mangyan jewelry-making practices increasingly reflects the concepts of Adorno's Culture Industry such as

standardization, commodification and production shaped by market demand, the craft has not yet fully conformed to its logic. The artisans' continued creative input and selective integration of traditional elements demonstrate a degree of agency, reflecting an ongoing negotiation between cultural preservation and adaptation. Therefore, the future of Mangyan jewelry-making rests not only in the hands of the artisans but also in the awareness, respect, and choices of those who consume their work.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Hanunuo Mangyan's jewelry-making is a rich yet often overlooked cultural tradition. More than mere adornments, these handcrafted pieces have historically carried deep cultural meanings, serving as symbols of identity, belief systems, and spiritual protection. Four Mangyan artisans, whose experience in beadwork spans from 10 to nearly 50 years, continue to thrive and represent their cultural practice.

Traditionally, their jewelry was made from natural materials such as plant seeds like *tibak*, *tigbe*, *saga*, and *pili*; as well as fibers from abaca, cotton, and banana. These materials required careful sourcing and labor-intensive processing before being crafted into pieces that held personal, spiritual, and social significance. Over time, however, their jewelry-making practices evolved to include commercial materials like seed beads and nylon thread, enabling more vibrant colors, intricate patterns, and complex beadweaving techniques.

This shift was driven not only by cultural traditions but also by external factors such as (a) environmental conditions, (b) economic necessity, (c) artistic influences, and (d) market demand. While natural materials remain available, artisans often prefer synthetic ones for their durability and convenience. Economic needs, coupled with support from non-profit organizations, encouraged this transition by assisting the artisans in navigating the marketplace to promote their craft. Yet, consumer preferences for contemporary designs have also led to the commodification and standardization of

Hanunuo Mangyan jewelry, sometimes at the expense of traditional craftsmanship and deeper cultural meaning.

Despite participating in the broader Culture Industry, the Hanunuo Mangyan artisans retain significant agency over their craft. It remains a core part of their culture, and they hold the power and choice to retain, alter, or innovate their traditions. Artisans like Eping Mayot demonstrate this negotiation by combining traditional and contemporary processes and materials, maintaining cultural continuity while exercising artistic freedom within commercial constraints.

Jewelry-making has then shifted from a primarily community-centered and spiritually meaningful practice to a commodity largely oriented toward external consumption. While motifs like the *pakudos* continue to assert cultural identity, the pressures of commercialization risk diminishing unique cultural expressions due to the standardization that makes them similar to other indigenous groups in the market. Without intentional efforts to pass down hybrid methods to younger generations, there is a real danger that foundational traditional practices may be lost.

Ultimately, the future of Hanunuo Mangyan jewelry-making lies in balancing preservation and adaptation, artistic freedom and market pressures, as well as the choices of both artisans and consumers. Although the Culture Industry strongly influences the craft's evolution, the Hanunuo Mangyan's cultural identity and their power to decide how to shape their traditions remain central to the sustainability and vitality of their jewelry-making heritage.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to support the preservation, appreciation, and further exploration of Hanunuo Mangyan jewelry-making practices:

For the Hanunuo Mangyan community, it is encouraged the artisans actively seek ways to preserve and revitalize their traditional jewelry-making practices. One possible approach is to adopt a method similar to that of artisan Eping Mayot, combining traditional and contemporary techniques while placing traditional materials as its center piece. By doing so, the jewelry can continue to evolve with market demand while still carrying visible traces of cultural heritage. This can open conversations with consumers, especially non-Mangyan people, about the origins, techniques, and meaning behind each piece, promoting cultural appreciation and awareness.

For the cultural organizations and supporting institutions, it is encouraged to continue supporting the preservation, revitalization, and promotion of Hanunuo Mangyan jewelry-making traditions. This support can come in the form of: facilitating training that emphasizes the importance of traditional practices while innovating within the market; identifying effective and culturally sensitive marketing strategies; and creating partnerships with social enterprises that align with the community's goals and values. These efforts may strengthen the economic viability of the craft while ensuring the continuation of its cultural significance. It would also be ideal to create marketing plans for the indigenous artisans in such a way that they would not need middlemen to participate in the market and promote and facilitate their own businesses.

For consumers and the general public, it is encouraged to be a responsible buyer to take the initiative to learn more about the indigenous products they purchase. Understanding the cultural background and effort behind the creation of such pieces not only prevents the undervaluing of indigenous crafts but also promotes a more ethical and informed consumption practice. Supporting these crafts goes beyond aesthetics–it contributes to the livelihood of artisans and the preservation of cultural heritage.

This study also opens several opportunities for further research on Hanunuo Mangyan jewelry-making traditions. Future studies may focus on validating and documenting contemporary techniques in more detail, possibly through witnessing demonstrations to closely observe each step of the process. An in-depth exploration of the cultural meanings and stories behind the symbols and patterns seen in Mangyan jewelry and other crafts would also provide valuable insight into their artistic and cultural significance. It would be beneficial to compare the contemporary jewelry of the Hanunuo Mangyan with those of other indigenous groups to examine and perhaps justify the standardization of cultural products. Additionally, research on how these products are marketed in the broader industry could help understand the role of branding, narratives, and consumer perception in shaping the value of indigenous crafts. Another avenue worth exploring is the use of similar materials and designs in jewelry made by non-Mangyan people and how this affects the recognition or misrepresentation of Mangyan identity. Lastly, comparative studies on the jewelry-making traditions of other Mangyan groups could deepen our understanding of the diversity and shared challenges among these communities in preserving their cultural heritage through the craft.

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