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Research Article

Atang in the Digital Age: Preserving Ilocano Ritual Food Heritage Through a Digital Magazine

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the practice of making Atang in Ilocos Norte as a form of Ilocano ritual food offering that represents remembrance, respect for the deceased and continuation of Ilocano culture. An exploratory-sequential mixed-methods design was used to document the practice and evaluate the digital magazine developed from the findings. Qualitative data were gathered from 14 community participants, consisting of three elders, one cultural practitioner, and ten youth participants, through interviews, focus group discussions, and observations in selected municipalities of Ilocos Norte. In addition, five expert validators assessed the digital magazine using an adapted LRMDS evaluation tool. Results showed that Atang is primarily learned through observation, family involvement, and ritual repetition. However, the findings also indicated that modernization, financial difficulties, and changing lifestyles have contributed to the simplification of offerings and fewer opportunities for younger generations to observe and participate in the practice. Based on these findings, a digital magazine was developed and validated by experts. The material obtained mean scores of 2.89 for content quality and 2.83 for instructional quality, both interpreted as valid. The results suggest that digital storytelling may serve as a useful means of preserving indigenous culinary heritage; however, further classroom use and user testing with younger audiences are recommended to strengthen its instructional value.

Keywords: *Cultural Preservation, Digital Storytelling, Ilocano Food Heritage, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Ritual Food Offerings*

Introduction

Many Ilocano families do not express remembrance only verbally. They place remembrance on tables, carry it with the smell of sticky rice, coconut milk, candles, prayer and the food they prepare for the spirits of their beloved deceased. Atang is an example of how Ilocano families show love, respect and

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maintain spiritual connections with their loved ones who have died. These foods represent more than what is served at the dinner table. They symbolize the relationship between family, religion and community.

Practices based upon food help to sustain the cooking tradition, belief systems and historical memory of many communities around the world. Traditionally cooked foods are frequently used in rituals honoring those who came before us, and in building relationships within communities. Food has been historically a symbolizing way to show respect, remembrance and spiritual connection. In Mexico, for example, the Day of the Dead or Día de los Muertos celebration involves cooking food for their deceased loved ones by offering it during celebrations to honor their ancestors, preserving their cultural heritage, and strengthening familial bonds. The use of food-based rituals can be found throughout other Filipino families as well. Family reunions, religious services, and community gatherings exemplify how food represents the culture's values, and the traditions that are being passed from one generation to another.

The practice of Atang is an excellent example of these culturally valued aspects of the Ilocano culture. The practice of Atang is when you prepare food and serve it to your love ones after they pass away so they can honor them with respect, remembrance, gratitude and spiritual connection. Typically, according to Cacay (2025), when people do atang they will put out food offerings on an alter with candles, pray for their loved ones, and display photos of them. While Atang has great value in terms of its religious aspect, it is also indicative of the cultural identity of the Ilocano community and strengthens the lasting tie between the living and their ancestors.

Preservation of Atang may be considered under UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage framework of intangible cultural heritage which acknowledges that knowledge and skills passed down from one generation to another constitute forms of living heritage that should be preserved within communities. Therefore, preservation of Atang is not only about recording the food itself offered but also about documenting knowledge, skills, beliefs, stories and meanings behind each practice. Preserving these aspects can contribute to ensuring that cultural knowledge related to Atang remain accessible to future generations.

Atang may also be explained using social learning theory where people acquire behaviors, knowledge and practices through direct experience with others through observation, participation and interaction. Younger generations may obtain knowledge about Atang through observing older relatives prepare traditional food, participating in preparation processes, hearing stories about deceased family members and going through the ritual process. Since fewer opportunities exist for younger generations to observe and take part in traditional practices, the transmission of cultural knowledge may be weakened. Documentation is therefore necessary to support continued availability of knowledge that may otherwise be less accessible to younger generations.

Although culturally rich and historically important, modernization, migration, lack of income, changing lifestyles and lack of interest from young people present obstacles to continuing the practice of Atang. Many families no longer regularly perform traditional rituals and some simplify their offerings or substitute with more easily obtainable foods. Younger people may lack familiarity with the traditional ways of preparing Atang, whether it is the ingredients, recipes or cultural practices surrounding Atang. As such, the eventual passing of knowledge from elder generation to younger generation will be impacted. Adaptation is needed to allow traditions to continue; however, when there are losses in traditional knowledge and practices, it becomes increasingly challenging to maintain the cultural elements associated with Atang.

To address the above issue, the Digital Story Framework offers a useful lens for sharing and maintaining cultural knowledge through digital media. Through digital storytelling, written narratives, photographs, and other forms of multimedia can be combined to share experiences, knowledge, and cultural practices in an accessible format. For example, a digital magazine on Atang can compile community stories, photographs, traditional recipes, methods of

preparation, and descriptions of cultural significance in one place. This type of platform may increase young people's access to information about Atang at a time when opportunities to observe the practice within their families are becoming less frequent. It can also provide a way for younger readers to revisit the stories and preparation practices documented by elders and cultural practitioners. In this way, the digital magazine may support, rather than replace the family-based experiences through which cultural knowledge has traditionally been passed down.

Previous studies suggest that Filipino food traditions reflect the community values, identity and cultural heritage of the Filipino people. This is why, Mercado and Andalecio (2020) agree to document traditional food way so that they can be preserved. Gabriel et al., (2025) also came to the same conclusion, they found that documentation and advertisement of the cultural foodway contributes to the development of the sustainable tourism and advertisement of local culture. In addition, according to Article II Section 28 of the 1987 Philippines Constitution, the State shall take steps to preserve, enhance and enrich Filipino culture and arts and recognize traditional cultural practices as important expression of national identity.

Although past studies examined different aspects of the Filipino culinary heritage and cultural preservation, no past studies identified the practice of Atang in Ilocos Norte. Further, no prior studies have investigated how digital magazines may serve as platforms to preserve and present ritual food traditions to young audiences. The available literature also does not include sufficient documentation of Atang via the community-based stories of elders, cultural practitioners, and local cooks specifically regarding the traditional preparation methods, recipes, and cultural significance of Atang. These limitations illustrate the need for a study that documents Atang as an important aspect of Ilocano culinary heritage and translates this knowledge into an accessible and engaging digital educational resource. The need is particularly relevant for younger generations, whose opportunities to observe and participate in the practice may be declining as family routines and lifestyles changes.

As a result of these needs, this study seeks to document and preserve the practice of Atang in Ilocos Norte through the creation of a digital magazine. Specifically, this study seeks to examine the historical and cultural significance of Atang, identify common processes and materials involved in preparing Atang, identify common recipe ingredients used when making Atang, assess potential barriers to continuing to make Atang, and determine if a digital magazine can be used to document, promote and sustain this cultural heritage. Through a combination of documented narratives related to community members' experiences, documentation of food preparation practices, different types of visual materials, and digital stories, the researchers hope to develop an educational resource that can be accessed by anyone interested in appreciating and continuing to participate in this indigenous culinary tradition.

Potential contributions from the results of this study are numerous. Specifically, the members of the Ilocano community may see value in preserving and promoting their own cultural heritage through digitally documenting their own cultural practices. Youth may develop increased appreciation for and awareness of traditional practices which will foster long-term engagement with cultural traditions. Tourist boards and organizations responsible for promoting culture may view the digital magazine as a marketing tool for cultural tourism in Ilocos Norte. Students of culinary arts, history professionals, teachers and others interested in indigenous food traditions and cultural practices may also reference this study as a source of background information. Future studies investigating cultural preservation, culinary heritage, digital storytelling and community-based documentation may also draw upon these findings as background information.

Given the importance of preserving culinary traditions and preventing further decline in the practice of Atang, this study focuses on assessing the cultural and historical significance of Atang, documenting the traditional preparations for Atang including ingredients, techniques and recipes, examining factors limiting the continuation of Atang, assessing the utility of a digital magazine in sustaining and

creating interest in Atang, particularly in regards to both the quantity content and quality instructional nature. The study is guided by UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Framework, Social Learning Theory, and the Digital Story Framework. These perspectives provide a basis for documenting cultural knowledge, understanding how it is transmitted through family and community participation, and presenting it through a digital resource that may be accessible to younger generations. In particular, the digital format responds to the reduced opportunities for young people to observe and participate in the practice, as reflected in the findings of this study.

Materials and Methods

This section outlines the research design, respondents and locales of this study, research instruments, data collection procedures, and analysis plan, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

The qualitative aspect of this study involved an exploratory-sequential mixed-methods design. During the qualitative phase, the researchers gathered data regarding the cultural meaning, preparation techniques and obstacles associated with preparing Atang via focus groups discussions, individual interviews and observations. Findings from this phase were then used as a guide for creating the digital magazine. The quantitative aspect included evaluating the digital magazine using a modified version of the LRMDS-based evaluation tool by experts.

Respondents and Locale of the Study

Data collection occurred in select towns within Ilocos Norte Province located in Northern Luzon Philippines. Data was collected from four municipalities: Bangui, Pagudpud, Paoay, Sarrat. The sites selected have been long-standing centers of Ilocano cultural tradition, especially regarding the ritual foods traditionally associated with Atang. Therefore, each site provided an authentic environment for assessing Atang in its natural cultural context, thus, providing a culturally-specific basis for the findings.

Research Instrument

The study employed four different tools to gather information in support of achieving the goals stated in the study's objectives. The first three tools were developed specifically for this study: semi-structured interviews, an observational tool, and a focus group discussion. All three tools were developed to collect qualitative data. A fourth tool, a validation survey questionnaire for the digital magazine created, was adapted and modified from the LRMDS evaluation tool of the Philippine Department of Education. Validity of the research tools was established by having all four submitted to experts in culture, education, and research. Feedback from these experts was used to modify each tool to determine if they could be successfully used to obtain relevant, useful data.

Data Analysis Procedure and Trustworthiness

Qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were evaluated using thematic analysis. Responses from both types of data sources were transcribed, read multiple times, coded and categorized into emergent themes. Triangulation was used to increase credibility by cross-referencing interview data with observational notes. Themes identified were reviewed and revised according to relevance to the study objective.

Validation data was evaluated using descriptive statistics. Specifically, the weighted means of the validation results were analyzed using a four-point validity scale.

Data triangulation was implemented to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Data collected via interviews, focus groups and observational methods were compared. Participants were also asked to verify the correctness of statements made from the interpreted data.

Table 1. Participant Profile and LRMDS Validation Scale

Section A. Participant Type	Number	Selection Criteria	Role in the Study
Elders	3	Knowledgeable about Atang traditions and able to share their experiences of the practice.	Shared historical background and cultural meanings.
Cultural practitioner	1	Actively involved in preparing Atang.	Described techniques and materials.
Youth participants	10	Members of families familiar with or exposed to the Atang practice.	Shared awareness and perceptions.
Expert Validators	5	Expert in culture, education, or instructional materials.	Evaluated the digital magazine in terms of content and instructional quality.

Section B. Rating Scale	Weighted Mean Range	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
4	3.26-4.00	Highly Valid	Excellent Standard met
3	2.51-3.25	Valid	Acceptable Standard met
2	1.76-2.50	Not Valid	Major improvement needed
1	1.00-1.75	Highly Not Valid	Unacceptable standard

Ethical Considerations

This study followed the ethical principles of respecting the rights, privacy, and dignity of all participants. Prior to commencing data collection, participants signed an informed consent form explaining the intent of the study, procedures involved, and their right to decline or remove themselves from participating in the study at anytime with no negative consequences. Anonymity of participants was ensured through use of pseudonyms and secure storage of all interview recordings, observational data and other data collected throughout the study. Respectful treatment of participant cultural practices and traditions was maintained while conducting interviews and observations throughout the study. Furthermore, the study was reviewed and approved by an academic panel to ensure compliance with institutional guidelines for ethical conduct in research.

Results and Discussion

This section includes the data collected, analyzed, and interpreted to provide answers to the research questions posed in the study.

Table 2. Summary of Qualitative Thematic Findings

Category	Themes	Key Meaning	Representative Evidence	Interpretation
Cultural and Historical Significance of Atang	Intergenerational Transmission of Atang	Atang is learned through observation and participation within the family.	"I only observed what others were doing; I just watched and observed." -Respondent 1	Knowledge of Atang is transmitted informally through lived experience rather than formal instruction, ensuring the continuity of cultural knowledge across generations.
	Atang as Spiritual Remembrance and Social Obligation	Atang expresses remembrance of the dead while fulfilling cultural	"When you remember, of course you also pray, so that the souls of the	The practice strengthens spiritual relationships with deceased family members while reinforcing communal

Category	Themes	Key Meaning	Representative Evidence	Interpretation
		and community expectations.	dead are comforted." -Respondent 2	values of respect, remembrance, and responsibility.
	Cultural Continuity and Adaptation	Families continue practicing Atang despite modernization and changing lifestyles.	"We don't order the Atang, we prepare it ourselves… Nothing has changed, it's still the same." -Respondent 2	The persistence of traditional preparation reflects cultural resilience, showing that Atang continues to preserve Ilocano identity despite social changes.
Traditional Techniques, Materials, and Recipes used in Preparing Atang	Material Culture of Atang	Indigenous ingredients reflect Ilocano identity and local resources.	Diket, gata, and tagapulot are consistently used in preparing traditional offerings.	Local ingredients connect agricultural traditions with ritual practices and preserve culinary heritage.
	Traditional Knowledge and Manual Food Preparation	Food preparation relies on inherited techniques and indigenous tools.	Rice is pounded using alsong and al-o, coconut milk extracted with armidol, and food cooked using paryok and firewood.	Manual preparation preserves traditional knowledge while reinforcing cultural authenticity.
	Ritual Labor and Culinary Heritage	Preparation is time-consuming because every step has symbolic values.	Food preparation involves soaking, pounding, stirring continuously, and careful firewood cooking.	The lengthy preparation demonstrates devotion, respect for ancestors, and commitment to preserving tradition.
The Challenges Contributing to the decline of Atang practice	Socioeconomic and Lifestyle Pressures	Economic hardship and modernization reduce families' ability to prepare traditional Atang.	"Nowadays the offering is not complete because of the hardship of life." -Respondent 1	Financial constraints and changing lifestyles reshape how the ritual is practiced.
	Adaptation of Ritual Practices	Families simplify offerings while preserving the ritual's symbolic meaning.	"Before, performing the Atang was really important. They would even cook food to offer. But now, even just bread or water is already acceptable as an offering." -Respondent 3	Material aspects of Atang change, but symbolic remembrance remains..

Category	Themes	Key Meaning	Representative Evidence	Interpretation
	Resilience and Cultural Continuity	Communities continue practicing Atang despite modern challenges.	"Nothing has changed ; it is still the same." -Respondent 6	Cultural values remain stronger than external pressures, demonstrating resilience.

Intergenerational Transmission of Atang

Interviews produced several strong themes related to Atang including the intergenerational nature of knowledge transmission. Unlike many educational contexts where children learn a new skill through formalized instruction, many respondents indicated they learned about Atang through family experiences rather than formal instruction. Family experiences included viewing their elders prepare and display Atang during family commemorations. Through repeated participation in family commemorations young family members internalized aspects of Atang naturally as part of their family experiences.

An example respondent described her learning process: "I only observed what others were doing, I just watched and observed". This description exemplifies how observation can serve as a viable pathway to understanding cultural knowledge. Although it had no formal training in performing Atang this ultimately gained an understanding of its meaning through repeated exposures. This emphasizes that Atang exists as a collective family experience versus something formally taught in classrooms.

Furthermore, it appears that sustaining Atang as a continued practice is not dependent on formalizing the documentation process but relies heavily on family participation in shared commemoration events. Since Atang has historically been passed down through family-based experiences, there is less reliance upon formal teaching mechanisms to sustain the tradition. Traditionally family-based experiences provide opportunities for younger family members to become engaged with and knowledgeable about the tradition through witnessing their elder family members demonstrate and pass-down aspects of Atang. As such, diminished intergenerational communication resulting from increased migration rates, changing familial structures and decreased attendance in traditional communal celebrations may be one of the greatest threats to continuing Atang beyond any loss due to lack of written records. Therefore, creating environments that foster opportunities for younger generations to actively observe and participate in demonstrating Atang will directly impact whether Atang continues to exist as a cultural tradition.

Thus, this finding aligns with Nelson (2023) when he states that Atang evolved from pre-colonial belief systems concerning ancestral worship and protection of families and then merged with Roman Catholicism after colonization. Although these historical aspects changed how Atang has evolved over time its continued transmission has remained predominantly family based and experientially based. Similarly, Naima (2025), indicated that continuing cultural identity preservation happens when individuals engage in the repetitive ritualistic act of providing food offerings and pass this down to future generations. Findings from this research indicate that respondents continue to use primarily observation and imitation to maintain the tradition. Therefore, intergenerational learning continues to be a significant factor in supporting Atang as part of Ilocano tangible intangible heritage.

Atang as Spiritual Remembrance and Social Obligation

Another prominent theme found in this study was that Atang has two simultaneous functions, spiritual remembrance and social obligations. Participants continuously described the ritual as a method to honor their deceased loved ones using food offerings and prayers, while at the same time meeting an obligation to the family and community. Therefore, Atang has both spiritual and social meanings, giving it a greater significance than simply being a religious observance.

A respondent stated "When you remember, of course you also pray, so that the souls of the dead are comforted." This statement shows how Atang is seen as a continued concern and attention toward deceased relatives. Food preparation for Atang includes prayer to represent the belief that remembering one's deceased relatives will provide them with comfort, while at the same time strengthen the emotional bonds between generations.

In addition, another respondent also highlighted the communal pressure associated with performing Atang when she said that if people do not make Atang, others ask why they did not. It appears that the ritual demonstrates shared cultural values such as respect, gratitude and remembrance.

The data suggests that the value of Atang goes beyond the ceremonial aspect of the ritual since it serves both as a spiritual representation of individual faith as well as a social mechanism that creates and reinforces family and community relationships. The ritual represents individual faith, however, it is also a visible demonstration of respect for ancestors that is expected within the community. Therefore, participating in the Atang ritual supports strong collective cultural identity because of the ability of the practice to enforce shared beliefs and social obligations over multiple generations. As such, the Atang continues to be practiced by families due to both their spiritual commitment to performing the atang, and social obligation to their community to continue the tradition. Therefore, Atang remains culturally significant due to the fact that its value is derived from supporting both spiritual connections to the deceased and social bonds among the living.

The studies also support previous study results as mentioned by Manila Bulletin (2020), they stated that Atang is an offering that can maintain balance for the living and the dead through spirit worship. Vishwakarma et al. (2025) stated that food offered during funeral ceremonies throughout a wide range of cultures, is utilized to show respect for deceased memory, as well as, to provide physical evidence of development of ancestral relationships. In addition, Gandeza et al. (2023) showed that ceremonial practices continue to represent significant components of Filipino communities' beliefs and provide spiritual protection and identity. The data collected from the present study demonstrates that participants believe Atang is not only an aspect of personal devotion, but also a social obligation that contributes to creating social cohesion. In addition to serving the spiritual function of promoting cultural identity in Ilocano communities, Atang serves a social function in that it promotes cultural identity.

Cultural Continuity and Adaptation

The third major theme in this study is cultural continuity and adaptation, refers to how Atang is maintained and adapted even with modernization and migration occurring. Participants agree that society has evolved, yet they indicate that the value and meaning behind the preparations of Atang remain the same. Family members maintain the old ways of making Atang, but adapt to current situations.

A respondent said "We don't order the Atang, we prepare it ourselves… Nothing has changed, it's still the same." This response emphasizes that the preparation of the Atang by each family member is significant as it represents sincerity and respect. Not only do families prepare the food in accordance with traditional recipes, they also maintain the symbolism which the preparation embodies. It is not just a form of remembering deceased family members but also a method for continuing past customs.

Another respondent indicated that his family continues to perform Atang because it is a simple means of remembering those they love. This indicates that cultural continuity may or may not include elaborate ceremonial activities, what is important is preserving the values which the tradition embodies. As societal factors evolve, families can continue to perform Atang by modifying some of the material aspects of the tradition, while at the same time preserving the symbolic representation.

This research demonstrated that the continuation of Atang occurs due to cultural adaptation and not solely due to an effort to preserve all traditional practices. In spite of external influences related to modernization, migration, and changing lifestyles, none of these

influences have altered the primary objective of performing Atang. That objective is to honor deceased family members and to provide further evidence of family identity. Rather than seeing this kind of adaptation as a reduction or loss of cultural value, the findings of this research indicate that this allows family members to develop methods whereby future generations will still prepare Atang. Thus, the data collected in this research demonstrates the presence of cultural resilience in that the continuation of traditions does not compromise essential core beliefs. In other words, rather than view the type of adaptation mentioned above as an indicator of cultural decline, this research illustrates that families use adaptation as one of several methods to continue practicing Atang over generations.

Similar results were reported by Soyombo, Ijomah, and Toromade (2024), who reported that food preparation based on traditional practices functioned as cultural narratives to reinforce identity and facilitate community unity. In addition, De Leon (2024) provided a description of Atang as a "cultural bridge" allowing Ilocano families across generations and geographic areas to connect, thus serving as a vehicle for legacy and heritage to endure beyond migration and modernization. This current study builds upon previous research in that it demonstrates that participants are taking deliberate steps to continue to prepare Atang at home using traditional preparations and/or incorporating rituals as a means of maintaining a connection with their ancestors. As a result, Atang may be viewed as a living tradition that continues due to its capacity to evolve with changing environments while retaining its basic cultural and spiritual importance.

Material Culture of Atang

As part of observations of this study, it was determined that Atang relies heavily on locally produced ingredients that have been used for centuries in Ilocano agricultural production. The majority of native materials are made up of sticky rice (diket), coconut milk (gata), and sugarcane molasses (tagapulot). These indigenous materials are used in preparation of traditional foods including linapet, patupat, and baduya. Atang represents a cultural connection to native ingredients used for food, and those same ingredients represent an interdependent relationship among cultural customs, native agricultural practices and ancestral reverence.

Use of native ingredients in preparation of Atang demonstrates that the tradition relies on resources which have been cultivated and preserved across generations. Offerings made during Atang thus reflect cultural identity and regional heritage based on use of products which are integral to Ilocano way-of-life.

Findings demonstrated that ingredients in Atang are functional not only as components in traditional recipes but also as symbols representing a linkage between people and their ancestral environment and collective identity. Selection of locally grown ingredients over time represents an active attempt to preserve knowledge/traditions related to local food systems. As such, retention of these locally grown ingredients is critical not only for ensuring authenticity in the preparation of Atang but also for maintaining a larger body of cultural heritage and eco-knowledge related to Ilocano communities.

Manik et al. (2024), in a like manner, found that preparation of traditional meals will support preservation of cultural identity by maintaining historical recipes; utilizing local products for meal production, and supporting the preservation of the family's history. The National Museum (2021) stated that ceremonial foods are considered to be associated with good luck, cleanliness and gratitude as part of the Philippines' customs. Results observed in this research expand prior studies in demonstrating that continued use of native ingredients enables Atang to remain closely linked with both ancestral environments and Ilocano identity. Native ingredients therefore are representative of historical linkages between the Ilocano people, their environment, and their enduring cultural traditions.

Traditional Knowledge and Manual Food Preparation

Another key observation was that regardless of access to modern cooking equipment, participants continued to rely on traditional food preparation techniques. During all field

observations participants prepared Atang utilizing indigenous tools including alsong, al-o, armidol, paryok, malabi, and silyasi. Traditional food preparation tools are essential in creating authentic ritual foods.

Manual preparation is a demonstration that preservation of culture is about much more than preserving traditional recipes. Preservation of techniques, skills and knowledge related to food preparation are integral components of the culture. The techniques used require years of experience and are typically acquired through hands-on participation within family, therefore preparation of meals is one of the best ways to pass down indigenous knowledge.

Findings indicate that the preparation of Atang is a method to preserve intangible cultural heritage, and although the continued utilization of traditional equipment and manual preparations shows that authenticity is not solely based upon the final product; it is also established through the process of how the food is prepared. Therefore, cultural knowledge is built into every day practices. Younger generations learn practical skills, values and traditions by being involved in active participation, instead of receiving formal education. Therefore, the loss of traditional preparation techniques will result in a loss of indigenous knowledge, regardless of whether the recipes remain intact. For this reason, protecting Atang means protecting both the culinary products and traditional preparation processes that provide the food cultural importance.

Villegas (2024) found that preparing ritual foods are an essential aspect of expressing respect for ancestors, and a way to preserve cultural knowledge. The data collected for this research supports Villegas' view by illustrating that manual preparation continues to represent an important cultural practice that preserves community identity and ensures the continuation of culinary traditions through generations. In addition to reinforcing Villegas' perspective, the current study illustrates that traditional equipment and techniques are living representations of cultural knowledge that enable Ilocano families to maintain their culinary heritage, and ancestral traditions, through regular practice.

Ritual Labor and Culinary Heritage

In addition, observing the preparation of Atang, illustrated that preparing Atang demands significant amounts of time, effort, and teamwork. Delicacies go through multiple steps including washing, soaking, grinding, shredding, mixing, constant stirring, preparing wood for fires, and carefully cooking. These activities demand patience, and emphasize that the preparation process is an element of the ritual.

The long preparation period emphasizes the community's willingness to honor their ancestors by providing great care and respect when preparing food. The process is viewed as a form of devotion and cultural obligation, not simply hard work.

Data suggest that the value of Atang is rooted in both the complete food offerings and the collective efforts put forth to create them. Through the extensive preparation process common cooking becomes a powerful cultural practice that creates a strong sense of unity among family members and establishes respect for the ancestral traditions. Furthermore, this data illustrates that labor provides a mechanism to establish cultural continuance by allowing family members to spend time working together, learning traditional knowledge from each other and building stronger intergenerational connections. Additionally, the collective process of preparing Atang can be defined as a type of intangible cultural heritage where family members' collective experiences in preparing Atang represent equally significant aspects of cultural heritage as do the food offerings presented throughout the ritual.

These views are consistent with Sampang's (2025) presentation of preparing the ingredients for rituals to reflect both the person who prepares them as being skilled in cooking as well as having devotion spiritually. Similarly, it was noted within this study that each part of the preparation of Atang were essential in demonstrating authenticity for Atang while at the same time reinforcing the identity of their community. In contrast to Sampang's view, this study found that Atang is an example of traditional food practices and also serves as a contemporary example of Ilocano heritage that has been preserved through group labor and respect for ancestors.

Socioeconomic and lifestyle Pressures

Some of the most prevalent issues identified in interviews included the effects of socioeconomic and lifestyle changes on the practice of Atang. Many respondents identified financial difficulties, increased costs of living, and shifting priorities as contributing factors to why many families were unable to prepare traditional offerings as they had previously. These factors have complicated the full completion of the ritual for families with limited economic resources.

A few respondents said things like "Nowadays the offering is not complete because of the hardship of life." And another respondent said "It is a financial problem because everything we use now must be purchased." These quotes illustrate those economic conditions directly impact how families prepare Atang. Families currently have to buy all supplies needed to make the ritual food, whereas before families could grow most ingredients locally or easily access them from home. Due to the need to purchase so many items necessary to make complete offerings, many families have been forced to either decrease or modify what they prepare.

Respondents also noted that changes in people's lives brought on by modernization have altered individuals' priorities and daily habits. Increased numbers of hours spent at work, moving away from home, and changing family structures have resulted in less time available for preparing traditional offerings. Thus, findings support that there is not decreasing interest in practicing Atang; however, there are many real-world obstacles limiting families from completing the ritual traditionally.

The researchers found evidence that Atang is declining because of practical issues, that prevent families from performing the ceremony in its traditional manner. However, since the majority of families are continuing to keep the practice alive, most families are adapting by providing less expensive, quicker-to-prepare alternatives. Since most families are finding alternative means of participating in the Atang tradition, the researchers found that there is no lack of interest in keeping the culture alive. There is however, a need to find ways of keeping the culture alive that fit into today's socio-economic demands. Thus, researchers believe that cultural preservation efforts will need to focus on creating methods for families to maintain their cultural heritage that is both meaningful and feasible.

Delina et al. (2025) stated that for many families, the burden of economic costs associated with modernization forces them to sacrifice customary cultural practices for the sake of survival. Lawangen and Roberts (2023), further noted that changes in social and environmental settings contribute to the manner in which indigenous customs are preserved and practiced. This body of work expands upon those studies through demonstrating that both socio-economic limitations and modern lifestyle modifications influence participation in the Atang tradition; however, the results show that these factors do not impact one's valuing of the Atang tradition. Therefore, the issue with the Atang tradition is not solely the loss of culture but rather reconciling traditional duties to modern societal expectations.

Adaptation of Ritual Practices

Another important theme is the adaptation of ritual practices. Respondents reported that although Atang is still performed, the material components of the ritual have changed significantly. Many families now provide simpler items to offer as part of the ritual, since they are easier to prepare and cheaper. These adaptations were shown to be pragmatic responses to the evolving socio-economic climate and to maintain the underlying intentionality of each ritual.

As one respondent shared, "Before, performing the Atang was really important. They would even cook food to offer. But now, even just bread or water is already acceptable as an offering." This quote shows that the meaning behind the ritual has been preserved, albeit in a different manner. As long as the fundamental purpose of providing a remembrance for deceased individuals continues to exist, regardless of whether or not money is provided as an offering, the core of the ritual will continue to exist. A number of respondents also stated that families currently conduct Atang celebrations in the cemetery instead of holding them at home; another indication of how families are

adjusting their participation in Atang to accommodate contemporary lifestyles.

Based on the data collected during this study, Atang appears to be exhibiting selective continuity in that the symbolic meaning of the tradition is maintained, yet the material manifestations of the tradition are continually evolving. Rather than abandoning the tradition altogether, families are able to hold onto the central tenets of remembrance, respect and devotion to their ancestors, while making modifications to the form of the ritual so that it fits into contemporary society. Selective continuity provides insight into how cultural preservation can be accomplished without having to preserve each aspect of a tradition exactly as it has always existed; rather, cultural preservation involves preserving the values and belief systems which underlie the cultural significance of a given tradition. Therefore, as demonstrated through this study's examination of adaptability, Atang exhibits considerable cultural resiliency and remains relevant within a world where many economic, familial and lifestyle factors are constantly changing.

Li (2026) further argued that globally influenced and adapted rituals resulting from modernization and globalization often lead to transformations in intangible cultural heritage where local communities modify their established traditions based on the current circumstances. The findings in this study extend that position by indicating that modifying types of food offered and locations at which Atang occurs does not devalue its cultural significance. Rather, these modifications permit families to continue observing the ritual despite various contemporary constraints. Thus, as opposed to regarding Atang's continuity solely as a function of maintaining fixed practices; continuity can be better understood as maintaining fixed cultural meanings through evolving forms.

Resilience and Cultural Continuity

Although the participant's identified challenges, the results also show a high degree of resilience and continuation of cultural traditions. Many respondents indicated that although certain elements of Atang have altered; the core values, principles, and purposes of the ritual remained unaltered. Families continue to engage in significant customs and consider Atang to be an essential component of their cultural identification and spiritual lives.

"Nothing has changed; it is still the same as it was before." states one respondent; thereby indicating that community members differentiate between the evolution of material representations of a ritual and the persistence of a ritual's cultural representation. While a family's offering may be simplified or transformed, a family's continued engagement in Atang is predicated upon their commitment to honor their ancestors and preserve their traditions. Therefore, it seems clear that Atang has not ceased existence; but instead has evolved while maintaining its central cultural and spiritual significance.

It seems clear from these results that Atang's viability exists in the fact that families have managed to sustain its underlying values despite altering its external manifestation. Rather than defining a tradition's viability by assessing whether all aspects of a tradition are carried out completely or if all aspects are presented with complete offerings; respondents defined a tradition's continuation by virtue of families consistently engaging in acts of remembrance, expressing respect for their ancestors, and incorporating themselves into family-based activities. Atang has continued to evolve and remain alive because it is based upon strong, shared values, and so long as those values are passed down to future generations, then the tradition will remain as a living example of Ilocano culture. Therefore, it should understand adaptive strategies as ways to preserve cultural heritage, and not necessarily as a sign of cultural decline.

Barbuti (2020) indicated that retaining the cultural heritage of non-material cultural practices depends on the local community's ability to retain their cultural values, which will likely involve changing those values as society evolves. This research supports Barbuti's research with evidence supporting the concept that the adaptability of the Atang tradition exists in the local community's desire to retain certain elements of their practice but also allow themselves to be flexible when it comes to practicing the tradition based on evolving societal trends. In essence, Atang remains an example

of Ilocano identity, family unity and remembrance of ancestors in spite of the rapidity at which modernization and economic change.

In general, the results show that instead of disappearing, Atang has undergone change. Modernization, changes in lifestyle, migration, and economic stress have affected how families celebrate Atang. Families now simplify their offerings to their ancestors and use more flexibility when performing the ritual. Although the physical elements of the ritual have changed significantly since its inception, none of these changes have altered the basic intent of celebrating Atang, to honor one's ancestors, strengthen family ties, and help preserve Ilocano cultural identity.

Research from this project demonstrates that there are several ways that Atang has been able to continue to be celebrated by multiple generations. These include the transmission of knowledge and customs from generation to generation; family participation in celebrating Atang; adapting the celebration of Atang; and the teaching of younger generations cooking techniques used for preparing foods associated with Atang. These examples provide evidence that preserving intangible cultural heritage does not require maintaining every single aspect of a cultural practice. What is important is whether people still believe that the cultural values, norms and beliefs that matter to them exist today. Protecting Atang cannot stop with simply documenting recipes and rituals. It must create opportunities for future generations to engage in, participate in and derive value from the cultural significance of the Atang tradition. By doing so, Atang can evolve over time yet remain a true representation of Ilocano culture and history.

Table 3. The validity Content Quality

Statements	Mean	Descriptive
Category A. Content Quality		
1. Content is accurate.	3.00	Valid
2. Content is up-to-date.	3.40	Highly Valid
3. Content is logically developed and organized.	2.80	Valid
4. Content is free from cultural, gender, racial, or ethnic bias.	2.60	Valid
5. Content stimulates and promotes critical thinking.	2.80	Valid
6. Content is relevant to real-life situations.	2.80	Valid
7. Language (including vocabulary) is appropriate to the target user level.	2.80	Valid
Overall mean	2.89	Valid
Category B. Instructional Quality		
1. Purpose of the material is well defined.	2.80	Valid
2. Material achieves its defined purpose.	2.80	Valid
3. Graphics and colors are used for appropriate instructional reasons.	3.20	Valid
4. Material is enjoyable, stimulating, challenging, and engaging.	3.00	Valid
5. Material effectively stimulates creativity of target user.	3.00	Valid
6. Target user can control the rate and sequence of presentation and review.	3.00	Valid
7. Instruction is integrated with target user's previous experience.	2.00	Not Valid
Overall mean	2.83	Valid

Category A illustrates that the digital magazine was validated regarding content quality. Average score = 2.89 – Valid. The average score indicates that the digital magazine meets expectations for content quality for educational and cultural related resources. UNESCO (2023) said digital media can provide a lot of opportunity for protecting, and showing off cultural customs in an accessible and fun way.endoza, De La Hoz Franco & Gomez (2023) found that users have access to recent data on cultural knowledge through various types of digital tools which aid in documenting and preserving it. Also, Ren & Lam (2026) stated that digital storytelling and online archives are assisting with preserving intangible cultural heritage as

well as make cultural traditions more understandable and relatable to younger generations. These studies support the value of using digital magazine to present the cultural knowledge documented in this study.

Amongst the indicators "Content is up-to-date" received the greatest average score = 3.40 - High Validity. The greatest indicator showed that the digital magazine offered current information relevant and suitable for its target audience. The previous statement is supported by Gabriel, Jao, Leus, & Amutan (2025) and Lian & Xie (2024), who both assert that digital platforms are enhancing cultural education options for young people because they provide timely relevant appealing content targeted toward youth. Furthermore, Li et al., (2025) explained that interactive digital platforms and multimedia archives can improved access to cultural knowledge and support awareness of intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, the high rating suggests that the digital format is a suitable means of presenting information about Atang to contemporary readers.

Amongst the indicators "Content is free from cultural, gender, racial, or ethnic bias", received the least mean score = 2.60 - Valid. While validators were mostly satisfied with appropriateness and respectful nature of content, they indicated potential for increased inclusion and objectivity. Since the digital magazine represents the Ilocano tradition of Atang greater emphasis may be required to ensure explanations demonstrate culturally sensitive presentation of the practice avoiding stereotypical and cultural assumptions and providing enough contextualizing information for readers representing different cultures. While ratings confirmed that content met acceptable standards increasing inclusive language and balanced cultural representation would be able to improve quality and credibility of digital magazine.

On the other side, Category B focuses on the validity of the digital magazine based on its instructional quality. The overall average rating of 2.83 or Valid means that the digital magazine satisfies the criteria for instructional quality. However, the results indicate that there is still space for improvement, and thus, it will take time to reach being viewed as high-quality instructional material. Rather than showing excellence in this regard, the Valid rating shows that the digital magazine has instructional content that is adequate, however; it lacks refinement to adequately meet the educational needs of its intended audience.

Singzon (2024) who determined positive influence of integrating technology into classroom practices improved instructional practices and learning experiences. Gabriel, Jao, Leus & Amutan (2025), also stated that digital platforms allow young people to have access to, and engage with their culture more easily than ever before. In addition, Gore (2021), and Ashikuzzaman (2023), also mentioned that digital preservation supports the preservation of cultural knowledge. This is done by preventing the loss and deterioration of important information, which occurs mainly from technological obsolescence. As such, these studies support the idea that digital media can function as an effective way to promote cultural heritage when instructional materials are developed thoughtfully and continually improved.

Of all of the categories assessed, the one receiving the highest average rating of 3.20 or Valid was Graphics and colors are used for appropriate instructional reasons". This is indicative of the fact that the visual presentation of the digital magazine is very supportive of learning because it makes the instructional content more attractive and understandable. When well-designed graphics and appropriate color combinations are used they can draw learners' focus, organize instruction, and facilitate understanding of cultural concepts. Therefore, this finding is also similar to those found by Lian & Xie (2024), indicating that multimedia elements such as images, videos, and on-line presentations can greatly enhance the educational effects of cultural education and provide a more interactive, interesting, and comprehensible educational experience. Additionally, but (2024) noted that interactive digital technologies can support a greater degree of public enthusiasm for, and appreciation of cultural heritage. Finally, Wang (2025), noted that visual technologies allow students to gain experience with cultural knowledge in a more immersive manner than other methods, which could lead to greater degrees of cultural awareness

and understanding among succeeding generations.

Although several indicators received acceptable ratings, the lowest score under instructional quality was recorded for "Instruction is integrated with the target user's previous experience", which obtained a mean of 2.00 and was interpreted as Not Valid. This result identifies an important limitation of the digital magazine. While the material presents information about cultural meaning and preparation of Atang, younger readers may not have enough experience with the practice to immediately connect the information to their own family experiences. The findings of this study indicate that opportunities for younger generations to observe and participate in Atang are becoming less frequent as family routines, work demands, migration, and changing lifestyles affect participation. Consequently, presenting cultural information through a digital format alone may not be enough to help learners relate the documented practices to experiences they have not personally encountered.

The UNESCO (2023), statement that digital platforms provide many opportunities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage; however, when cultural traditions are presented online without proper explanation can lose some of the original context and meaning that those same traditions possess in real life situations. Also, Buragohain et al. (2024) found that digital technology has many advantages for preserving cultures, however, younger generations require relevant and experiential learning opportunities in order to appreciate greatly the value of traditional practices. Therefore, the low rating does not lessen the value of the digital magazine as a documentation resource. Rather, it points to a specific instructional area that needs to be addressed in its next development.

In response to this result, future versions of the digital magazine should include activities that allow younger readers to connect the documented tradition with their own family experiences. One improvement may be the addition of interactive family interview prompts that encourage students to ask parents, grandparents, or other older relatives about the food prepared during family commemorations, the meaning of the offerings, and the way the practice has changed over time. Guided reflection questions may also be included, such as asking learners to identify traditions observed in their own families and compare these with the practices described in the digital magazine. In addition, short activities, reflection spaces, and classroom discussion tasks may help learners relate the stories, recipes, and preparation methods to their personal and community experiences. These proposed features should be reviewed and tested with students before being incorporated into the final version. Through these improvements, the digital magazine may become more student-centered and may help younger readers recognized Atang as a meaningful part of Ilocano intangible cultural heritage.

Conclusion

Overall, this study indicates that Atang continues to represent a vital form of Ilocano intangible cultural heritage. Atang serves as a means of maintaining family memories and spiritual connections as well as preserving individual and collective identities through food offerings and prayer. While Atang continues to evolve in response to modernization, economic difficulties, and changing lifestyle, the digital magazine provides a useful means od documenting the practice and promoting its cultural significance. The validation results show that the material met the acceptable standard for content and instructional quality. However, the low rating for integrating instruction with user's previous experiences indicates that the digital magazine requires further development to strengthen its connection with younger readers. Adding family interview prompts, guided reflection questions, and interactive learning activities may help address this limitation and encourages students to relate the documented tradition to their own family and community experiences.

Based on the findings of the study, local educational institutions in Ilocos Norte are encouraged to consider using the digital magazine as a supplementary resource in lessons and learning activities related to Ilocano culture, food heritage, and intangible cultural heritage. Teachers may introduce the material in

classroom discussions and provide opportunities for students to examine the stories, recipes, photographs, and preparation practices documented in the magazine. Since the validation results identified a need to strengthen the connection between the material and learner's previous experiences, teachers may also use family interview activities and guided reflection questions to help students relate the content to their own home and communities.

The researchers also recommend that local tourism councils and cultural offices support the dissemination and community use of the digital magazine as a resource for promoting the cultural heritage of Ilocos Norte. Before wider implementation, the material should undergo classroom pilot testing and user evaluation involving students and teachers from the intended audience. Feedback on clarity, engagement, cultural understanding, and the usefulness of the proposed interactive activities may guide further revisions. Future researchers may conduct additional studies to determine how the use of the digital magazine influences student's awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the Atang tradition.

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The main findings (novelty) and why they are important and useful:

This study examined the cultural meaning, preparation methods and the decreasing popularity of the Ilocanos' Atang. The traditional method of passing on the Atang practice has been informal, based upon family observations of preparing the food and taking part in the ritual. The tradition still continues today in simple ways due to recent financial and lifestyle changes. To assist in continuing this heritage, the researchers produced a digital magazine that received validation on both its content and instructional quality. This publication will provide both educators and local officials with an accessible format to educate younger generations about Atang, it will also serve as a valuable source for all future research on Philippine indigenous foods and digital storytelling.

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