

WOMEN AND ARTISANSHIP IN BONELESS DANGGIT (DRIED RABBITFISH) MAKING

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Gender equality has been a persistent challenge in the fisheries sector. While recent scholarship has increasingly highlighted various efforts and approaches to achieve gender equity (Kleiber et al. 2017; Rice et al. 2024), however, little attention remains on the artisanship of women engaged in post-harvest activities within small-scale fisheries. This paper aims to illuminate the techniques, embodied skills, and culturally embedded practices women employ in the boneless danggit industry. *Boneless danggit* refers to the deboned, salted, and dried rabbitfish (*Siganus* spp.), notably crafted in Bantayan Island and traded in the Philippines and overseas. To elucidate women's artisanship, this paper focuses on two processing steps integral to boneless danggit production: *timplada* and *pukyad*. *Timplada* denotes the nuanced technique of flavoring the fish, primarily through estimation and application of salt. *Pukyad* encompasses a sequence of transformative acts – namely, the dorsal split opening of the fish, degutting, and deboning – that convert fresh rabbitfish into a highly valued boneless danggit.

Women's artisanal labor, as manifested through the practices of *timplada* and *pukyad*, is instrumental to the widely acclaimed distinctive quality of boneless danggit produced in Bantayan. However, these artisanal skills and practices are often rendered invisible and undervalued in interventions that prioritize technological improvements in boneless danggit production. This study argues that by focusing on women's artisanship, we can better recognize and value their capabilities and agency as key actors in the post-harvest of small-scale fisheries. Foregrounding women's artisanal knowledge and practices shifts from reductive economic framings of their plight, which can lead towards achieving gender justice. The findings and analysis presented herein are grounded in sixteen months of ethnographic fieldwork at boneless danggit production sites in Bantayan Island, north of Cebu Province, in the Central Philippines.