

Kaemag, Wuhig, Pasak Duw Guyanganan (Air, Water, Land and Forests): The Manobo Eco-Literatures in Preserving Nature

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Abstract: This study aimed to gather and examine the oral literatures of the Manobo Tribe in Agusan del Sur, through the lens of ecocriticism, to be able to identify eco-knowledge in preserving nature. The qualitative design was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the way the Manobo interact with nature and of the specific eco-knowledge from 20 eco-literatures. Purposive sampling procedure was used in selecting the participants for Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Results showed that the Manobo eco-literatures contained the Manobo eco-knowledge of preserving air, water, land and forests. Development and validation of MTBL Education materials using the collected eco-literatures of the Manobo tribe is recommended. Documentation of oral and written literatures of other indigenous tribes is also recommended to fill in the dearth of materials from the locality. Further analysis of the collected Manobo literatures is also recommended to find out if reconstruction of the once shattered environment is also captured in oral literatures of the Manobo tribe .

Keywords: Eco-Literature, Eco-knowledge, Ecocriticism, Preserving Nature, Manobo

Introduction

Climate change is a serious environmental problem resulting from unethical human interactions with nature. Extreme weather conditions such as El Niño, La Niña, super typhoons, and tsunamis are just some of its effects. In addition, Ehrlich and Ehrlich (2012) claimed that the loss of biodiversity and toxification of the planet are as dangerous as the changing of climate. Plainly, these problems require attention from various sectors of the society including literary scholars. Anent to it, it is observed that ecology and environmental depredation/devastation have been portrayed as themes in Philippine literature in recent decades to answer the growing environmental problems (Arbilo, 2016).

“Environmentally oriented study of literature brings about an ecological literacy among the readers who in the process become eco-conscious, thereby taking good care of Mother Nature” (Mishra, 2016, p.168). Mishra, pointed out that to preserve and protect the environment, everyone must have ecological consciousness. Thus, understanding the human impact on nature is requisite in mitigating the global crisis. This understanding can also be gained from oral literatures, which encapsulate the traditional knowledge, beliefs and values about the environment and the nature of the society itself. That is, the oral literature of indigenous group may be used to describe the impact of human culture on nature because oral literatures are created from their experiences. These oral literatures are record of everyday experiences that may depict and describe the indigenous way of preserving and protecting the environment to lessen the impact of climate change.

Nature Preservation

The extensive misuse of natural resources has left us at the brink of ditch. The rainforests are cut down, the fossil fuel

is fast decreasing, the cycle of season is at disorder, ecological disaster is continually happening around the world and our environment is at the verge of total destruction (Mishra, 2016). These circumstances must lead people to realize that there is only one Earth that can support life. Preserving its nature is a way of keeping ourselves from destruction. Amidst all these circumstances, emerged an ecological perspective in reading literature aimed at changing the anthropocentric attitude of people in interacting with nature. This emergent ecological perspective is referred to as Ecocriticism.

Ecocriticisms

In the advent of preserving nature (ecocriticisms), the new theory in reading literatures, can be used in studying literatures of nature. This can help verify if eco-knowledge needed in achieving sustainable way of preserving nature are also found in oral literatures. “Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment” (Glotfelty, 1996 p. xviii). The study which emphasizes the relationship of human and non-human throughout the history of human culture is the broadest definition of the subject of ecocriticism (Garrard, 2012). It features not only the harmony of humanity and nature, but also talks about the destruction of the environment caused by people (Fenn, 2015, p.115).

Ecocriticism presents nature, not just as a text but an individual entity that played a great role as protagonist of the work. It is a combination of *eco* and *critic*, which are derived from Greek word *oikos* and *kritis*, and together they mean a “house judge.” An eco-critic is the person who judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view of celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action (Howart, 1996 p. 69). Barry (2009) further explained, that ecocriticism is a critical approach to the study of literature. The two existing eco-critic groups, from America and Britain,

are related in their approach and purpose although they differ in their focus. American ecological criticism, used the term Ecocriticism, which tends to be “celebratory” in tone, that is, it celebrates the beauty of nature. The British ecological criticism (green studies), which tends to be “minatory” in tone, seeks to warn us of environmental risks emanating from human unethical interactions with nature.

Indigenous Literatures (Eco-literatures)

Literatures about a certain group of indigenous people; which contained what they knew, where they came from and where they are going, are referred to as indigenous or oral literatures. These literatures are the indigenous peoples’ records of their day-to-day experiences, handed down from one generation to the next to instruct, and to remind the members of the tribe of their responsibilities.

In this study, celebratory and minatory ecocriticism are used to prove that oral literatures of the Manobo tribe that contained the traditional ecological knowledge needed to preserve and protect nature. It is assumed that preservation of nature and environment are part of a long-term relationship of ethnic groups to nature. The Manobo tribe, being one among the 110 ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2010), considered nature as part of their lives because it is their home, the creator of their lives, and the image of their culture and tradition. In fact, Nakashima, Prutt and Bridgewater (2000), said:

Human societies all across the globe have developed rich sets of experiences and explanations relating to the environments they live in. These “other knowledge systems” are today often referred to as traditional ecological knowledge or indigenous or local knowledge (p.11).

These traditional ecological knowledge, are equally important to the knowledge that one can get from books, from the classrooms, and even from the lectures of experts in environmental issues. Oral literatures, such as the oral literatures of the Manobo, being the record of their day-to-day living may have also recorded their ecological knowledge that can be used to mitigate environmental problems. However, these ecological knowledge in oral literatures of the Manobo, are at risk of being extinct if not recorded and bequeathed to the next generation.

It cannot be denied that most of the contemporary studies in literature in the past few decades are anthropocentric rather than ecocentric, that is, it centered on people rather than on nature. Nevertheless, few studies on literature using ecological perspective are found in the studies of Chua (n.d.) and Santos (2011), which focus on eco-poems. Larsson (2012), analysed how children edutainment books articulate and spread “eco-knowledge”, encouraging children to become environmentally aware world citizens. Apparently, literature on nature which was developed into movie was the focus of Mishra’s (2016). The review of related studies lead to recognize a dearth of studies using the lens of nature in oral literatures. The current research on oral literatures, therefore, is timely and appropriate in the advent of saving nature amidst global environmental problems.

As one of the major subjects of basic education, the study of literature will disseminate information that will probably help save nature. Using literatures in education has a great role in developing eco-literacy of the youth (Chua, n.d.). Chua added:

Using literature in educating students definitely cultivates hope in the crises of sustainability; it can also slowly cultivate a paradigm shift toward the

idea of 'ecocentrism' by inspiring young citizens to partake or discover trial-and-error solutions toward sustainability (p.6).

The study of eco-literatures will develop eco-literacy, where students, in the process of reading, gain ecological consciousness and appreciate the importance of Mother Nature (Mishra, 2016). It is in this end that to record and investigate the ecological knowledge found in the oral eco-literatures of the Manobo that are crucial to preserve nature is timely.

Purposes of the Research

The study aimed to describe how the Manobo tribe in Agusan del Sur interact with nature and to examine what ecological knowledge are found in their oral eco-literatures crucial to nature preservation.

Specifically, it aims to:

1. Gather and translate to Filipino the select Manobo, oral eco-literatures;
2. Describe how the Manobo tribe interact with nature;
3. Examine from the oral eco-literatures, the ecological knowledge it contained; and
4. Relate the events, in the oral eco-literatures, to the real happenings in the history of the province.

Methodology

The qualitative research design was used in the study where respondents are allowed to speak in their own language (McLeod, 2017). In this research, the informants were allowed to narrate and/or write the eco-literatures in Manobo and Cebuano languages.

The criterion-i sampling was used as purposive sampling strategy. This strategy assumes that the samples contain the characteristics, knowledge and experiences of the studied phenomenon (Palincas et al. 2013). In total, there were 20 informants who were *datus* from five municipalities in Agusan del Sur. A total of 30 oral eco-literatures were collected through the Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Six other oral-literatures were included from the study of Saranza, Bermiso, Canda and Quisil (2016).

A Free and Prior Information Consent (FPIC) was sought prior to the actual KII. The self-introduction and presentation of the objectives of the study formally commenced each scheduled KII and FGD. The rituals of *Manawag-tawag* and *Haekyadan* led by the *baylan* followed. After the rituals, the tribal chieftain of the municipality and the informants, signed a resolution permitting the researcher to gather the needed data. The interview proper was done with the help of three teacher-enumerators who helped interview and record the KII proceedings. The FGD was done after the KII. It is where more ideas about the ecological knowledge present in each oral literature as well as the kind of interaction between the tribe and nature are sought.

The proceedings of each KII and FGD, were transcribed and translated to Filipino and validated by five professional Manubos. The initial interpretation of the researcher of the validated literatures were subjected to another FGD participated by five Indigenous People Mandatory Representatives (IPMR's) from five Municipalities of Agusan del Sur. This activity was conducted to see to it that the interpretations of each oral literature, are in consonance with the Manobo culture.

The descriptive-analytic method was used in the analysis and interpretation of the Manobo oral literatures. Ecological

knowledge contained in the Manobo eco-literatures as well as the way they relate with nature were examined. From the identified events, emerged the different ecological knowledge and moral values through the culturally bound terms of the Manobo tribe as well as the cultural motifs or themes found in the eco-literatures.

Findings and Discussion

The Manobo tribe in Agusan del Sur

The word Manobo refers to the ethnic group, while Manubo refers to the person belonging to the Manobo tribe (Elkins, 1968). The Manobo has the largest population among the indigenous groups in the province of Agusan del Sur (Campos, 2014).

The Manobo Oral Literatures in Preserving Nature

The 36 literatures collected are classified into: eco-legend, eco-song, eco-story, eco-fable, and eco-poems. From 36 oral literatures, twenty (20) eco-literatures are found to have contained ecological knowledge crucial to preserve nature, which are mirrored in the way the tribe interact with nature, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Manobo oral eco-literatures on preserving and protecting nature.

Title of Manobo Oral Eco-literatures	Genre	Ways in interacting with nature which mirrored the Manobo eco-knowledge
Motong Falls	Eco-legend	Executing rituals as a sign of respect to nature
Toduw	Eco-legend	Appointing <i>dagpun</i> (forest guards) and <i>bagani</i> (tribal warrior)
Legend of Talacogon	Eco-legend	Appointing <i>dagpun</i> and <i>bagani</i>
Legend of Bunawan	Eco-legend	Limiting the use of gold only to barter with food
Sindoy	Eco-song	Using machetes, bows and spears in fishing

Here in the Mountain	Eco-song	Limiting the use of plants/tress only for building their shelter
Cold Forest	Eco-song	Celebrating nature by living in the forest
The King's Story	Eco-story	Using <i>bugjas</i> and fishing nets when fishing
Lake Panlabuhan	Eco-story	Using <i>bugjas</i> and fishing nets when fishing
Maria and Friends	Eco-story	Talking to nature through their rituals
The Nymph and the Raft	Eco-story	Executing rituals as a sign of respect to nature
The Woman Stump	Eco-story	Using their own indigenous skills in interacting with nature
Ikogan and Mandabon	Eco-story	Considering the preservation and protection of nature as their responsibility
The Forest of Liliputon	Eco-story	Using only <i>lit-ag</i> (traps), <i>bangkaw</i> (spears) and <i>singwag</i> (splinters) and by tagging along a <i>tumawan</i> (hunting dog) when hunting
Tanhuban	Eco-story	Appointing <i>dagpun</i> and <i>bagani</i> Executing rituals as a sign of respect to nature
The Story of Herbal Medicine	Eco-story	Using medicinal plants resources wisely
The Ancestors of the Butterflies	Eco-fable	Promoting a wise environmental protection plan
Daguan and Dahunayon	Eco-fable	Living at the heart of nature
Heritage Land	Eco-poem	Protecting their <i>yutang kabilin</i> (ancestral land)
Ing-ing Manatad	Eco-poem	Using only traps in hunting

The Eco-Legends of the Manobo tribe.

The Manobo eco-legends refer to the legends which settings/characters/plots reflect one or more elements of nature, such as: water, land, air, minerals and forest. The four (4) eco-legends collected, *commonly* emphasized nature in its setting and characters. It was found out that culturally bound terminologies and motifs of eco-legends are connected to different elements of nature such as water, land, minerals, and forests. It is also observed that the Manobo eco-literatures contained themes that can promote eco-knowledge or eco-literacy.

First of the themes that emerged in the eco-legends is the value of respect as reflected in the eco-legend **Motong Falls**.

In the legend, the couple who lived in the forest ridiculed the white tailless monkey and were punished by the *Tagbanwa*, owner and guardian of everything in nature. The lightning struck on them and they turned into rocks called *amotong* or huge people. The couple punished as a result of lack of respect for nature. This proved what Taylor (2011) called the prevailing anthropocentric view--that the natural environment and its wildlife are valued only as objects for human use or enjoyment, thus, human disrespect nature.

What happened to the couple was a punishment from *Tagbanwa* according to the beliefs of the Manobo tribe. Because of this belief, they do ritual before they fish, hunt, plant and do other activities. Performing a ritual is their indigenous way of preserving the environment because it is deemed by the Manobo tribe as respect to *Tagbanwa*. In doing so, they won't destruct the environment and can keep themselves from being punished.

Everyone has to accept that he/she has a role in protecting nature. This theme is clearly shown in the eco-legend **Toduw**. Toduw is described as great and strong Manobo *bagani* (warrior). Whoever wanted to conquer the ancestral land of the tribe, they all have to defeat Toduw first in order to succeed.

Similar to Toduw, the hero in another eco-legend didn't hesitate to accept his role to protect the ancestral land even if it means sacrificing his life. In the **Legend of Talacogon**, the spouses Tagakupan and Labnigan are living peacefully until some immigrants came to their place to grab their ancestral land. Unfortunately, Tagakupan was killed during his fight against the invaders. Labnigan committed suicide and buried in the place where she and Tagakupan lived. In her grave, a lot of cogon grass have grown. The people thought those were Tagakupan and Labnigan, who reminded them to take care of their place. Later, they called the place Talacogon by combining the syllables "Ta- from

Tagakupan”, “-La- from Labnigan” and cogon. This eco-legend teaches that acceptance of the responsibilities as protector of nature is a way of preserving nature.

Nature is the pride of Manobo tribe. It is symbolized by the rich mineral in the **Legend of Bunawan**. Since nature is their pride, they willingly accept their role as keepers of nature by protecting it with their lives. In the eco-legend, Eladio Bawan and Eladio Manguyod brothers use *buyawan* (gold) only to barter with food. For instance, a marble-sized *buyawan* is bartered for 500 sacks of the *yumbia* seeds (palm tree family) of the Muslim vendors. However, the Manguyod brothers didn't receive the *yumbia* seeds on the agreed time. Heavy flood washed the seeds away. As a result, they did not give the *buyawan* to the Muslim vendors. The Muslims got angry and attacked the Manguyod brothers but they didn't succeed because the Manguyod brothers defended their place to the best of their fighting skills. This event showed that human culture has an impact on nature, as emphasized by Garard (2012). Indeed, the way people relate to nature can do good or harm to nature.

This eco-legend showed how rich the place with gold. This is validated with the presence of mining corporations in the area. These mining corporations are likened to the Muslim vendors while the Eladio brothers are representations of the people of Agusan del Sur who joined the rally during the commemoration of Earth Day right before the office of Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB). This rally promoted protection and strived to prevent destruction of nature due to the region's large-scale mining (Catoto, 2014).

The Manobo indigenous way of interacting with nature are evident in their eco-legends. They preserved nature by conducting rituals as respect to nature; protect their land from land grabber whom they called *dagatnon*; and defended the

mineral sources from those who want to grab it. The three eco-legends are one in emphasizing the importance of protecting the environment, especially the natural resources, in their ancestral land from total destruction.

Not far from the events found in literatures, are the indiscriminate cutting of trees, *kaingin* system, the use of electricity, poison and dynamite in fishing, and illegal mining in the province. It is strongly opposed through The Agusan del Sur Environment Code of 2007, Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC), which through the NCIP Administrative Order No. 2, Series of 2002 became the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT). Laws and policies, limit the use of natural resources in the Manobo ancestral domain.

The Manobo Eco-songs.

Eco-songs are songs which described the place of people in nature. In the eco-songs of Manobo tribe, nature is being reflected in the setting and in the images in the song. It dealt with the potential environmental subject such as water resources, trees, and forests. Culturally-bound terms and motifs related to nature such as using fish spears, mountains, and forests and ways to preserve water resources are also noted in each eco-song.

The eco-song **Sindoy** described the simple lifestyle of the natives by fishing in the river, through what they called *pigpanlimas*, by using only machetes, bows and spears to get only the big fishes. These methods allow the small and young fishes to grow and reproduce more for future needs. Fish, in any body of water, also need to be conserved, be given time to grow and multiply. These themes that emerged from the Manobo eco-songs emphasized the importance of traditional fishing methods and the significance of preserving forest trees for clean and fresh air.

Preservation of trees is depicted in the eco-song **Here in the Mountain**. It tells that *hamindang* (a kind of wood) and *badjang* (a huge tuber) are materials the Manobo used for their shelter. Using plants just for building a shelter is the Manobo way to preserve nature.

Forest trees were the protagonists in the eco-song **Cold Forest**. In the eco-song, the freshness of air through the huge trees, provides comfortable life of those who lived in the forest. The beauty of the scenery is likened to the beauty of a woman which charms someone to take care of her even she's far away.

The love for nature is perceived from the way the Manobo interact with nature in the eco-songs. Taking good care of nature is likened to the relationship of a couple. It requires care for the trees to flourish and in return, will give clean and fresh air.

Overall, the eco-songs exhibits features of the ideal ecocritical text which celebrate nature by taking good care of the physical environment. It is not clear from the eco-songs, however, how the love of nature brought up as a way to berate nature's dispoilers, and how to reverse the harm people brought to nature, as emphasized by Howart (1996) in his definition of ecocriticism.

Concommittant to Manobo's love for nature as reflected in the eco-songs, is an action for environmental issues called "2015 Community-Based Forest Management National Greening Program (CBFM-NGP) Congress." In this congress, President Aquino said that the government's NGP has planted 766 million seedlings on 1.2 million hectares of land (Venzon, 2015). It is hoped that millions of hectares of land that have been planted with trees will absorb 30 million tons of carbon per year. It is of great help to slow down the threat of global

warming caused by climate change. Furthermore, the church reminds the people that part of the Lord's good discipleship is the preservation and protection of the natural resources God had provided to humanity (Patinio, 2017). The eco-songs has proven that the Manobo tribe can also be called "good disciples" who preserve and protect the natural resources God had given to humanity. The Manobo considered the Magdiwata Mountain Ranges as sacred. They believed that they will be punished by *Higanteng* (Giant) *Magdiwata* when they would not protect the mountain. This is why, in their customary way of interacting with nature, they always do rituals as symbol of respect to *Tagbanwa*.

The Eco-stories in Preserving and Protecting Nature.

Eco-stories tell the ways the Manobo preserve and protect nature. Elements of nature are emphasized in its settings, such as the different bodies of water, while the forests are its potential environmental topics. There are some, that emphasize nature not just in its setting but a combination of two or more parts of the text.

In the eco-literature **The King's Story**, the princess is not allowed to mingle with the people in the kingdom. But to the king's dismay, his princess got pregnant by an ordinary man, a maker of *bugjas* (catfish trap). In rage, he drove his daughter and grandchild with the *bugjas* maker, but good fortune came to the new couple when they found lots of gold around the spring where they bathe. They became wealthy and got the chance to reunite with the king, who at that time was already old and sick.

The theme of the eco-story **Lake of Panlabuhan** is almost identical with that of **The King's Story**. In the story, beside lake Panlabuhan, lived Tay Pidong and his family. He only used his *bugjas* and fishing nets in fishing.

Once, there was a *dagatnon* (person who crossed the sea) who fished at the Lake of Panlabuhan. He used dynamite, electricity and poison so that he could catch more fish. But not long after he started fishing, he saw a ball of fire flying after him. Hastily, he jumped from the boat and drowned. Since then, no one ever dared to fish in the lake using poison, electricity and dynamite again.

The setting helps the development of the eco-story. The body of water, such as the spring, the marshland in **The King's Story** and the lake in **Lake Panlabuhan**, symbolized the simple lifestyle of the people in the kingdom. They only used *bugjas* in catching fishes through which they are able to preserve nature. This traditional way of fishing is one of the Manobo eco-knowledge crucial to preserve nature.

The relationship of humanity and nature in Manobo eco-story **Maria and Her Friends** is marvelous. In the story, the young Maria was already orphaned but she has friends: woodpecker, deer, and Buhi, the daughter of Busyangaw. The woodpecker and the deer had saved Maria from being slaughtered by Busyangaw. They were Maria's saviors. In reality, animals are deemed saviors as they helped human in many ways. Their presence also indicates that there is still hope to have ecological balance.

The story teaches, that it is impossible for people to live without nature, so people must take care of it. Talking to nature, through the rituals of Manobo tribe, is their indigenous way to preserve the environment. Manobo rituals signify close relationship between the people and nature.

The close relationship between nature and humanity is also shown in the eco-story, **The Nymph and the Raft**. In the raft, a ritual called *sundo* was held to heal the people from an epidemic. The woman in the story has a nymph friend, who is

guarding the place. When an epidemic afflicted the people of the tribe, the nymph asked the woman to prepare stuff to be offered in the raft. The offerings were placed on the raft, and had it float along the current of the river. Whoever found the offerings on the raft should not take any of it or else he/she will get the diseases of those who gave the offerings.

Respect is the key word that the eco-story wants to teach in order to protect nature. When nature is taken cared of, it will grow and give people their needs. In the story, respect is shown through the ritual and by not taking the offerings in the raft where the *sundo* ritual was made. This is what the Manobo believed to drive away the spirit who brings diseases to the tribe.

Caring of nature is also the very essence of the eco-story, **The Woman Stump**. In the eco-story, Yahag (a carpenter), Kalimbang (a tailor) and Oto (a musician) travelled in the jungle. As they take turn in sleeping, they were able to give life to a stump using their skills. Yahag, the carpenter, carved the stump into a beautiful woman. Kalimbang, the tailor, sewed a dress for the woman stump. The songs of Oto, the musician, give life to the stump. Both of the men wanted to marry the woman stump, but she chose Oto who gave her life through his love songs. The resurrection of the stump into a beautiful woman, is symbolism of life that human can give to the once shattered nature.

The eco-story, **Ikogan and Mandabon**, is about the mythical characters, Ikogan and Mandabon. Mandabon is a giant whose necklace is a log. At the middle of it is a fire where he grilled the people before he eats them. Meanwhile, Ikogan was the protector of the tribe and guardian of the forest. He succeeded in driving Mandabon away from the forest by using his long sharp tail. This eco-story reminded us that preserving the environment is everyone's job.

In the eco-story, **The Forest of Liliputon**, the native hunters only used *lit-ag* (traps) and *singwag* (splinters) to catch wild animals. The hunters also tagged along a *tumawan* (a hunting dog) specially to hunt wild boars. One day, a non-Manobo hunter died after he used his shotgun in hunting at Liliputon. Since then, no one dared again to hunt at Liliputon using firearms.

The story of **Tanhuban** discussed the importance of protecting nature. In the story, *Magbabaja* (the Almighty) asked Tanhuban to protect the forest. On the waterfall near the *bogni* tree where Tanhuban lived, was a woman who eventually died because of flash flood. Tanhuban revived the woman and she lived with him in the woods. The story ends with Tanhuban stating his mission as *Magbabaja's* messenger to tell everyone that he is the caretaker and defender of the forest.

The Story of Herbal Medicine is focused on the medicinal plants found in the forest of Manobo ancestral domain. In the story, the old man had an *abyan* (guide spirit), that only him can communicate. One day, his *abyan* told him to grab a small leaf from another spirit through a fight. Fortunately, the old man won and got the small leaf that he needed to cure the epidemic in his tribe. Through that leaf, he found the plant in the forest, got enough of the plants and distributed it to the whole tribe.

The eco-stories gathered in this research are centered on the preservation of nature, particularly the forests and everything in it. It has been observed that eco-stories contained different traditional eco-knowledge the Manobo tribe have in preserving nature. They use only the *bugjas* and fishing nets when fishing. They communicate with the keepers of the animals and plants in the forest and *abyan* through rituals. They use their talents and skills in reviving nature. They accept the responsibility to protect the environment. They use only *lit-ag*, *bangkaw* (spears)

and *singwag* as well as *tumawan* dog in hunting. They have people assigned as *dagpun* (forest keepers) and they educate people about nature. The Manobo use the natural sources of medicinal herbs fairly. The eco-knowledge of the tribe, found in their eco-literatures, clearly explains how the Manobo people interact with nature.

The way they interact with nature are in consonance with what the government institution is doing to restore nature. In the webpage of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Agusan del Sur, it can be read that efforts are being made to restore the denuded forest of the province through reforestation projects. The province joined the National Greening program in consonance of Executive order # 26 of 2011. This environmental project led by Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) has a theme: There is Future and Development in Planting Trees.

The content of the Manila Bulletin by Ruiz (2017) also talked about the preservation of nature which are also noted in the Manobo eco-stories. It said that the province of Agusan del Sur is eyed to be the pilot province in the country's Tree Planting Project. Sec. Emmanuel Piñol told Manila Bulletin:

“We have to encourage farmers to plant more trees. I believe that through this program we will not only protect watershed areas but we will provide farmers source of income,” (par. 6).

Forming the *Konsehu tu Maniga-on* (Council of Elders), who are anticipated to take the lead in preserving the area assigned to them, is mirrored in Manobo eco-stories. The responsibilities of the *Konsehu tu Maniga-on* are likened to the responsibilities of Ikogan, Tanhuban, Tagbanwa, and the old man with an *abyan*. They played as the keepers of the

forests of the Manobo ancestral domain. In the history of the province, they are the environmental advocates advocating the preservation and protection of environment for the welfare of the natives. Their arms are the IPRA Law of 1997, the NCIP Administrative Order # 2 s. 2002, and The Agusan del Sur Environmental Code of 2007. The implementation of the CADC and CADT is a specific program to protect the environment by preventing the concessioners from destroying the forests land through indiscriminate timber cutting.

The Eco-fables in Preserving and Protecting Nature.

Fables which reflect the relationship of human culture and nature are referred to as eco-fables. Just like the ordinary fable, the characters of eco-fables are animals. In the eco-fable, **The Ancestors of the Butterflies**, the monkey and the butterfly are warring over a ripe banana. The monkey challenged the tribe of butterfly for a fight under the *balite* (banian) tree. The butterflies won the fight. The monkeys killed their peers in their quest to kill the butterflies alighting in the forehead of another monkey.

This eco-fable reminds the people to protect rather than to abuse the environment. Everything in nature is necessary to achieve ecological balance. There are strong and agile as monkeys, there are also weak as the butterflies, but the presence of each one is needed for ecological balance.

The eco-fable, **Daguan and Dahunayon** is about the couple crocodile, Daguan and Dahunayon, who lived in Agusan Marsh. Dahunayon was pregnant and wanted to give birth at the sea, so the couple travelled to the sea. On their way to the sea, they came across Namolinas, a huge marine crocodile who wanted to go to Agusan Marsh. He was huge that Daguan and Dahunayon can't pass. Daguan asked Namolinas to allow them to pass but Namolinas did not listen to Daguan and so they

fought. The fable had ended with Namolinas returned to the sea while Dagan and Dahunayon stayed in Agusan Marsh.

Dagan and Dahunayon, symbolized the Manobo people who are ready to fight for the preservation of their home, Agusan Marsh. Agusan Marsh is the source of the living of all the natives residing in and around the marshland. In the eco-fables, nature is preserved and protected by: (1) promoting a wise environmental protection plan; and (2) fighting for the right to a dwelling just like Dagan and Dahunayon.

In general, the eco-fables of the Manobo adhere to some of Glotfelty's assumptions on ecocriticism that imply the interdependence of nature and humanity, integrated system as well as strong connections among constituent parts—culture and nature. Looking at the eco-literatures closely, it can be said that these fables had inspired the present generation to do something that can preserve nature. In the article from DILG website, titled "IP's, government, other stakeholders discuss enhanced protection of Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary" (Fabe, 2017), covers an Action Planning Workshop to assign lake guards to protect Agusan Marsh. In addition, forest protection, through the implementation of CADC and CADT in the province, proved that the events in the eco-fables are related to the actual endeavors in protecting and conserving nature to attain ecological balance.

The Eco-poems in Preserving and Protecting Nature.

The potential environmental topics were emphasized in the images and settings described in the poems referred to as eco-poems. It contained culturally bound terminologies and motifs that are related to land and hunting methods. Protecting ancestral lands and indigenous method of hunting are the themes of eco-poems.

The eco-poem, **Heritage Land**, indicates that people must give their heart and mind in protecting the ancestral land

of Manobo tribe. This concern may be equivalent to their lives given for the land, which they considered very important part of their lives.

On the other hand, the simple way of hunting is described in the eco-poem, **Ing-ing Manatad**. The poem describes the forest from where the tribe can get their food by hunting using only a *lit-ag*. It is pointed out that the hunters are not trying to catch a lot of wild animals by using improper means like guns. The two eco-poems show how the tribe interact with their environment. Further, it reminds everyone how important are the preservation and protection of the forest to the Manobo tribe.

From the eco-poems, some of the eco-knowledge the Manobo used to preserve and protect nature were noted, like: (1) fighting for the right to their ancestral lands; and (2) using only a *lit-ag* in hunting. It is a good step, therefore, to address the environmental issue through the creation of laws for the environmental protection such as provisions found in IPRA Law of 1997, NCIP Administrative Order # 2, s. 2002, The Agusan del Sur Environmental Code of 2007, are expected to strengthen the protection and preservation of the environment which are the challenges posed by Manobo eco-literatures.

Conclusion

The study described how the Manobo tribe in Agusan del Sur interact with nature. It also examined what ecological knowledge are found in their oral eco-literatures crucial to nature preservation. As mentioned, it was found out that there is an inadequacy of studies using the lens of nature in oral literatures. The findings of the current research are essentially extending the application of ecocriticism from written literatures to oral literatures.

In the light of the data gathered, it can be concluded that the traditional way of the Manobo in interacting with nature suggested that the tribe value respect of nature, ethical manner of dealing with nature, and their responsibility of being the eco-citizens or keepers of nature. This relationship between the Manobo tribe and nature, that emerged in their eco-literatures, has demonstrated what Garard (2012) have said about eco-criticism. Garard argued that eco-criticism is study of the relationship of human and non-human throughout the history of human culture. In their eco-literatures, etched how close they are to nature, which to them is their world. Their world made them a total person, who valued nature as they valued their lives.

It was also found out that the Manobo eco-literatures contained eco-knowledge of the tribe that are worth emulating. Their eco-knowledge further described the rich culture of the tribe in relation to nature. The most prominent eco-knowledge are the rituals that they do before they start hunting, fishing, and farming. These rituals are the hallmark of their respect to nature. Underpinning this respect is their fear of punishment from *Magbabaja*, their Great God and even from *Tagbanwa*. Their fear of punishment keeps them from abusing nature. This circumstances found in Manobo eco-literatures gave emphasis, not only to the harmony of humanity and nature, but also talked about the destruction of the environment caused by people as Fenn (2015, p.115) had presented.

Using the traditional way of hunting, fishing, and farming as well as their close relationship with nature made the Manobo tribe truly an eco-informed or eco-literate citizen. The ethical practice of the tribe, as shown in their eco-literatures, have found connections to the actual circumstances in the history of the province in celebrating nature. Environmental programs, laws and other legal provisions had been implemented in the province to mitigate environmental crisis.

Government institutions had strived to create programs to achieve sustainable nature preservation. This result, concretized what Howart (1996) said, that with a view of celebrating nature, an eco-critic, berate nature despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action. Therefore, the awareness of environmental issues through the study of Manobo oral literatures in preserving and protecting nature, can contribute to the solution in solving the pressing environmental problems facing the Agusanons, the Filipinos and the world.

Recommendations

This study had just focused on the Manobo oral literatures. Its major limitation lies on the limited number of literatures gathered in the study and its being focused only to oral literature and one tribe. It is in this premise that documentation and analysis of eco-literatures , oral and written, of another tribes in Caraga Region are recommended.

The researcher had identified some issues need to be explored in the furture researches. One, on development and validation of MTBL materials using the collected eco-literatures of the Manobo tribe. Two, on documentation and analysis of the oral and written literatures of other indigenou tribe as it can address the dearth of materials from the locality. And three, on the analysis of the collected and documented Manobo literatures to find out if reconstruction of the once shattered environment are also captured in both oral and written literatures of the Manobo tribe. The same can be done with the oral and written eco-literatures of other existing tribe in Agusan del Sur and other places in Caraga Region.

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Appendix A

Sample Translated Manobo Eco-Legends

MOTONG FALLS

BUSAY TU MOTONG (Manobo)

Diya tu lugar nu pighingadan dan tu Mangbagungon meyduon kun magtiadun nu namang ugpa.

Sungu aeduw kun, tu sikan miglalaba kun tu diya asawa diya tu wuhig daw apas diya bana nu migdaya tu paniudto para tu asawa din. Pagyaboy kun tu diya bana dani tu yumbyahan, nakakita kunma kandin tu amo nu maputi nu tampud kun tu ikog. Migngisi kun kandin duw tawaga tu diya asawa din duw ilingi tu diya nakitaan din “ahaa da.”, namang ngingisi daw kandan daduwa nu hilabi nu dedijag. Wada kandan kataga diya amo nu pigngingisihan dan meyduon naan tag-iya nu kunan angud ita. Pigpangkilatan sikan dan daduwa dow kangkahinang nu mgu bato. Bato nu mig asyag nu angod tu mgu amotong nu migyupon diya tu wuhig nu piglabahan tu diya asawa.

Sugod tu diya hingadan un tu diya nu lugar nu wuhig tu mgo amotong nayugoy “Motong”.

TALON NG MOTONG (Filipino)

Sa lugar na kung tawagin ay Mangbagungon mayroong mag-asawang nakatira.

Isang araw, habang ang asawa ay naglalaba sa may ilog, nagdala ang kanyang bana ng kanilang pananghalian. Nang madaan siya sa may yumbyahan (maraming lumbya) ay may nakita siyang isang puting unggoy na putol ang buntot. Natawa raw siya roon at tinawag ang kanyang asawa at sinabing “Tingnan mo!”, nagtawanan silang dalawa nang sobra. Di nila alam na ang unggoy na kanilang pinagtatawanan ay pagmamay-ari pala ng di-kagaya natin. Kumidlat at tinamaan silang dalawa at naging mga bato. Bato na kasing laki ng mga amotong (malalaking tao) na namagitan sa dulo ng ilog na pinaglabhan ng asawa.

Mula noon ay tinawag ang lugar na iyon ng ilog na Talon ng mga amotong. Nang tumagal, ito ay naging Motong.

TODUW

TODUW (Manobo)

Dogihon nu utuw, madusan, mabuyot, maisug duw utuw nu matinabangon tu isig ka utuw din sikan si Toduw. Kiyaya kandin diya to La Paz no tagabantoy tu lugar dan batok tu mgu utuw nu gusto ug puduton tu mgu pasak dan.

Sungu panahun tu sikan meydoon kun mgu utuw likat diya tu Divavow (kunan kiyaya poon tu Divavow) nu gusto ug pakigbuyow ki Toduw agon tug kapildi dan kun kandin, agon kandan un kan tug panag-iya tu La Paz (na buot ipasabot kalinaw). Pagkataga ni Toduw bahin tu diya pigplanu tu diya mgo utuw migsakuy dadun tu gakit din nu mey kayuw-ag ka angud tu Adgawan aw bangani diya mgo utuw pandaeg pad tu La Paz. Pigpanapos din kun diya mgu utuw tu tungon din nu mae kahaba tu niyog duw nadaug din dadun. Sugod tu diya, wada un gadud mgu utuw nu ug planu nu ug pamang-aguw tu diya pasak nu ongki Toduw.

TODUW (Filipino)

Malaking tao, malakas, at matapang. Isang taong matulungin sa kapwa. Siya si Toduw. Kilala sa La Paz na tagapagtanggol ng kanilang lugar laban sa mga taong gustong agawin ang kanilang lupain.

Isang araw, may mga tao na mula sa Divavow (di kilalang tao mula sa Davao) na nanghamon na makipagtunggali kay Toduw para kapag siya ay natalo, makukuha na nila ang La Paz (na nangangahulugang kapayapaan). Nang malaman ni Toduw ang mga pinaplano ng mga taong iyon, nagmadali siyang sumakay ng kanyang balsa (gakit o raft) na kasing lapad ng ilog ng Adgawan at hinarang ang mga taong iyon na papunta pa lamang sa La Paz. Pinaghahampas niya ang mga taong iyon gamit ang kanyang tungkod na kasing taas ng puno ng niyog at natalo niya ang mga ito. Mula noon wala na talagang mga tao na nagbalak agawin ang lupain nina Toduw.