

# Tinuy-an, The Hidden Treasure and other literary forms in barangay Burboanan

**LILIFREDA P. ALMAZAN**

<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6341-4591>  
lilifreda.almazan@deped.gov.ph  
Bislig City Division  
Bislig City, Philippines

**TERESA MAY A. MUNDIZ**

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0614-5193>  
teresamaym@gmail.com  
Stand Alone Senior High School  
Cumawas, Bislig City, Philippines

**EDWIN C. SALAZAR**

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7720-4891>  
edwinsalazar.dwen@gmail.com  
BCNHS – Coletto Annex  
Coletto, Bislig City, Philippines

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the different literary forms present in Burboanan, Bislig City, where the indigenous tribe, Mandaya Kamayo, is still thriving and practicing their culture and more alongside the new one. It aimed to anthologize literary traditions found in their locality like the indigenous songs, myths, and rituals. Purposive sampling was used involving key informants such as the Mandaya leaders. A triangulation was done with a focused group discussion with

the Ancestral Domain Council elders, and documentation of demonstrations on the indigenous ways of life for these people. The study found out that oral tradition is still a dominant practice in the literary scene in Burboanan. The tribe has myth on the origin of the name *Tinuy-an*; a collection of songs, or *bagi*; and rituals are done for their *anito* in order to ask for abundant harvests and heal sick relatives. With this information, a contextualized resource material has been developed for social science classes. The study concludes that nature played a big part in the lives of indigenous people of Burboanan, Bislig City as reflected in their literary tradition. The Mandaya Kamayo living in the area depended on nature for their sustenance, and that the belief of living harmoniously together with unseen beings is still evident.

**Keywords** — literature, documentation analysis, Bislig City, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Human societies have long since thrived even before their discovery and colonization. They have developed and enriched their experiences relative to their coexistence in the environment they live in. These experiences are referred to as the tradition or indigenous or local knowledge which includes “sophisticated arrays of information, understandings and interpretations that guide human societies” (Fien, 2010; Nakashima, Prott, & Bridgewater, 2000). This knowledge is passed down from generations through word of mouth or even cultural rituals and activities.

UNESCO’s Teacher Education Programme highlights local or indigenous knowledge as crucial for the sustainability of human societies. Fien (2010) writes about the inclusion of indigenous knowledge into mainstream education, thus bringing “the benefits of helping to ‘sustain’ indigenous knowledge and societies to all.” Moreover, there is a need for all teachers and students to “respect for local culture, its wisdom and its ethics, and provides ways of teaching and learning locally relevant knowledge and skills” since understanding lies in one’s particular culture (Fien, 2010; Fernandez, 2002). Clifford espoused that ethnographers on field find themselves writing about languages, community practices, local traditions, and all others of cultural value for the community being studied on, not just about literature (as cited in Alsop, 2005).

As embedded in the 1987 Philippine Constitution Article XIV section 14 that “the state shall foster the preservation, enrichment, and dynamic evolution

of a Filipino national culture based on the principle of unity in diversity in a climate of free artistic and intellectual expression.” In addition, section 5 of the same article stipulates that “the State shall take into account regional and sectoral needs and conditions and shall encourage local planning in the development of educational policies and programs” (CDAAsia, 1987). Studying culture, then, is not just in teaching subject, but also, understanding power (Fernandez, 2002). Since the state dictates it, a Filipino education entails on the inclusion of culture: the language, climate, and even literature.

As a typical human activity involving language, literature is a written record, from the Latin term *littera*, meaning letters, and reflection on the everyday lives of people (Klarer, 2013; Patron, 2002). Patron (2002) presupposed that literature is a collection of compositions that deal with life experiences—telling stories, dramatizing situations, expressing emotions, analyzing and advocating ideas. But mostly, though reading literature, goals are identified, values and one’s identities are shaped, with the knowledge and acceptance of what is admirable and sinister in humans. Similarly, this points to the teaching of literature as a way of rediscovering and re-evaluating the traditions of Filipinos as Filipinos. And to some degree, Klarer (2013) shared that “literary production is certainly the human wish to leave behind a trace of oneself through creative expression, which will exist detached from the individual and, therefore, outlasts its creator.” What remains, then, is the reflection of what used to exist, yet, made legitimate and negotiated in the context of one’s culture.

The birth of literary tradition is known to come from stories passed orally. This has been known to be the oral tradition of literature which Beowulf has come to be passed down from cultures and generations across time. Oral narratives from various cultures have been widely documented by researchers and ethnographers, alike, citing folklores as means of communication and interaction (Gabbert, 2010). As civilization prospered, early people immortalized their identity through literature and expressed it through recitation and singing; and these were retained only as long as people performed these oral act handed down from generations, contributing to their literary tradition (Patron, 2012). These are mostly poems spoken and shared orally, then eventually documented for posterity, much like *Oral Literature in Africa* (Finnegan, 2017). This is an example of a compilation of oral literature which has been handed down from one generation to the other.

In the Philippines, oral literary tradition has also marked every region of the country. Mapping out these literary pieces from the region have always involved

ethnographic works. As Abad (1993) puts it, a 'native clearing' shall be done by Filipino writers for them to create a mark in the Philippine Literary Tradition. On the other hand, Enriquez (2006) qualified that much of ancient Philippine literature was in oral tradition. This consisted of folk narratives, riddles, proverbs, sayings, songs, ritual chants, and epics. These were definitely community bound and served its needs, from the transmission of beliefs, values, ideals, customs, and mores, to entertainment. Many of these expressions still survive at present, having handed down orally through generations. Every ethnic group has its own rich literary heritage. It has specially been well preserved among groups and untouched by Western influence. Baltazar, Erestandin, and Estanislao (1981) shared that even before the Spaniards arrived in the country, early Filipinos already had a culture of their own, including the oral literary forms. Much like the Mandaya Kamayo of Burboanan, the same oral literary tradition has been handed down to the younger generation, in spite of the presence of formal education from among them.

Burboanan, Bislig City is one of the 24 barangays in this locality where indigenous culture and way of life is still practiced. The Mandaya and the Manobo tribes are known to co-exist in the scenic Tinuy-an Falls. However, this present study focused on the Mandaya tribe as the researchers have already had prior interaction with the community and as with one of the researchers' distant kin.

With contextualization and localization in the curriculum, there is a necessity to start documenting local stories and traditions surrounding Bislig City. As Fernandez (2002) put it, Philippine culture proves to be a powerful teaching tool. She emphasized that even in teaching, culture plays a crucial role in the transferring of information to the learners. And to best teach the young, the Philippine culture should also live in the classroom. In fact, there are efforts to document local stories started especially by the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Bislig, but these sources are yet to be published; others require credibility, hence, deemed unsubstantial for research. Much of the local knowledge about the different barangays focuses on tourism and the promotion of the city's tourism industry. However, for literary studies and traditions, Bislig still has to document its own. In this culture where everything is shared digitally, collection and documentation of these literary forms are a necessity.

In the classroom setting, human society, history, experience, and culture still prove to be the basic material in classroom teaching (Fernandez, 2002; Lopez, 2006). Written history and culture of the barangays in Bislig including Barangay Burboanan, hence, is essential in the teaching of Araling Panlipunan.

Yet, no learning and teaching resource is available for use which contextualizes and localizes the contents of the lessons.

Thus, the present study finds its audience from among the teachers, particularly, teachers of Araling Panlipunan and Literature as they bridge the past into the current classrooms. Through the key informants of the Mandaya Kamayo, this study recorded the literary tradition as reflected in their songs, rituals, myths, dances, and poems. This also established the themes common from the literary traditions of the Mandaya Kamayo. A compilation and documentation of these proceedings form part of this research as the resource material developed for the subject area in Araling Panlipunan.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This research is qualitative in nature. This study made use of purposive sampling. Creswell (2012) indicated that purposeful sampling is done by purposefully selecting individuals to understand the inquiry at hand. The informants were chosen because they could provide rich information. The key informants were the tribal leaders of the community known as chieftain and the elders of the tribe. The interview was on the scheduled period allotted.

### Research Site

The research locale of the study is barangay Burboanan, one of the 24 barangays that composed the city of Bislig. Burboanan, Bislig City is famous for being the location of Tinuy-an Falls also known as the “Niagara Falls of the Philippines” because of its multi-tiered falls and wide water curtain.

On a broader note, Bislig City is located around 900 kilometers from the capital Manila in the province of Surigao del Sur, Mindanao, Philippines. Bislig is approximately 208 kilometers northeast of Davao City, 152 kilometers south of Tandag (the provincial capital) and 158 southeast of Butuan City.



### **Participants**

The participants of this study were the Mandaya Kamayo elders of barangay Burboanan, Bislig City. Mandaya Kamayo is one of the tribes that originally inhabited the locality.

The researchers used a purposive sampling technique which the identified Mandaya Kamayo elders were intentionally picked just for the purpose of the study. 15 Mandaya Kamayo elders were interviewed during the whole duration of the conduct of the study.

### **Data Collection**

Field notes and interviews were done to collect data from key informants in Burboanan, Bislig City. Video documentation was also used to supplement the data collection. The data collected was then sorted/analyzed according to its genre.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study primarily aimed to collect different literary forms in Brgy. Burboanan, Bislig City, specifically among the Mandaya Kamayo tribe of the

locality. The key informants and the focused group discussions revealed the unpublished literary forms. Consequently, the present study classified the themes common in literary forms. And finally, a compilation, or an anthology, of these works was designed as an instructional or material for the Bislig City Division.

As an ethnic or indigenous tribal community, the Mandaya Kamayo in Burboanan, Bislig City has a reported population of 837 as per barangay census on August 2018. The community follows a tribal chieftain leadership who is chosen through bloodline as a right or title descendible by law at the ancestor's death. But the recent demise of Luis M. Iligan, Datu Gacub, entrusts the community to the wisdom of the tribe elders.

On August 4 and 19, 2018, a focused group discussion put into open the literary forms as practiced by the community. These literary forms were then grouped according to genres and the same here analyzed/documentated.

**Ritual.** Victoriano Sumaganday Mandabon, (herein then referred to as Tatay Victoriano) 79 years old, a Mandaya tribe elder, demonstrated a ritual known to the local as “*taphag*” that they used to practice before. The ritual made use of food offerings like braised native chicken, and rice, hard-boiled eggs and sweet candies. The researchers brought in White Rabbit and Kendi Mint as sweet candies during the ritual. There was no restriction as to what kind of sweet candy was offered; however, during the early days, the food offering specified by the elders, shamans, or even the anointed ones to conduct the ritual were identified according to the needs of the spirits, or *anitos* (Lumbera, 1976).

This non-restriction for food offerings for ritual implies how the community has become open and accepting of the changes in its larger environment. The constant interaction of the Mandaya Kamayo community to the people in the lowlands, or even those from the local government of Bislig City through the leaders reveal that in spite of their seclusion from the urban area, the need to commune with these ethnic group and account their contribution to the history and progress of Bislig brings in another culture different from those practiced by the tribes' men. As Fernandez (2002) explained, one's culture is the only way to understand another's. Thus, the efforts from the City Tourism Office of Bislig greatly indicates that to understand the Kamayo is to understand its ethnicity - and that includes the Mandaya.

Education also introduces change to the community that alongside the tribal culture, the influence of formal education from the nearby schools opens the community. Therefore, it is hardly a surprise that what used to be a strict practice of ritual to commune with the spirits, the offerings required from such ritual

also have to bargain itself from what is locally available. As to the researchers, the sweet candies completed the offerings for that day.

Moreover, other offerings included were cigarettes, kamanyan, an *apog*, or lime, or *buyo* (made from fresh water shell known to the locals as “*tuway*” that is crushed until it became powder), rhum (preferably Mallorca) and firewood. It is important to note that all of these offerings have no salt as an ingredient for the tribe elders believe those deities and other supernatural beings (locally known as *engkanto*) do not like salt.

At the start of the ritual, Tatay Victoriano lit the firewood and mixed it with kamanyan, to excite smoke. “*Ining abuwu na arun kamanyan amu ini ang ag awungun niran pagmaka bahu siran sini* (This smoke with apog will make the deities come to us, once they smell it, to hear our pleadings),” recalled Tatay Victoriano. If kamanyan is not available, the indigenous people use sawong that comes from the bayawak tree. Sawong is the local name for sap, the sticky fluid part of a plant. He then proceeded to call *Cristobal* (an ascetic which they believed living in the upriver of Tinuy-an who turned into a rock), *Cipriano* (a prince deity whom they believed as a huge snake with a crown on its head) and several other ancestors (dead relatives) to come and hear his pleading. “*Para madayaw ang mga masakitun, kinahanglan manawag-tawag sa mga taghuya ug mga espiritu ng mga kahinuudan na yamanaw da sa laing kalibutan, ug tradisyun na sa mga hinuud na manawag-tawag*” (For the sick to be healed, a ritual or taphag is done. The ritual is also a customary tradition of the natives), said Leo Gallo Iligan, one of the elders.

He (Tatay Victoriano) then offered food to them and ask for their blessings for a bountiful harvest, seek permission to hunt for wild animals and heal their ill relatives.

The practice of rituals dates back to the pre-colonial inhabitants of the country (Godinez - Ortega, (nd); Lumbea, 2000). It affirms to the ties with the other Southeast Asian countries as reflected in the dances mimicking that of animals, or nature processes. During the conduct of the research, the same was shown by the tribal elders, expressing the long tradition of rituals, not just simply as an ‘obligation to the gods’, but more so on the affirmation of one’s identity and culture.

The community’s ritual also experiences modernization. For example, the inavailability of *sawong*, which the indigenous people often use is replaced by *kamanyan* commonly found in the market. Moreover, their ritual is not characterized by dance movement, unlike the ones from the Manobo. The elder

or anyone who would perform a ritual will only call on their deities or dead ancestors in *panawag-tawag*.

**Myth.** Tinuy-an falls and its surrounding tiered waters played an important role for early inhabitants in Burboanan. It is where the community gets most of its food like hunting for wild boars and fishes. A widely acknowledged legend regarding how Tinuy-an got its name has been circulating among the locals. According to the legend, as narrated by Tatay Victoriano, an early inhabitant of the area fooled a group of moros (synonymously referred as bandits) to ride a raft that eventually fall from the falls that led to their demise. The name Tinuy-an came from the local name “*tinuyuan*,” meaning there is an intent to do it, referring to the native who intentionally lured the moros to ride a raft and fall so that they could be free from them. In the legend, the locality was terrorized continuously by bandits. That is why, when they rode a raft along the river of Tinuy-an Falls, they were told by one local that the river would lead them to the community. However, they were just tricked and that they eventually fell from the falls.

Likewise, the name Burboanan (name of the barangay) was derived from the local word “*Bubuanan*,” meaning a place poured with grace. According to Alfredo Manlino Domogoy also known as “*Datu Tinuy-an*,” the tribal chieftain of the Manobo tribe, “*ang Burboanan grasyusu ang lupa. Magtanum ng humay, manda digmi-un ug tadtadun ang sagbut tas patuyuk-tuyukan ng kabaw, tas pagkalata, ag rabkan ng similya tas balikan da haw ting-ani ra*” (The soil of Burboanan is much fertile. If the natives plant rice, they will only crush the weeds using carabao. After that, they will throw seedlings in the area and returned during the harvest season).

Myth, as an oral literary tradition, has been one of the forms of literature for the indigenous people, much like the Mandaya Kamayo. The myth is a “strong source which complements the magical nature of poetry and adds flavor to its mystifying flair” (Castrillo, 2005). The myth around Tinuy-an could add to the mystery to its already majestic stature; the story of the moros further intensified its grandiose and the relevance of local historians as keepers of the culture. The Mandaya elder may have only known the story as passed down from the generation of elders, but, the credibility and consistency of how the story unfolds remain unchanged. Legends and myths constitute what mainly describes as folklore.

**Song.** A collection of local song, “*bagi*” is famous among the early inhabitants of the area. According to the Mandaya elders, the *bagi* was part of the

locals' daily life and tackled almost every aspect of life like courtship, food, jokes, greetings, birthdays and similar activities. A *bagi* is a song of just a few lines that rhyme at the end of every sentence. Instead of delivering it in a form of narration or poem, the locals convey it in a form of a song. *Bagi* is commonly sung by two people as if they were talking, responding to the other's song. For Father Nestor Climaco (personal communication), who has studied the culture of Mandaya, *bagi* literally means "tubag-tubag," hence, there is an expected response from a line.

A sample *bagi* of the natives for courtship is written below. Translation is provided by the researchers.

*Ay Inday ang gugma ku kanmu* Oh lady my love for you  
*Daw sama sa batu na pinasigu* Like a stone that perfectly fits into  
*Tangtangun diri matantang* You can't remove it my lady  
*Kang Hesukristu pinahimutang* 'Cause it came from Jesus Almighty

Response:

*Ay magbayad Duduy* Oh my man I'm sorry  
*Ang kanmu gugma na ipasiantug* The love that you convey  
*Puro hambug* Is nothing but heresy

-Kagawad Leodegario Forones Bartolazo-

However, a similar poetic form for *bagi* is *balitaw* (Castrillo, 2005). *Balitaw* is also rendered in a song, as a verbal joust or exchange between two persons, not necessarily a man and a woman. Although the subject revolves around love and courtship, political themes and social commentaries are also embraced in the form. Arguments are versified and rendered in alternate modes to indicate an exchange of ideas.

**Other Practices.** There is a unique, indigent way to capture baboy ihalas or wild boar with the use of *batik*. *Batik* is a kind of trap made of tree branches. In the middle of it is a semi-like spear stick with a sharp pointed tip that would pierce into wild boar's body if it steps into it. Another way is the *sarungag*, a trap made of bamboos with pointed tips that were lined usually below an elevated or slope area. If the wild boar will fall or slide into it, the bamboo would pierce into its body. *Gabung* or hole was used to keep the wild boar away from camote

field. “*Butangan ng kahuy na gabuk da ang bangag. Gamit panguha ng baboy tas proteksyon sa tanum*” (The hole is covered by rotten slabs of trees), says Leodegario. If the animal will step into it, it will fall in the hole and cannot escape. It is interesting to note that in order for humans not to fall or step in the traps, a symbol, usually a form of an arrow is placed not far from the trap.

In catching fishes from the streams surrounding the waters of Tinuy-an, traps were also used. Traps named *bubu* and *takup* were commonly used. The natives will use *takup* if they are only planning to catch *kasili* (freshwater eel) while *bubu* can catch eel, *pait* (kind of freshwater fish) and different kinds of freshwater crabs called by the natives like *kimpi ug kuga* and a kind of freshwater shimp known as *urabang*. Another trap called *sanaw* is used to catch *haruan* (mudfish commonly found in freshwater). “*Pero ang waray himbis na isda diri makuha*” (However, fish without scales cannot be caught using *sanaw*), says Leodegario. The trap called *butuwu* “*pait lang ang makuha. Ang paan apa ng mais*” (can only catch *pait* using corn hay).

As the researchers continued to convene with the Mandaya Kamayo community, themes common in their oral literary tradition revealed that the lives and daily encounters prove to be a rich subject for these works.

A song/poem commonly for the purpose of courtship, and ritual asking for blessing and healing are among the themes of the Mandaya literary forms. Likewise, a myth regarding an ascetic who lived in the upriver of Tinuy-an was also present, whom the elders said was really true and that he really existed.

Love and courtship are also common themes even in other ethnic literary traditions (Godinez-Ortega, (nd); Lumbera, 1976; Castrillo, 2005). This is probable to happen as the Philippines still has thriving tribal communities, albeit the constant influence of western education, and commercial merchandizes. Moreover, like love and courtship, rituals and petitions for healing and blessing reflect the *paganistic* nature of man. Even before the arrival of Christianity, man has always believed in something and someone greater than himself. For the Mandaya Kamayo community, the spirits, or the *anitos*, are proofs of this belief.

Nature also plays a significant role in the composition of the songs, or *bagi*, myths, and in the observance of rituals. This characteristic goes back and supports a man's *paganistic nature*. The tribal elders act as mediators for the spirits and for man.

A compilation of all these oral forms - myth, *bagi*, and rituals and other practices - have been developed as a learning resource for the Araling Panlipunan subject. Yet, the Learning Resource Management System still has to conduct

quality assurance of the resource material as this compilation can also be used by all the other subjects with the introduction of contextualization and localization in the classroom teaching in Bislig City Division.

## CONCLUSIONS

Nature played a big part in the lives of the indigenous people, the Mandaya Kamayo of Burboanan, Bislig City as shown in their existing literary forms. Oral literary traditions such as rituals (taphag), songs (bagi), myth, and other indigenous practices are part of the everyday lives of these people, and they deserve to be known and documented. Love and courtship and healing of sick relatives were the usual themes present in the literature of the Mandaya Kamayo. However, a remarkable observation of these literary traditions is the inclusion and evolution of how people observe their indigenous practices. The offered objects and food for rituals and other practices have also been contextualized according to the resources available in the locality. Even so, whatever the changes in the community, nature still dictates the rituals and practices of the people.

## TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The results of this study may be translated into different media like reviews, prints, and even social media for information dissemination. More researches relating to the present study can also be developed to be used in classrooms, and similar venues. Finally, this study can be rendered through performance arts for the proliferation of the literature relative to this endeavor.

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