

AMBAHAN OF THE AKEANON BUKIDNON

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Abstract— This research was a preliminary study on the *ambahan* of the Akeanon Bukidnon in Dalagsaan, Libacao, Aklan. The *ambahan* of the *Akeanon Bukidnon* were collected and themes were extracted. Lesson exemplars were then produced. This was a qualitative study which used culturally resonant methodologies, specifically *pakikiisa* (oneness), a person-oriented approach with *panagtagpo* (convergence); *pagkaana* (presence); *pagpangotana* (asking questions); *pagpamati* (listening); *pakig-ambit* (life-sharing); *pagtugyan* (surrender); and, *pagdawat* (receiving). In the collection, description and interpretation of the *ambahan* on the reflective culture of the indigenous people of Dalagsaan, three *manog-amba* (oralists) were interviewed. The *manog-amba* performed the role of oral historian, culture bearer, preacher and entertainer. The *ambahan* was described as a poem, a language, song, poetic joust, entertainment, *pamaeaybay* (preaching) and value laden. Various themes significant to the lives of the Akeanon Bukidnon were identified: arranged marriage, advice, commitment, inheritance, faith, friendship, humility, love, peace and respect. This indigenous culture needs to be preserved to continue the rich legacy of the Akeanon Bukidnon.

Keywords— *ambahan, Akeanon Bukidnon, manog-amba*

INTRODUCTION

The *ambahan* is a chanted poetry of the Akeanon Bukidnon, most of whom live in the hinterlands, specifically in Barangay Dalagsaan in the municipality of Libacao, province of Aklan. The Akeanon Bukidnon have been recognized by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples as a distinct ethno-linguistic group, hence, they compose part of the indigenous peoples of the Philippines. Jocano (1968) called them Sulodnon and Magos (1995) declared them the Tumandok Bukidnon. Generally, they are called Panay Bukidnon by other researchers. In the past, people had the pejorative or degrading connotation of the term; it implied that people from the mountains were naive and backward. They are now acknowledged with a new sense of pride because they have retained a rich legacy of the cultural practices of our ancestors that have been forgotten by the lowlanders.

Magos (1995) described the upland people of Panay Island for their intangible cultural heritage in oral literature. These literatures are in poetry form and are handed down from one generation to another through singing or chanting as affirmed by Maatubang (2015). Pitogo (2012), in his study on the *ambahan* of the Hanunuo-Mangyan, described the *ambahan* as a poem, a song, a dialogue, done in social gatherings, and conveys lessons, insights, wisdom, and beliefs. It gives advices and expresses the faith and values of the tribe.

There is a similarity in the *ambahan* of the Akeanon Bukidnon and that of the Hanunuo-Mangyan. However, while the *ambahan* of the Mangyan tribes had been documented, that of the Akeanon Bukidnon had not been compiled nor interpreted. Likewise, while the Mangyan have written their *ambahan* and codified by researchers, the *ambahan* of the people of Dalagsaan have not been written. Their *ambahan* remain to be orally transmitted, thus, there is danger that they will soon be forgotten once the original *manog-amba* pass away.

The *ambahan* contain a message or testimony, which mirrors the highlanders' stories, histories, lessons, advices and practical guide to life. It is chanted or recited. The *manog-amba* (oralist) explained that the *ambahan* is also known as *istoryahanan* (storytelling), *sabtanan* (joust), *matomato* (anything goes), *pabati-bati* (relay message in metaphors) or *tinukod* (created at a moment's notice), sung or recited without musical accompaniment. It is a poetic debate, an extemporaneous speaking or an interchange of conversation customarily done in December during Christmas time when they gather together for a celebration called "panaad" to partake in drinking the *pangasi* (rice wine). The Filipino people need to know about this rich legacy of the highlanders. The researchers believed that there was an urgent need to start collecting, interpreting and preserving the *ambahan* of the Akeanon Bukidnon.

This study was, thus, an exploratory study on the *ambahan* of the Akeanon Bukidnon. The researchers collected the chants, translated them based on the meanings the *manog-amba* attributed to the *ambahan*, described and extracted the themes with the end view of developing instructional materials from the collected *ambahan*.

METHODS

This study made use of the descriptive method for this *ambahan*. This research study used a qualitative research design, specifically, culturally resonant methodologies: *pakikiisa* (oneness), a person-oriented approach (Obusan,1994, as cited by Nono (2008)—*panagtagpo* (convergence), *pagkaana* (presence), *pagpangotana* (asking question), *pagpamati* (listening), *pakig-ambit* (life-sharing), *pagtugyan* (surrender), *pagdawat* (receiving)—in the description and interpretation of the *ambahan*. The positive engagement technique was used. It

was an open-ended face-to-face interview using an interview guide.

The study was conducted among the Akeanon Bukidnon, an indigenous people of Dalagsaan, Libacao, Aklan. The interview was conducted in Datag Village in Poblacion Libacao. The three informants of the study were three manog-amba (oralists). Three other people helped in the interpretation of the ambahan. Aliases were used to maintain confidentiality. The researchers were the primary instruments for the collection of the ambahan. Guide questions for the interviews, field notes and video recordings were utilized to collect the ambahan. Forty-six (46) ambahan were collected out of which seventeen (17) were translated to English. The annotations were established based on the meanings the oralists attributed to the ambahan. The member check validation technique was also done wherein confirmation and validation of the interpretations were done through consultations with the manog-amba.

The key informants were likewise requested to sign an informed consent form that they willingly participated and were informed of the nature of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptions of the Ambahan

A. Poem

The ambahan is a poetic expression in blank verse or free verse. (The blank verse has a set of metrical pattern but has no rhyme. The free verse has no rules about rhythm or rhyme). It uses symbolisms and metaphors to convey its message. The ambahan of the Hanunuo Mangyan is also metaphorical but it adheres to its strict rule on metered syllables which consisted of at least two to over 100 lines with each line having seven syllables, ending in a rhyme.

Ambahan 1	English Translation
Pag eakbo ay kong bukid Pag saylo kon buntukan Gin anunaw kong kahoy Ginturok ko dang lumbayaw Lumbayaw sa bulod Rang kahoy sa tagaytay Bisan sa pigada't hangin Hiagyan it ugayong Ogiwan ka kuno matumba Nga indi matumbaeay Hay hanguea ka kuno dakot na Dako tana'y sumbari na.	When I traversed the mountain I crossed through the hill I could see the tree I looked at its structure That tree at the top Stood at the crest With the blowing of the wind The passage of the storm Would not collapse Would not fall Because it was strong And the roots were tough.
Pedro (oralist)	

B. Language

The manog-amba uses a language that sounds archaic. The highlanders call it "lenggwahe it Bukidnon." Hence, the manog-amba often has to explain the content to be understood by outsiders. As a discourse, it often conveys meanings using metaphors about their life experiences and their environment. The meaning or interpretation will depend on the context where it is used.

Ambahan 2	English Translation
Gasiakay si Kariyag Nariyag si Rumdum Gabinurak gali ikaw it but anan Minkad ikaw it hirumduman Linahi ikaw it tugas	My mind is pleased My brain rejoices Because you are pleasant You are good Your lineage is prominent
Juan (oralist)	

C. Song

The ambahan is chanted melodically with very little tonal variations. It has no defined rhythmic pattern, no clear voice pitch, time signature or melodic meter. It is not accompanied by any musical instrument. The lyrics are impromptu lines based on the thought of the previous oralist. The oralists are adept at weaving stories.

Ambahan 3	English Translation
Pasensya 'kaw, patawad Hay kon wa don kita'tkan on Owa don 't pagyamunon Urahaw na ti atong humay Kueang na 'ton tinug on.	I am sorry If we have nothing to eat Nothing to feast on We are short of rice We do not have enough grains.
Pedro (oralist)	

D. Poetic Joust

It can become a poetic joust between two manog-amba which makes for exciting listening among the listeners. It can be about a boy and a girl expressing his/her love during betrothal or pamaeayi. At times, it could be about their faults, either physical or moral; after it was done, all was forgotten (Maatubang, 2015).

Ambahan 4	English Translation
Ako namangkot Ako nangutana Ka dang ginuknan it ginikanan Binyaan it ginikanan SA ngaran it mutya Ngaran it banawan.	I ask I inquire What parents bequeathed Left by them In the name of wealth And inheritance.
Jose (oralist)	

Ambahan 5	English Translation
Tinuknan kuno't ginuknan Binyaan it ginikanan Ikaw timo tinuknan Ikaw ginbayaan Hayabi ako ithurayi Ako'y tag tagi.	Bequeathed by the parents Left by them You have inherited You have acquired Please share it with me Give me my part.
Pedro (oralist)	

E. An entertainment

The ambahan is performed particularly during the month of December whereby people are gathered for a celebration they call "panaad" when they partake in the pangasi (rice wine). The Akeanon Bukidnon love social gatherings like pasalamat, ponsyon and fiesta. Any occasion is not complete without the ambahan.

Ambahan 6	English Translation
Bisara man kuno ka ambahanon Mga kibari nagtanom ka kuno it binhi Nga ginpadapuan it pispis Ay naga kasiakay sa dumdum nga kaluyag Si Panguriman.	I am telling you That when you sow seeds For everybody to partake We are all happy The Datu.
Jose (oralist)	

F. Pamaeaybay (Preaching)

The manog-amba often uses the ambahan to give advice, such as during "hungaw" or marriage celebration. This will serve as their practical guide to life.

Ambahan 7	English Translation
Tabi man kuno sa nobyo ag nobya Kon ano saea kon bana Sa katurugan pagtud-a.	This is for the boyfriend and girlfriend Whatever is the fault of the partner Resolve in slumber.
Jose (oralist)	

G. Values

The ambahan reflects the beliefs and values of the Akeanon Bukidnon. It expresses their belief in life after death, the power of good over evil, the power of life over death and so forth. They highly value the advice of parents.

Ambahan 8	English Translation
Ibilin ko man ang pakaghot Sa od kong paka ikod Ima'y tag pagsundonnyo Ima'y pag pa ayunduga	I leave my advice to you It is real You have to follow You have to respect

Agud ogiwan kaysa dakong tawo Hay nakapagpanugliwan kamo sa karnod.	Do not be arrogant For you have inherited good values.
Juan (oralist)	

Themes of Ambahan

A. Gintukod nga Kasae

The parents are the ones who decide the partners of their children. They call it "reto." Both sets of parents could contract marriage even though their son or daughter has not yet been born. Fathers could do this. They could be of the same political status who wanted to form alliances or maintain good social standing of the family (Maatubang, 2015).

Ambahan 9	English Translation
Umpisa sa kagon Sa duha nga nagtiayon Ginikanan nag ugyon Isara it kabubuot on.	It started from a secret For the two who united Parents decided For their union.
Pedro (oralist)	

B. Pahanumdom (Advice)

The ambahan of the Akeanon Bukidnon could be about proper guidance and counselling. They express in the ambahan the teachings they give to their children particularly when they are leaving home to serve as reminders wherever their children may be.

Ambahan 10	English Translation
Ginbilin kong pakaghot Sa od kong paka ikod Kon may eabugay kang dako Mag eakot kang hanguya Magpaangay 'kaweamang Magpasama-sama.	I leave an advice It is real When you grow old And associate with others Act accordingly And appropriately.
Juan (oralist)	

C. Kasugtanan (Commitment)

The Akeanon Bukidnon honors a promise as gleaned in Ambahan 11 which expresses commitment and responsibility.

Ambahan 11	English Translation
Tarina kita'y gasumpa Gasindi kita't kandila Galingkod 'ta sa istampa Sa pulong ga mansing tanda.	Let us swear And light a candle Let us sit at the altar Keeping in mind our promise.
Jose (oralist)	

D. Panublion (Inheritance)

When parents pass away, children are left with inheritance that the children should share.

Ambahan 12	English Translation
Owa do't ikahuray Ogiwan na ikaaeagad SA ngaran nga paeandundon Dadaeay na tanang naubon Ngaran tanan naubos don.	I have nothing to share I do not have anything to give Regarding the wealth Of our departed parents It is gone.
Pedro (oralist)	

E. Pagtuo (Faith)

They believe in God. Their faith is developed through the frequent visits of priests, nuns and missionaries of different denominations in Dalagsaan (Maatubang, 2015).

Ambahan 13	English Translation
Kibari pangantilod sa Makapyo Panganti sa Makaako Kon magpauli ka sa baeay mo Magpangi sa lilingdon Ogiwan pag agya't mga risgo Indi pag agyan it apektado.	I pray to God My request to Him That when you return home Going back home May you be protected from risks May you be safe.
Jose (oralist)	

F. Pag aeamiguhan (Friendship)

The Akeanon Bukidnon are an affable people. They treat their friends as their brothers and sisters. They share their food. They are ready to help those who are in need. They can hardly refuse the requests of their friends. To strengthen friendship, they have bonding moments when they share a drink. They love being together.

Ambahan 13	English Translation
Hay ga yumayum ta bugto Ga inom ta eotungan Pag tung an it baeay Sa tunga it lingdon Ogiwan ta ton kab eag Di magkabuyan.	Let us have a drink, brother Let us imbibe, sibling Here at the mid of the house At the center of abode We can not be separated Can not be alienated.
Juan (oralist)	

G. Pagka-mapainubuson (Humility)

The Akeanon Bukidnon consider humility as a desirable quality. They are ready to humble themselves when the situation calls for it.

Ambahan 14	English Translation
Ogiwan wa ka do't itao	If you have nothing to give

Ogiwan waka do't ita eagtag Pasensya lang paangyan Paebas pataliwan Pero nasiakay gid lang i dumdom Nariyag oriwan ko Pedro (oralist)	Nothing to share You are sorry It is alright But my mind still delights And I am quite glad.
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H. Gugma (Love)

Grandparents have a more intimate relationship with their grandchildren. There is more intimacy between them than authoritarian relationship between parents and children (Maatubang, 2015). They call their grandfather mama.

Ambahan 15	English Translation
Magsapigad man sa baeay Abot salinindon Mag dungkaya si mama mo Mag abot dong ginikanan Yakapon mo kuno si lolo mo Hakson mo si mama mo Jose (oralist)	Pass by your house Here in your welling place When your grandfather comes When the elder arrives Embrace your grandfather Hold him in your arms.

I. Kalinong (Peace)

Ambahan 16 exemplifies that the Akeanon Bukidnon are peace loving people. They are taught not to involve themselves in trouble. They have to bring peace wherever they go.

Ambahan 16	English Translation
Magretiron kamong pamingkad Mag padaya, magminurak Ogiwan kamong kamo't darag kapoy Di dara't kaeayo In milig langtanay idarhon Tubi darapiton. Juan (oralist)	When you stroll young ones And associate with others Do not bring flames Never a fire Bring only water Water, you fetch.

J. Pagtahod (Respect)

Respect is earned. It is never demanded. When elders are talking, the younger ones should not disturb them by crossing in their midst.

Ambahan 17	English Translation
Ogiwan kamo't agi Indi magsapigad Hanguang ga arasdang Dako nga gaatubang Sa ngaran kuno tanang ginuknan	Do not pass by Do not interrupt Elders are talking The speakers are eminent In the name of all elders Name of parents

Sa ngaran it ginikanan Sa tunga tunga't baey SA tunga it liningdon. Pedro (oralist)	At the middle of the house At the center of our residence.
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CONCLUSION

The ambahan reflects the oral tradition of the Akeanon Bukidnon. The manog-amba performs the role of oral historian, culture bearer, preacher and entertainer. The ambahan is a poem expressed in harmonious language. It may not be done by just one man but in the company of others. It is a form of entertainment. It is also a pamaeybay (preaching) and a kind of verbal contest. This oral tradition reflects the experiences of the people, their philosophical viewpoints and their values through music or poem.

To an Akeanon, the term bukidnon has a derogatory connotation, meaning someone who is illiterate and without manners. However, as shown in the ambahan, the Akeanon Bukidnon have a global philosophical worldview and are steeped in values. While they have kept their identity as a people, their culture and language different from that of the lowlanders, they also learned to adapt to the changing world.

To them, the ambahan is a pamana handed down by their ancestors through word of mouth. As they have not reduced their life stories to writing, it is on the shoulders of the manog-amba to become the culture bearer of their ethno-linguistic group. However, the oralists are also creating new ambahan as a result of various kinds of interaction. Thus, while there is permanence, there is also change.

The NCCA may incorporate in their program activities that will help preserve the oral tradition of the Akeanon Bukidnon. Also, the Aklan Provincial Government, Municipal Government of Libacao, Sangguniang Barangay of Dalagsaan and Aklan State University may need to work together to set up a Center for Akeanon Studies that will conduct activities to preserve not only the ambahan of the Akeanon Bukidnon but also the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples of Aklan.

More in-depth studies on the ambahan of the Akeanon Bukidnon may be conducted by future researchers. Future researchers may delve deeper into the collection, preservation, transcription and translation of the ambahan..

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