
**INVENTORY OF EXTANT AND EXTINCT TRADITIONAL
LITERATURE IN WESTERN VISAYAS AREA I
(ILOILO, ANTIQUE, AND GUIMARAS)**

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ABSTRACT

This study surveyed the body of existing traditional literature for Iloilo, Antique and Guimaras. The basic objectives of the study were to collect a body of traditional manuscripts for the area and to determine which genres are extinct or extant. The methodology of this research is likened to a treasure hunt, operating on a hit and miss procedure. The search for manuscripts began with known entities like libraries, indigenous centers, the internet, and local printing presses. It also pursued word-of-mouth leads about people known to be writers of traditional literature. This study collected a variety of traditional manuscripts in Hiligaynon, Kinaray-a, Inati and translations in Tagalog and English representing the following literary periods: Early Bisayan, Spanish Colonial, American Colonial, Japanese Colonial, Philippine Republic, Philippines after EDSA, and Philippines in the 21st Century. The study revealed the following: literature follows a language instead of a political map; traditional literature in Hiligaynon, Kinaray, and Inati documented in the Early Bisayan Period are extant; and traditional literature did not become extinct rather evolved into modified forms with the coming of the Spanish and American colonizers.

INTRODUCTION

A great interest in the investigation, classification, and preservation of traditional culture prevails in the Philippines today. The establishment of the Philippine National Commission for Culture and Arts is mainly responsible for the impetus towards this direction. Literature as an expression of a people's artistic personality has seen extensive support, creative undertakings and research grants.

The Commission on Higher Education as the supervising arm for the quality of tertiary education in the Philippines recognized the need for Filipinos to be aware of their literary heritage. Consequently, R.A. NO. 7722, otherwise known as the Higher Education Act of 1994 was promulgated to make the curriculum relevant and responsive to the needs of the times. The systematic collection of Western Visayas literature provides valuable materials of this region from which others regions can learn from.

Providing the related studies for pre-colonial Panay history are Veloso (1973), Salvilla (1998), and Magos (2001). In separate articles they established the three waves of people that occupied Panay as Aetas, Indonesians, and Malays with their respective cultures.

A survey of traditional literature across the nation was comprehensively provided by Godinez-Ortega (2002) while Jocano (1969, 1971 and 1975) in his various ethnographic studies established various pre-colonial traditional genres including those in the Visayas. Lumbea, (2005) provided the historical grouping of Philippine literature for this study up to the Philippines after EDSA Period. Deriada (2003), Rivera (undated), Hosillos, (1992), and Eugenio (1982) provided more specific discussions of the Hiligaynon literary experience. Chroniclers of early Bisayan literature were culled from the writings of Sonza (1972), Jocano (1975), and Eugenio (1992).

Of the latter scholars and preservers of early literature manuscripts, two names stand out: Prof. Otley Beyer and F. Landa Jocano.

Among the works of Beyer include an extensive ethnographic study of the Hiligaynon society with collections of a variety of literary genres preserved in microfiche at the National Library. Like other

mentors interested in collecting and preserving folk literature, Prof. Beyer also sent his students to go out into areas and collect manuscripts from story tellers or communities where they were popular.

Felipe Landa Jocano, the first Filipino anthropologist for the mountain people living in the interior parts of Central Panay, plays a stellar role in the preservation Hiligaynon folk literature by his persistent effort to pursue the oral literature of the Sulod people.

A great number of manuscripts of genres in short forms like the *paktakon*, *luwa* and *hurubaton* came from unpublished student papers archived in the University of San Agustin Library and the UP Visayas Center for West Visayan Studies. Many of the original manuscripts of contemporary traditional literature were contributions of the writers themselves.

The research is basically a search for manuscripts in the original traditional language or as preserved and translated in English. It is an attempt at creating an anthology of the indigenous literature of Area I. The anthologies of Cariaga-Enriquez (2003) and Eugenio (2001, 1992, 1989, 1982) provide models for a systematic listing of Philippine literature. Enriquez classified various Filipino regional genres according to historical periods of the Philippines while Eugenio classified the voluminous Philippine folk literature into specific genres. Both accompany their listings with manuscripts.

Objectives of the Study

This study is an inventory of the extinct and extant traditional literature of Western Visayas Area I that includes Iloilo, Antique and Guimaras. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. acquire copies of manuscripts;
2. identify the sources of traditional literature of Iloilo, Antique and Guimaras that are preserved in print; and,
3. classify the acquired manuscripts into genres and status of existence.

Significance of the Study

The completed research provides a valuable reference for existing traditional literature in this part of the Philippines. It systematized the rich but fragmented collection of materials in a part of Western Visayas.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

Considering the vast number of traditional literature in Western Visayas, the following limitations were observed:

1. This study is a search through the existing oral tradition that had been preserved in writing like in books, news papers, magazines and loose manuscripts by private collectors.
2. Traditional literature covered only those that had been in existence prior to colonial influence.
3. Manuscripts included in the collection are in Hiligaynon, Kinaray-a, English, and Tagalog. No translations are provided for non-English manuscripts.
4. The research does not include content analysis of manuscripts.

METHODOLOGY

The search for manuscripts of traditional literature was like a treasure hunt following uncertain clues that unfolded along the way. The search began with known entities like the internet, public libraries, and private ones as in schools and indigenous centers. One printing press was contacted. Historians and living writers of traditional literature were also interviewed.

The methodology only sought printed manuscripts because of the volume of available yet unclassified materials. This includes oral literatures that have been preserved only in print.

The collected manuscripts were classified first, according to genres and secondly according to possible period of writing following the given indicators: Internal or content indicators like topic, names, dates, cultural practice, syllabary; and External indicator like known author, life period of author, classification by publication.

After the systematic listing of the various genres through the historical periods, the conclusion of whether the genre was still existing (extant) or no longer existing (extinct) was made. The listing of only one genre in a given period is considered enough proof that it was extant in a given period.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF MANUSCRIPTS

The collected manuscripts of Hiligaynon literature through the years altogether reveal longevity, endurance and adaptability to survive the changes of time. Genres of the early Bisayan Period like the myth, epic, *suguilanon*, (tale) *paktakon* (riddle), *hurubaton* (maxim), *Binalaybay* (poetry) and *amba* (folksong) are traced through the various periods and to date remain active and alive. The myth and epic were earlier altogether known as *suguilanon* or *asoy* despite structural differences. The distinction was made of the three as earlier scholars eventually separately labeled them, thus explaining the English labels of myth and epic versus the Hiligaynon term of *suguilanon*.

The 330 years of Spanish domination indeed brought significant and far reaching influence on traditional Hiligaynon literature. It controlled literacy by changing the textual symbols into the Roman alphabet and modified the literary output of the period. The Spanish clergy's suppression of pagan practices detoured the literary output to Catholic references. *Paktakon* and *hurubaton* began to refer to saints and catholic religious practices. Also, as formal education was only for the *ilustrados* (rich Filipinos), a double standard of traditional writing ensued. The rich educated Filipinos had the ability to read and write in Spanish. Folk literature in the native language was by the "unlettered" or uneducated people. The *composo*, was a response to a need to carry news to distant places and is an offshoot of the Spanish *corrido*. The *luwa* during Christianized vigils and the *copla* evolved as forms of *binalaybay* during the Spanish period.

The ritual chant by the pagan *babaylan* who was the center of deity contact in the pre- Spanish period, was likewise threatened into extinction as the *babaylans* were forced to give up their craft in the wake of the nation's Christianization. As the *babaylans* went deep into the culture of secrecy for survival, they carried their practices as well. Secrecy provided a force field against foreign influence and allowed the accurate preservation of its culture and oral literary texts.

The epic which is a combination of poetry, storytelling and song eventually evolved into the more distinct form of the *suguilanon* with the folktales. The folktale with a faint feature of a plot is the forerunner of the *malip-ot nga sugilanon* (short story) and the *nobela* (novel). The *paktakon* and the *hurubaton* while extant, keep their Early Bisayan structure as metaphorical statements in two lines.

The new system under the Americans impacted traditional Hiligaynon literature as well. Education became available to a greater number of people thus exposing them to a variety of information including American literature. This caused the *suguilanon* to take a more structured form after the American literary models and became the *malip-ot nga sugilanon* (short story) and the *nobela* (novel). Stories began to have by lines in vernacular publications and were written by schooled people.

The internal and external indicators used for the period of writing do not accurately determine the veracity of the classifications. For example while a reference to *Datu Makatunaw* indicates a Bornean culture, it is possible that the tale was composed in the post Bornean Period or while a *paktakon* may mention *saguing* (the word *saging* using the Spanish syllabary), it is possible that this was composed during the post Spanish periods. The classifications of the voluminous body of extant manuscripts are a genuine problem because oral literary tradition changes and absorbs the character of the milieu as they are retold.

The discovery of *Ati* literature in their language, *Inati*, is accidental. While searching for original manuscripts from traditional writers, an *Ati* writer provided *Hiligaynon* and *Inati* versions of her manuscripts thus bringing to the surface the existence of this literary group apart from the dominating Hiligaynon and Kinaray-a in Area I.

This study utilized seven periods of Philippine history and identified traditional genres that surfaced during the respective periods (Table 1).

In this study, traditional literature is a broad phrase that covers both the works of the lettered and the unlettered folks through the years. Traditional literature that began in the Early Bisayan period used the language of that period and made no distinction between the schooled and unschooled. The trace of traditional literature, therefore used Hiligaynon or Kinaray-a as the basis of a manuscript's acceptability as traditional literature.

Table 1. Summary of the Collection of Traditional Genres in Western Visayas Area I from the various periods of Philippine history.

Early Bisayan (before 1565)	Spanish Colonial (1865-1897)	American Colonial (1898-1945)	Japanese Colonial (1942-1944)	Philippine Republic (1946-985)	Philippines After EDSA (1986-1999)	Philippines in the 21 st Century (2000-2006)
<i>amba</i>	<i>amba</i>	<i>amba</i>	<i>amba</i>	<i>amba</i>	<i>amba</i>	<i>amba</i>
*myth	myth			myth		
*epic				epic		
<i>suguilanon</i>	<i>suguilanon</i>	<i>suguilanon</i>	<i>suguilanon</i>			
<i>paktakon</i>	<i>paktakon</i>	<i>paktakon</i>	<i>paktakon</i>	<i>paktakon</i>		<i>paktakon</i>
<i>paktakon</i>	<i>paktakon</i>	<i>paktakon</i>	<i>paktakon</i>	<i>paktakon</i>		<i>paktakon</i>
<i>hurubaton</i>	<i>hurubaton</i>					

* only the English name was given in references

The table likewise shows that the Early Bisayan genres of *amba*, *myth*, *epic*, *suguilanon*, *binalaybay*, *paktakon*, *hurubaton* are extant while the *suguilanon* and *binalaybay* evolved into modified forms. This study shows that traditional literature in Western Visayas specifically in the areas of Iloilo, Antique and Guimaras went through a process of preservation and evolution, rather than extinction. The blank areas in the table do not indicate that a genre became extinct. It simply means that the research corpus had no manuscript for the given period. The *hurubaton* was only cited until the colonial period but is considered extant because it has been preserved in print, thus could be studied and used as model for composition.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study of the traditional literature of Iloilo and Antique revealed the following characteristics: longevity, endurance and adaptability. Longevity in traditional literature means surviving today in its original structure. This is the best quality of being extant. This can be seen in the extant manuscript of the epic *Hinilawod* and the *Hanggab* Ritual Chant. Endurance is seen in its ability to change topics, names and references to be acceptable to the Spanish colonizers

and still keep its basic structure. Adaptability is seen in the evolution of the *binalaybay* into modified genres like the *luwa*, *copla*, *composo*; the *suguilanon* into *malip-ot nga sugilanon* and the *nobela*.

This study also ascertained that literature does not follow a political map rather a linguistic map. Literary collections are separated by language differences rather than provincial boundaries. The Kinaray-a manuscripts not only represent Antique but some areas of Iloilo. *Inati* literature is an accidental find of this research. Of the huge volume of literature investigated only one *paktakon* mentioned Guimaras. The absence of a separate body of Guimarasnon traditional literature can be attributed to the fact that Guimarasnons are Hiligaynon and Kinaray-a speaking migrants from the mainland Panay.

The following are the recommendations based on the findings of this research:

1. The phrase “ Early Bisayan Period” be used instead of “Pre-colonial period” in referring to the historical period prior to the Spanish conquest in the Visayas.
2. The epic *Hinilawod* in its entirety be taught in tertiary level in universities in Panay.
3. Any similar research be language-based, rather than area-based.
4. Guimaras traditional literature be further documented.
5. Translations of the Hiligaynon-Kinaray-a manuscripts herein be done for a wider readership.
6. Further individual studies be done on the traditional Hiligaynon-Kinaray-a genres listed herein.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My heartfelt gratitude goes to the following with whose help this gargantuan research task was made possible:

Central Philippine University.

The University Research Center headed by Dr. Randy Anthony V. Pabulayan.

Dr. Anita Illenberger, Prof. Hope Patricio, Engr. Artchil B. Fernandez, Ms. Lilia, Elizabeth J. Javier, Ms. Gloribel Ardiente, Mrs. Lyka Perez, and Clem Lachica.

My Literature 200 classes for the second semester SY 2005-2006.

Literature teachers of the University of San Agustin and their respective student researchers and writers of traditional literature who provided their original manuscripts.

To the Almighty God for giving me extraordinary grace at a season of extraordinary personal trial thus allowing me to single-mindedly pursue this study's completion.

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