

## Blaan Oral Narratives and Their Educational Implications

MARIA VINICE O. SUMALJAG

*my\_part07@yahoo.com*  
Cor Jesu College

**Abstract** - This study aimed to collect, record, translate and analyze the oral narratives of the Blaans in Little Baguio, Malita, Davao del Sur and determine their educational implications. Two types of informants were involved in the research: a) those who told the background of the Blaans and the elders of the tribes, and b) those Blaans who narrated the oral narratives in their own language. Thirty folk narratives were collected ranging from myths, legends and folk tales. Translator/guide assisted in the data gathering while trilingual translators transcribed and translated the oral narratives to Blaan and Cebuano languages. The collected Blaan oral narratives were analyzed by identifying the classification of oral tradition according to genre based on Eugenio's (1993) general category of folk narratives and the classification the way the Blaans themselves classify their stories in terms of truthfulness and sacredness, and identification and classification of values in the oral narratives according to Andres' (1985) value matrix. Findings reveal that the oral narratives of the Blaans project their culture and mirror the lifeways of ethnic Filipinos; that common values define their identity as a people; and the collected narratives and their values have educational implications. These narratives can be used as teaching

materials/tools in the academe and values drawn can serve as tools for Values Education teachers for the value formation of pupils and students.

**Keywords** - oral narratives, Blaans, values education

## INTRODUCTION

Folk literature pertains to the artistic expression of significant human experiences through the medium, and its essence is the oral transmission which characterizes the earlier age and with the absence of any fixed form (Eugenio, 1982). It is a very significant Filipino heritage of the past. It also defines one's identity for it projects the inner quality and strength of one's culture.

Literature of the ethnic groups is oral, handed down from generation to generation, and is preserved in the memory of the old folk. The Blaans of Malita, like other indigenous Filipinos, have their own literature. Their literature is expressed in the form of myths, legends, folktales, etc. These oral narratives display the culture of the tribe and to a considerable degree, the simple activities of their early lives. Their oral narratives which are handed down by word of mouth, reveal their values that speak of their sentiments, aspirations, and traditions which they highly cherish.

These narratives provide knowledge and information on how our early ancestors manifested their lifestyles. Through these oral narratives, we can trace ethnic customs, traditions and values that exist in our native culture which truly belong to us. However, this rich literary heritage of the Blaans tribe in Malita is in danger of gradually vanishing because of the rapid modernization of many indigenous communities and other influences by outsiders. Keeping the ethnic literary heritage alive has become a difficult struggle. Thus, there is a need to preserve the oral narratives before they are completely lost. These oral narratives have to be written down to ensure their preservation because these narratives reveal significant insights and values which can be taught to children and can be used to facilitate meaningful learning experiences in the classroom. Moreover, these narratives also acquaint children with the different types of folk literature.

## **SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study was conducted in Little Baguio, Malita, Davao del Sur where most of the residents are Blaans, comprising 81.9 percent of the total population of this village (Socio-economic Profile of Malita, 2002). The study is limited to the collection, documentation, translation and analysis of the Blaan narratives which are handed down and circulated among the Blaans of Little Baguio. It is limited to analyzing the value system which includes the economic, religious, social, human, political and cultural aspects based on Andres' (1985) classification of values, and to identifying the educational implications of the Blaan oral narratives. Determining the authenticity of the events in the narratives is not included in this study.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to collect, record, translate, and analyze the oral narratives of the Blaans in Little Baguio, Malita, Davao del Sur, and to present their educational implications.

Specifically, it pursued the following objectives: 1) to describe the Blaans of Little Baguio, Malita, Davao del Sur; 2) to identify the types of oral narratives of the Blaans have; 3) to analyze the values found in the collected Blaan oral narratives; and 4) to determine the educational implications.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Little Baguio, Malita, Davao del Sur, a village dominated by Blaans. Tribal literacy teachers told the background information of the Blaans and the key informants related the oral narratives in their own language.

Two types of data were gathered in this study. The first type consisted of the lifestyles and background information of the Blaans, and the second is on their oral narratives. The background information of the Blaans was gathered through informal interviews, field visits and library research. The oral narratives were collected using a field cassette tape recorder. The translator transcribed the recorded narratives and

translated them into Cebuano. With regard to the authenticity in the documentation of the materials, the researcher followed Manuel's (1997) assertion that the oral traditions must be recorded actually from the lips of the singers, riddlers, and storytellers, not copied or edited from unverified printed or collected materials. The record must be in the language of the ethnolinguistic group whose oral traditions are being studied.

The translator transcribed the recorded narratives and translated them into Cebuano. The researcher then translated the Cebuano version into English. The researcher used the Meaning-based Translation Theory of Larson (1984). This theory is also known as Idiomatic Translation or thought-for-thought translation wherein the meaning of the original is translated into forms which most accurately and naturally preserve the meaning of the original forms.

Content Analysis. The collected Blaans oral narratives were analyzed on the following categories:

Classification of oral tradition according to genre based on Eugenio's (1993) general category of folk narratives, and the classification according to the way the Blaans themselves classify their stories in terms of truthfulness and sacredness. Identification and classification of values in the oral narratives according to Andres' (1985) value matrix, and those values which the Blaans consider important in their tribe.

The educational implications were derived based on the values drawn from the narratives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Generally, the Blaans inhabit the southern part of South Cotabato and in some areas in Saranggani Province, as well as areas around Buluan Lake in North Cotabato. They are located in some municipalities of Davao del Sur such as Sulop, Hagonoy, Malita, Malalag, Matanao, Magsaysay, Saranggani Islands, and Jose Abad Santos.

In Malita, the Blaans are found in the cool place of Village Little Baguio. The Blaans of this village are distributed in almost all sitios of the village. Exclusively Blaans-dominated sitios include Malbag, Kipanan, Kisoy, Pagledong, Lenna, Tafgao, Bolobolo, Centro, Kablulan, Anggas, and Lalon.

The Blaans of Little Baguio are industrious and are of peaceable disposition in the sense that they do not get involve in crimes/quarrels in the village and in other places. They strive hard to earn income, despite how meager it is, to support their family. They work hard in the farm, ricefields, cornfields, small banana plantations all day long to survive.

They believe in the Supreme Being, *Dwata*/God, who is the creator of the universe. Because of intermarriages, some Blaans have become Christians and Muslims. The religious affiliations of the Blaans vary in every sitio.

Language used is Blaan which is characterized by the possession of letter "f". Some of the Blaans in this village learn to speak Cebuano because of the presence and influence of Cebuanos in the place. The Blaans use either Blaan or Cebuano in conversation.

### *Values in the Narratives*

**Religious Values.** *Dwata* or God is the Supreme Ruler who made the earth and everything that exists on it. The Blaans view *Dwata* as the provider of graces, and this is revealed in one of the narratives. They also acknowledge the presence of *Dwata* who manipulates some activities of the people. They also believe that God punished those people who disobey His will.

**Cultural Values.** Cultural values are portrayed in the narratives through their appreciation of the beauty of nature when God made the universe and He created the rivers, seas, trees, fruits, and animals.

**Human Values.** The human values of love, helpfulness, generosity, concern, compassion, kindness, understanding and unity.

**Political Values.** The Blaan narratives reveal political values. This is revealed in the tribe's recognition of God as giver of abundant blessings and the Supreme Ruler of the universe. This political value is shown through God's power in creating the universe. He decides on what creatures He would make, and the He mandates His people to rule His creation on earth. He also provides people's basic needs.

**Economic Values.** This value pertains to livelihood and materials as needed for survival. The tribe acknowledges the existence of plants, fishes, animals, trees, and water as basic needs of the people for economic survival. The tribe is also dependent on food and livelihood.

**Social Values.** These refer to the group’s doing social activities for common welfare, like feasts, rituals, and family routines. The Blaans highly prize the importance of a family as the basic social unit in the society.

**Classification of Blaان Oral Narratives**

Table 1. The classification of folk narratives  
[Eugenio (1987, 1993, 1996)]

MYTHS	LEGENDS	FOLKTALES
<i>A. Cosmogony and Cosmology</i> 1. The Beginning of the World 2. The Story about the Stars 3. Why the Sky is High  <i>B. Establishment of Natural Order</i> 4. The Story about the Lightning 5. The Story about the Thunder  <i>C. World Calamity</i> 6. The Flood  <i>D. Acquisition of Culture</i> 7. The Origin of Fire	<i>A. Origin of Water Features</i> 1. How Creeks are Formed  <i>B. Origin of Land Features</i> 2. The Origin of the Mountains  <i>C. Origin of Animals</i> 3. The Origin of the Frog 4. The Coward Bat  <i>D. Origin of Plants</i> 5. The Origin of the Coconut  <i>E. Pourquoi Legends</i> 6. The Monkey and the Owl 7. The Monkey and the Crocodile 8. Why the Rice Grains are Small 9. Why There are Fireflies 10. The Origin of Butterfly  <i>F. Plant Characteristics</i> 11. The War of the Plants  <i>G. Place Name Legend</i> 12. How Malita Got its Name  <i>H. Legend about Supernatural Being</i> 13. The Tree-Dwelling Creatures	<i>A. Animal Tales</i> 1. Fye We and the Monkey 2. The Monkey Who Became a Servant  <i>B. Fables</i> 3. The Two Monkeys and the Fruits 4. The Little Bird  <i>C. Märchen or Tales of Magic</i> 5. The Magic Horn 6. The Wishing Stick 7. The Couple  <i>D. Religious/Didactic Tales</i> 8. The Gift 9. The Bundle of Sticks  <i>E. Novelistic Tale</i> 10. The Fowls and the Bees

## EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings, the following educational implications are presented: Folk narratives of the Blaan tribe establish the authority/importance of the elders, spiritual leaders, *baylans* as pillars of the tribe, including its culture and traditions.

The collected narratives can be used as teaching materials/tools, thus, adding more materials in the academe. These can be utilized in the teaching of reading, language, and literature among students.

The narratives can serve as tools for historical references. Through learning folk literature, the young will gain an outlook of the Philippine historical past which will enable them to compare the present trends of culture and progress.

Awareness and preservation of their folk narratives and values can make the Blaans appreciate their identity as a people, develop self-confidence as they mingle with the mainstream society and feel the pride of having contributed to Philippine Literature.

The values drawn from the narratives may serve as tools for Values Education teachers for the value formation of the pupils in the primary school and tribal learning center in Village Little Baguio and other localities. The values in the narratives provide baseline information on the current lifestyles and culture of the Blaans which can enlighten the others of their nature, thus, understanding their character will be easier.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the implications generated, the following recommendations are made:

1. Schools may encourage students to explore and appreciate the tribal people and their customs and traditions.
2. School heads should motivate their literature teachers to make their students aware of the desirable values in order to gain appreciation and understanding from the mainstream society.
3. Teachers should encourage students to study the narratives of the Tribal Filipinos to inculcate in them the essence of being a Filipino.

4. Schools can plan extension programs, just like what Cor Jesu College is doing, like providing education to the Lumads, giving seminars on farming and other livelihood to the indigenous tribes to improve their living.
5. More recordings and studies of Blaan folk literature made by students and teachers for them to have a deeper appreciation and understanding of the tribe.

### LITERATURE CITED

Abordo, E.

2004. *Epikong Manggob ng Mansaka*. Master's Thesis, Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City.

Alegado, H.

- 1984 "The T'boli Folklore: Popular Learning". *Tambara*, pp. 78-80.

Andres, T.

- 1981 *Management of Filipino Values*. Quezon City: New Day Publishers.

Andres, T.

- 1981 *Understanding Filipino Values: A Management Approach*. Quezon City: New Day Publishers.

Andres, T.

- 1985 *Management by Filipino Values: A Sequel to Understanding Filipino Values*. Manila: Rex Bookstore.

Arce, W.

- 2004 *Values, Organizational Culture and Organization*. [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com).

Avanceña-Arcenas, M.L.

- 1993 *The Vanishing Nomads: The Blaans' Past, Present & Future*. Manila: Philippine Exchange Assistance Center Foundation.



Bacungan, P.

2002 *Essentials of Values Education*. Second Edition. Manila: National Bookstore.

*Blaan, Bisaya, Filipino, English Di Satu Liblu* – TFA Literacy Program.

Castro, J. et al.

1983 *Antolohiya ng mga Panitikang Asean: Mga Epiko ng Pilipinas*. Quezon City: APO Production Unit.

Coronel, M.D.

1968 *Stories and Legends from Filipino Folklore*. Philippines: University of Santo Tomas Press.

Dela Cruz, E.

1976 *Mandaya Oral Traditions and Educational Implications*. Master's Thesis. Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City.

Demetrio, F. S.J.

1990 *Myths and Symbols of Philippines*. Revised Edition. Manila: National Bookstore.

Dundes, A.

1980 *Interpreting Folklore*. London: Indiana University Press.

Eugenio, D.

1996 *Philippine Folk Literature, The Legends*. Quezon City: The UP Folklorist, Inc.

Eugenio, D.

1993 *Philippine Folk Literature, The Myths*. Quezon City: The UP Folklorist, Inc.

Eugenio, D.

1987 *Philippine Folk Literature, The Folktales*. Quezon City: The UP Folklorist, Inc.

Javier, H.

1998 *Ang Pagsasalin sa Filipino at Pagsususri ng Kuwentong-Bayan ng mga Blaan*. Master's Thesis. Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City.

Jocano, F.

1967 "Some Aspects of Filipino Vernacular Literature," *Brown Heritage*, ed. Antonio Manuud. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Jocano, F.

1969 *Outline of Philippine Mythology*. Manila: Centro Escolar University.

Larson, M.

1984 *Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross-language Equivalence*. London: University Press of America.

Pursuant to the international character of this publication, the journal is indexed by the following agencies: (1)Public Knowledge Project, a consortium of Simon Fraser University Library, the School of Education of Stanford University, and the British Columbia University, Canada: (2) E-International Scientific Research Journal Consortium; (3) Philippine E-Journals (4) Google Scholar.

