

Demystifying the Magic of Eskaya Writing System in Duero, Bohol, Philippines

**Sheeryn T. Bojos, Niña Mea S. Pacaña, Charmen D. Ramos,
Reynaldo B. Inocian, Natividad P. De la Torre**
Social Sciences Department, College of Arts and Sciences, Cebu Normal
University, Cebu, Philippines, 6000
*charmendiazramos@gmail.com, inocian03yahoo.com,
madzuatzcnu@yahoo.com*

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Abstract - *This study aimed to demystify the major characteristic of Eskaya writing system which is used by the Eskayas of Duero, Bohol, Philippines. This paper also analyzed some literary works of Eskaya tribe, elaborated the existing strategies in the preservation of Eskaya script and discovered the significance of this writing according to the social lives of the Eskayas. Interviews with the chieftain and other native members of the Eskaya tribe, naturalistic observation, and documentation were used in data gathering. Results show that the Eskaya writing system is based on the position of man's body parts which convey communicative meanings like emotional response, physical interaction, mental desire and spiritual aspiration. This writing system paved the way to the creation of variety of literature ranging from biographies, code of conduct, myths and histories which shapes the unique identity of the Eskayas. Bohol's rich folklore radiates nationalistic identity, natural and mystical origin, indigenous way of mathematical calculation, heroic reformation, quest for knowledge, code of conduct, affinity with nature, tragic and pure love, and social regard for human and mystical connection. Due to this unique identity, strategies in the preservation of the script have been strengthened; but conformity to the use the Visayan text greatly played a big role regarding the deterioration of the use of the Eskaya writing system. It is recommended that other researchers may conduct a similar study on the characteristics, syllabi, and syntax of the Eskayan writing system.*

Keywords: *Eskaya tribe, writing system, written literature, preservation*

INTRODUCTION

As civilizations emerge, a growing need for discoveries and creation likewise flourish. These discoveries seek to answer the fundamental questions behind mankind, creates a reaction to accumulative social, economic and political intricacy present in a developing society. As these civilizations progress, a long lists of achievements in terms of improving the living standard and style can be noted. This collection of achievements and improvements become the foundation of a heritage. It is apparent, that as this heritage expands the need for a written communication becomes a necessity in an accepted culture.

Written communication is one of the greatest accomplishments of the human race. Through an accepted writing system, a set of visual signs is used to represent a systematic way of language communication. To Rudgley, the formation of a

writing system signifies a breakthrough in human progress [1]. This writing system is believed to have played an important role in improving people's lives, thus its creation depends on the need for communication in a specific civilization. One major reason for the development of this complex written communication is the need to build a common identity for a group of people. The existence of a social group, Greenspan and Shanker expound that individuals must be able to agree with one another and exhibit "the ability... to form relationships"[2]. The ability to form relationships is made easier because of a common writing system. To Robertson, writing is also used for sacred intention for prophecy to interact with the mystical world associated with the use of power, authority, and society[3]. Another reason for the development of writing system is because it can be a reliable form of storing and transferring information. Without a system of writing, no historical record or

literary contributions in the past can be ascertained. Through writing, Cooper believes that notable cultures around the world are exact replica of the people's ways of living[4]. A writing system has been a medium of sharing cultures from one place to another; and bringing one identity to blend with others. To Smith, this paves the way to the creation of a more interconnected world [5].

There are hundreds of different writing systems all around the globe. Two of the earliest known are Hieroglyphics of Egypt and Cuneiform of Mesopotamia. Each of these writing systems has their own origin. In the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia, Whipps states that agriculture is required to have proficiency and thorough recordkeeping; these elements have led directly to the creation of cuneiform writing system[6]. With this system of writing, symbols are dented on even earthen tablets with a squared-off rod, which have stained wedge-shaped inscriptions in the clay. This shows that ancient people in Mesopotamia have rich clay resources that people make use for written communication, which means writing is ecological. Sampson, on the other hand, believes that some historians account the Egyptian hieroglyphics to have existed a little later the Sumerian script has probably invented; but the ancient Egyptians believe that writing is invented by the god, 'Thoth' and called their hieroglyphic script "mdju netjer"[7]. The Egyptian hieroglyphics is made using the plant papyrus, which is abundant in the Nile River valleys.

To Unseth, there are also writing systems in the African continent which are not as famous as the two earliest writing systems; but significant as well like the N'ko script, which created for the Manding languages of West Africa and is taught in schools and used in producing religious and philosophical text, which the Bamuns of Cameroon also use for recording their past [8]. The Americas also have their share of writing systems. A stone slab is discovered in Veracruz, a Mexican state, and is believed to be an example of the oldest script in the Western Hemisphere. Another writing system which is developed in Mesoamerica is the Mayan script. To Coulmas, the Mayan script is written on codices using indigenous and natural materials as paper that is covered with fine surface and to be folded like an accordion [9]. Many of the Mayan scrolls are burned by the Spanish authorities when they try to convert the

Mayas to Christianity. The surviving scrolls are used as source of knowledge about the Mayan beliefs.

In Asian countries like Japan, China and Korea, writing systems are also developed. To Vogler, the Japanese has no written language prior to the introduction of Chinese writing system [10]. Chinese characters are used to represent the Japanese language; but are changed to a more convenient Japanese form. This writing system is used to write essays, novels, poems, newspapers, and comics. Japan's writing system enables the creation of thousands of literature even if the Japanese writing system is often considered to be the most complicated to use anywhere in the world as Vogler expounds [10]. This complexity is also evident in the Chinese writing system, which is thought to be the basis of the Japanese writing system. In China, written documents that are left enabled historians to gain information on the early dynasties. The Philippines has its share in increasing man's cultural wealth, in the form of a writing system is called the *Baybayin*, which is thought to have a strong connection to that of the Malay language according to Morrow[11]. The most common material used in writing the *Baybayin* is the bamboo, which is perishable. The writing tools are the points of daggers or any sharp materials. To Aguirre, the ancient Filipino literature is an oral one, meaning stories, events, myths, and records from history are passed on orally from one generation to the next. Writing is mainly used only for personal letters and poetry especially between lovers as noted in the Boxer Codex in 1590 [12].

In the Visayan region, writing systems are said to have developed but still an impending mystery due to the fact that only small information about them has been published, specifically the Eskaya writing system of the Eskaya tribe in Barangay Taytay, Municipality of Duero, and an eastern part of the province of Bohol in Central Philippines. This tribe has unique religious and literary practices and a cultural heritage that date back to the pre-Spanish era. As Sweat purports, due to the fact that the modern world is in such a hurry to reach a never ending change, people take most of the past for granted [13]. The fading of cultural education specifically the use of the distinct writing system of a tribe is an undeniable example. To Piers, writing systems are invariably associated with local demands for self-determination, ethnic revitalization and a revised moral order [14]. As recounted, Piers emphasizes that Southeast Asia's new writing systems

are typically created in rural zones of anti-colonial confrontation by leaders who claim spiritual inspiration like the Eskaya writing system [14]. Eskaya people believe that their writings system is created by *Pinay*, whom they believed as the “*first pope*” in the Philippines. It is rediscovered by Mariano Datahan in the aftermath of Philippine-American war, which makes a utopian community, in order to resist imperial claims and establish an indigenous nation in Bohol. The Eskayan language and script are seen as a manifestation of this incipient national culture and is believed to be unique, as purported by Santos [15].

This study demystifies the major characteristic of the writing system used by the Eskaya tribe of Bohol. This study also navigates the literary works of Eskayas and elaborates the existing strategies in the preservation of their script. Unravelling solutions to the decline of knowledge on the Eskaya writing system and discovering its significance to social lives of the Eskayas are also embedded. It is believed that this research is appropriate and relevant to the present situation of the indigenous groups in the Philippines, in order to promote preservation of their cultural identity. Generating knowledge on the Eskayan script, discovering existing strategies for preservation of its writing system, this can be used by Social Science scholars, including the different tribes in the Philippines and abroad remain the noble intention of the study. It attempts to help the tribes to minimize their difficulty in saving what is left in them, as part of their heritage.

Mark [16] points out that as human societies emerge, the creation of a writing system has been seen as an inevitable scenario driven by exigencies such as communication and recording history. In this context, the use of writing system has been noted as a significant contribution in a society. This writing system is used in the creation of Eskaya Script among the Eskayas of Bohol, cuneiform among the ancient Mesopotamia, hieroglyphics among the Egyptians, *Alibata* or *Baybayin* among the Filipinos and Bamun script in Cameroon. To Ferris, all these emphasize diversity but with one common goal, that is, communication [17]. The advent of the Eskayan writing system in the Philippines is of a particular sociolinguistic interest, not just of its relative longevity; but because its development coincides with the construction of a complex spoken registers and a variety of literature, which enables people to revolutionize communication, and fill in the gap of

demystifying a remnant of our *baybayin* text, which are no longer used in the advent of globalization and intellectualization of an adulterated text. Henares points out that the Eskayan script is used by Francisco Dagohoy as a means of communication with his followers during the Dagohoy Rebellion, a rebellion against the Spanish colonial government that takes place in Bohol from 1744 to 1828, in order to avoid detection from the enemies [18].

To Piers, another domain of Eskayan writing is in the reproduction of traditional literature [14]. Bertram [19] supports that writing systems pave the way to the development of literature all around the globe. This can be observed in the Eskaya tribe as noted by Piers [14] who states that Eskaya has a wide literary corpus such as handwritten collection of folklore, expository texts and local history; though there is no available study on its literary works. Tirol [21] adds that language and writing are both persistent motifs in Eskayan literature. The Eskaya Chieftain describes Eskayan writing as having emanated from the mind of *Pinay* who used the human anatomy as his source of inspiration. To Piers, the uniqueness of the Eskayan Script necessitates protection [14]. Thus, policies for the preservation of cultural identity such as indigenous scripts should be prioritized.

Reyhner [22] stresses the importance of policies on the preservation of indigenous script such as the Eskaya, because this shapes self-identity and cultural diversity among the different races in the world. Indigenous scripts enable the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to another, which resulted in a wide range of understanding among people. Flores [23] promotes for the protection of the indigenous writing system, which plays a significant role in shaping the Filipino culture and identity. The writing system of the Philippines is an imprint of cultural uniqueness and definitive expression of solidarity. Protection of this writing system is also tantamount to protection and preservation of Filipino culture and identity.

Civallero [24] states that there is an importance in preserving writing systems and literature for it may be the only chance of knowing their past. Writing systems pave the way to the creation of books or any written code that people use as a means to know what is in the past. The Code of Hammurabi is one great example for this code, once written in clay tablets and provided people with knowledge of a fundamental law regulating a government. It is evident that writing

system has been used in noting political, social developments and historical data. This statement is also supported by Unseth [25] pointing that writing script of Cameroon called Bamuns, as an example, has been employed for recording national history from an indigenous perspective, and then becomes a trusted source of their past. The Eskaya tribe also has been recording their oral history, which is compiled and passed on to the succeeding generation.

Writing capacitates to communicate and blend information creates a deep influence on culture as evident in Eskaya tribe and other tribal groups. Collection of maxims into codes of law, palace documents in terms of accomplishments are stretched into histories, religious incantations, chants, and selections of literary pieces are enhanced into epics. To Fagan, literacy leads individuals to conceive of events in a more global and less segmented perspectives and allows nations to realize their historical beginning[26].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to demystify the writing system used by the Eskaya tribe of Bohol. Specifically, this study hunted to answer these objectives: (1) analyze the major characteristic of the Eskaya script, (2) describe some pieces of Eskayan literature, (3) explain the existing strategies to preserve the Eskayan script, and (4) state the significance of Eskayan script in the lives of the Eskayan Community.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research Design

This study used an ethnographic design with naturalistic observation and documentation to unveil the major characteristic of the Eskaya script, literary pieces, and strategies in writing system preservation. Naturalistic observation is the collection of data without manipulation of the environment; this technique involves observing the natural world [27], like the Esakayan village, their script and their interaction with one another. The chieftain and other native members of the Eskaya tribe were the key informants of the study, who were chosen based on the following criteria: mastery of the Eskaya script writing, in depth knowledge of the Esakayan literary masterpieces.

Research Tools

There were 20 questions written in an interview guide concerning the Eskaya script. Focused group

discussion was conducted among the Eskaya tribal leaders. Taking of photographs of the scripts and documentation of their literary pieces were recorded with tribal leader's permission. These answers were transcribed and themes were extrapolated to provide the illumination of concepts.

Scope and Delimitation

The study is focused on the major characteristic of the Eskaya writing system and their written literature. Its main purpose is to demystify the different writing system of the Eskaya script, the strategies on the preservation of the Eskayan scripts and the social impact of this script to the Eskayan people. The study covers only the minority information about the Eskayan script due to the researchers' time constraints and the researchers cannot dig deeper about the writing system because the researchers are not professional linguist.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Eskaya Script as a Corpus of Knowledge



Figure 1 Letter A



Figure 2 Letter B



Figure 3 Letter ATCHE



Figure 4 Letter HO



Figure 5 Letter L



Figure 6 Letter M



Figure 7 Letter P



Figure 8 Letter R

There are no other writing systems known all around the Philippines that use parts of a human body, as bases of their script, except the Eskaya writing system. Some of the Eskayan letters represent the different positions of a human head, arms, body and legs. Eskaya chieftain, Hilario Gigimbao, says “*gikan ang pinulungang Eskaya sa pormos minimi*”, *nga nangahulugan nga gikan sa lawas sa tao*” (The Eskaya script is derived from as pormos minimi” or in vernacular, from the body of a man). According to Santos [28], the word *as pormosminimi* is actually a bastard concoction of the Latin phrase *ad formus hominem*, which means ‘from the body of men’. The Eskayan letters represents body parts, and upon closer inspection, some of the symbols may actually be dance movements, as it is exhibited in the intricacy of hand movements in a casual human interaction. With this, a theory is derived that while some members of the tribes cannot decipher the symbolism of the script, they opt to use the body parts to communicate and create a common understanding among everyone. It resembles like a normal way communicating someone with the use of a sign language.

The arm extends from the shoulder to the wrist symbolizes Figure 1’s “A”. The arm is a part of body that provides pulling and lifting strengths (Healthline) [28]. In the Eskayan script, it represents the love of mankind on the beauty of a good body. This signifies a man whose standing proud baring his arms to show how strong he can be. Strength is an important aspect that a person would have wanted to achieve, physically, emotionally and mentally. Another is letter “B” in Figure 2, which represents the toughness and courage of a man that whatever problem that might come, he can stand tall and never be affected. This signifies a man’s firm and unbreakable decision toward everything in times of adversities. Figure 3’s “ATCHI” is a letter that represents the ability of a man to have a hidden intent on some actions that he shows toward other people. This also signifies

concealing the things that might hurt another person or concealing the facts that might cause harm on him.

The human legs are powerful support of the human body, more especially in standing and running. These provide the ability to walk, run, jump, and other movements (Healthline)[28]. In the Eskayan script “HO” in Figure 4, represents the tendency of a man to become greedy. Man, as a human being, has a strong tendency to hope for more and if he has more to achieve, he does not look back on where he comes from. This signifies a man who achieves his dreams and does not step back on the ground.



Figure 9 Letter T



Figure 10 Letter U



Figure 11 Letter BOY



Figure 12 Letter NGO

The hand allows humans to do much more complicated task than any other animals [28]. Figure 5’s “L” represents the strong devotion of man to a higher being, like his God. This signifies a man who offers himself and lifts up his hands to praise the Supreme Being whom he believes more powerful than him. Figure 6’s “M” represents the versatility of a man that whatever he may encounter he can change shape to accommodate the situation. This signifies his ability to accept every possible occurrence that may happen on him. The human hands can perform several functions, including lifting of hard objects [28]. Figure 7’s “P” represents the inner goodness of a man that blooms even if he wants it or not. Every individual is capable of goodness, like a flower, he or she can shower other people with his or her inner fragrance and inspire to do good for other people. This represents letter “R” in figure 8, which means the capability to be flexible to suit what the situation

requires him or her to act. This signifies the individual's survival mechanism that when life requires him or her to push through living, even if the ending is unclear he or she keeps on striving hard.

Figure 9's "T" represents the individual's dreams to have balance in every aspect of his life either emotionally, physically ormentally. This also signifies man's needs to balance things out in order to achieve his greater glory. Man believes that a balance life means achieving for better opportunities in life. The human elbow provides the versatility of the arm to lift certain objects [28]. Figure 10's "U" represents man's firm decision making skills when time requires them to. It signifies the capability of man to assert what he believes to be true no matter what it takes. Though, he is open to hear out other's perspectives; but this figured action can also signify aggression. This letter "BOY" in Figure 11 represents the ability of man to offer support or affection, and seeking to touch and join with the other person. This signifies that as a human being, man needs another person to connect with, to talk with and even to clash with. This shows that man can be vulnerable at times when he allows others to enter his life. Figure 12's "NGO" represents the character of a man to be a self-provider. He thinks of different ideas which benefit him. He always tries to stay on top to have greater access to the things he dreams of acquiring.

The Eskaya script has been closely associated with that of the Hebrew writing system [29]. Though in actual writing, the Hebrew letters and Eskayan letters are different, some of the hand gestures that represent the Eskayan alphabet have an obvious similarity to that of the Hebrew Alphabet hand gestures. Hand gesture for the Eskayan letter V has the same hand gesture for Hebrew's letter Q and Z, Eskayan alphabet Boy and Hebrew's H as shown in table 1. The difference can be observed in the movements of the fingers in the Hebrew alphabet hand gestures.

Eskaya's Literature Pieces

Bohol's Nationalistic Identify

Unang Katawhan sa Bohol (The Inhabitants of Bohol). This is a record of events involving the different personalities who have fought during the Spanish colonization. This record tells the readers that the Eskaya writing system has been made inside the 'boho' or cave in Bohol, when the Boholano patriots

hide in caves to have their campaign against the oppressors. The script is used by famous patriots such as Datu Sikatuna of Bohol, Francisco Dagohoy, Apolinario Mabini, Andres Bonifacio and Padre Jose Burgos as codes to be used as a means of communication to avoid detection from the Spanish authorities who were on a rampage to stop Filipino nationalism. These personalities have played great roles in fighting for Filipino freedom from the Spanish colonizers. The script has been safeguarded by these people for they believe that Eskaya writing system is for the Filipinos only and not for the Spaniards. The recorded testaments state that the Eskaya script has been used all over Bohol and outside the province. Ordinary Filipino people are taught by teachers to comprehend the script and join the fight against the Spanish authorities. It is also stated that the Eskaya script has been preserved by these people, in order for the next generation of Bohol and other Filipinos to use this script and embrace their cultural identity.

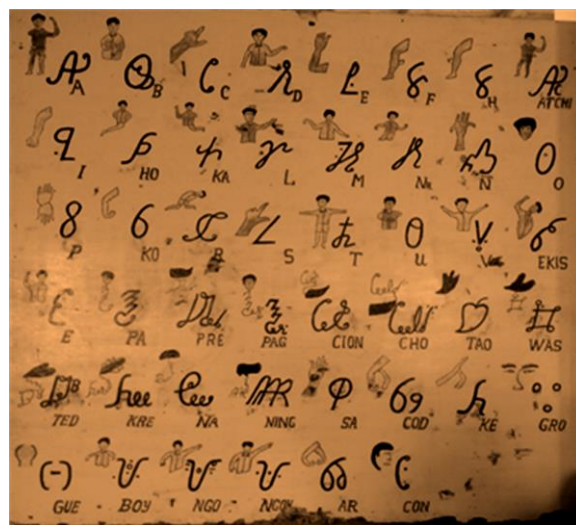


Figure 12 Eskaya Script

The analysis has not found any corresponding data to support the claim of the Eskaya tribe that Apolinario Mabini (1864-1903), the brain of the Philippine Revolution, Andres Bonifacio (1863-1867), the founder of the underground movement called KKK (Kataastaasan, Kagalanggalangan na Katipunan), and Jose Burgos (1837-1872), reformer during the Cavity Mutiny, used the Eskaya script as means of communication. Studies about Datu Sikatuna of Bohol (1565) and Francisco Dagohoy of the Dagohoy Revolt (1744-1828) cannot provide written testaments to prove this said claim. A

conjecture is made that the Eskaya script has been forbidden and kept secret, in isolation until the earliest attested document written in Eskayan is only dated in 1908, barely ten years when the country has been liberated by the Americans since the Spaniards left in 1898. A resolution to this confusion might be unveiled in the years to come by other researchers.

Boholano's Natural and Mystical Origin

Tumao (Sprout). This is the Eskaya tribe's version of the Book of Genesis, which becomes a myth that shapes their cultural beliefs.

"This story stated that there was once a garden, and in that garden there was a flower. One day, a butterfly chose to lay her eggs on that particular flower. Days passed, the eggs became caterpillars and had their own paths. One caterpillar went to a nearby tree and there she met a lion. They arrived to an agreement and they mated. The caterpillar became a lioness and gave birth to a monkey. The monkey gave birth to a man and that man is the Catholics' version of Adam. The monkey also gave birth to a woman the same as the Eve of the Bible. Then the man and the woman mated and humans multiplied".

This story is a combination of the Catholic's Book of Genesis and Charles Darwin's Natural Selection. The book of Genesis tells us what the creation of the entire cosmos (universe) took place in six days. He created a garden called Eden where he put the first man. God created the first man in his own image then God fashioned the rib of man into a woman [30]. The Garden of Eden has a resemblance to that of the Eskaya's garden in the story of Tumao. On the other hand, Charles Darwin's Natural Selection shows a similarity with the evolution of the lioness that gives birth to a monkey, who, later, gives birth to a human being. This is related to the process of natural selection that provides adaptation of the natural environment [31]. It can be noted that the Tumao story merges the religious belief of the origin of man and the scientific explanation of human evolution.

Bohol's Indigenous way of Mathematical Calculation

Aritmetica (Arithmetic). This is a compilation of Eskaya's numerical system and operations. The 'aritmética' is composed of mathematical questions

like the usual mathematics books. The Eskaya tribe uses the same decimal system as the rest of the Philippines. The names for their numerical system are as follows; 1=oy, 2=tre, 3=koy, 4=pan, 5=sing, 6=nom, 7=pin, 8=wal, 9=sim and 10=pon. They also have names for twenty (kaw), thirty (krat), hundred (ten), and thousand (man). The Eskaya tribe also have names for the basic mathematical operations like as (addition), ton (subtraction), bret (multiplication) and pen (division). The 'aritmética' also has directions for art making. Aritmetica is derived on a Spanish word for arithmetic, a branch of mathematics that deals with properties of the counting whole numbers and fractions and basic operations applied to numbers [32]. This 'aritmética' is the equivalent of the general mathematics books seen, not only in the Philippines, but all around the globe.

Bohol's way of Heroic Reformation

Rangnan (A Book of History). Rangnan is what the Eskaya tribe considers their version of Philippine History book from the time of Spanish colonization. This record of event involves the time when Dr. Jose Rizal's fight with the Spanish colonizers using a silent war through his books *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. What are also written in the Rangnan are other events from the Spanish colonization up to the achievement of freedom by the Filipino people including other people who also fight alongside with Jose Rizal, in order to gain the country's long sought independence.

Bohol's Quest for Knowledge

Simplet (Letters of the Alphabet). Simplet is the explanation on where the Eskayan Alphabet is derived from. This is also a collection of the different letters of the Eskayan alphabet. Inside the simplet are the different positions of man's body as representations of the Eskayan letters. The simplet is used by teachers when teaching the young Eskayan during Saturdays and Sundays. This is the equivalent of the global English alphabet chart which is used by schools. The English Alphabet consists of 26 characters on the other hand; the Eskaya letters have 1000 individual characters.

Bohol's Code of Conduct

Abadeha (Commandments). The Abadeha contains rules of right conduct and right manners for the Eskaya tribe. This contains teachings such as

respect for elders, going to church every Sunday, polite and courteous expressions and right manners in dealing with daily occurrences and situations. It gives them the standard of what is true and what is wrong. Aside from that, the abadeha encourages people to have a moral and ethical living. It stresses the importance of good actions and deeds as evident in the characteristic of an Eskaya tribe member. It also includes considerate manners towards every person, which leads to a harmonious relationship with one another and a strong devotion to God. Like the Ten Commandments for Christians and Buddhists Eight Fold Path, the abadeha serves as the guide for the Eskayan. The Decalogue or Ten Commandments of God provide better practices of Christians to live morally [33]. According to Bodhi[34], the Buddhist Eight Fold Path seeks to promote learning and a process of self-discovery. The different teachings intersect in a common denominator which is to have an ethical and moral living.

Bohol's Affinity with Nature

Atekesis (Nature's Guide). The atekesis includes the tribe's premonitions and beliefs on upcoming catastrophe and disasters. One can read in this book about the belief of the Eskaya tribe about prediction of natural calamities. The atekesis has different beliefs which state that when planting crops, one must first consider the moon to have better harvest especially if one is to plant sweet potato and other root crops. Another one is that the changes of the cats' pupils would mean the rise and fall of water level in the sea. The Eskayans build their houses through a ritual; the 'beriki' (a ritual master) has to ask the permission of the spirits if the site is right. If not, one has to select another site and undergoes another ritual, until the permission is granted. This book also states the importance of herbal medicine in curing diseases which is used by the traditional 'mananambal' (healer) in the area. The beliefs and superstitions of the Eskaya tribe have a similarity to that of the Filipino farmers and Welsh in Great Britain. These farmers believe that in broadcasting rice, a bountiful harvest is assured if the sowing has begun the day after a night, when the sky is full of stars. For the Eskaya tribe it should be full moon. Another belief from the Welsh superstition states that, when the pupil of a cat's pupil broadens, there will be rain. The difference lies in the result of the broadening of the cat's pupil. One states that it signifies the rise and fall of sea level while the latter

denotes rain. But in terms of scientific explanation, the success of the harvest has no relation to that of the full moon or the stars. The same as the rise and fall of the sea level and the upcoming rain has no connection to that of the broadening of a cat's pupil. To yield better harvest, one must consider the soil, fertilizer and a great care and time must be spent. Meanwhile, world's government adopts tides table in order to measure tides prevent occurrences of calamities [35]. This can be used by people to know the tides instead of the cat's pupils to have accurate knowledge.

Bohol's Tragic and Pure Love

Daylinda (A Woman's Pure Love). This is the story of a lady named Daylinda who is once a part of the Eskaya tribe. Daylinda's story starts when she refuses to be baptized by the Spaniards, for the reason that she does not want to be enslaved by them. She narrates all the happenings at that time including the war between Magellan and Lapu-Lapu. Even if she does not want to be baptized; but she remains helpless and is forced to accept it. Her partner does not want to be baptized also, so he chooses to flee to the mountains. Her partner's general encourages him to be baptized but he denies for he despises the foreign rule; by then he is killed by the general. Daylinda, who is not aware of the unfortunate event, is depressed for she is not able to receive any replies from her partner. When she learns about the death of her partner, she chooses to commit suicide on his tomb. There is a discrepancy between the facts given by the chieftain about the general during the time of Magellan and Lapu-Lapu and the established knowledge on the military history of the Philippines. It is a fact that at the time of Lapu-lapu and Magellan in 1521, there was still no known military structure in the Philippines. The possibility is that, the partner of Daylinda is simply a tribal warrior or a 'timawa'. The Timawas are the feudal warrior class of the ancient Visayan societies of the Philippines [36]. This particular uncertainty can be answered in the future, more especially on the account's ambiguity, in terms of its fictional and the non-fictional narratives.

Bohol's Regard for Human and Mystical Connection

Ang Lingganay na Ugis (While Bell). This is a story of a 1.5 meters diameter white bell, which can sound and be heard 50 kilometers away. It is believed that the bell is snatched by a small native bird from

Spain and is thrown into the Abatan River in Cortes, Bohol. Several means are made to recover the white bell; but all abortive because when someone tries to get the bell, the water level rises and kills the person who attempts its rescue. Old folks believe that the place, where the bell is sunken, is shielded by a huge octopus. This bell can only be retrieved at the right time and with the right person. The Eskaya Chieftain's claim about their 'Lingganay na Ugis' (white bell) is unbelievable that this is not a merely a myth but it does actually happen a long time ago. The small bird brought by the Spaniards is the Eurasian Tree sparrow or *Passer Montanus*, which has a size of 14 centimeter small. How come a small bird can carry a huge bell to the river? It is a question that future researchers to ponder on what is fictional and non-fictional.

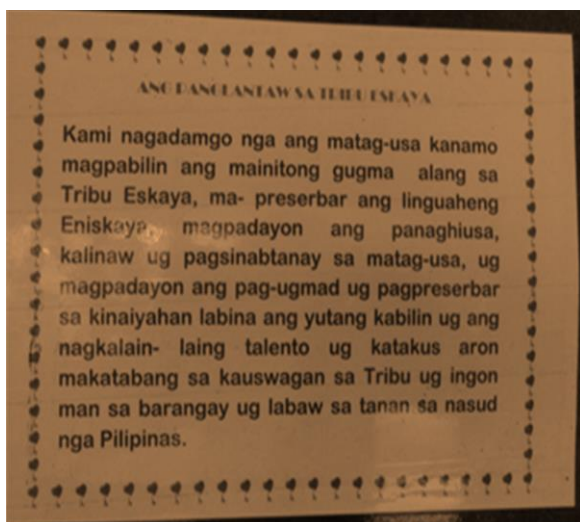


Figure 13 Eskaya Tribe's Vision Statement

Preservation of Eskayan Script and Literature

The provincial government of Bohol has undergone a preservation strategy for the Eskaya tribe as a whole using their Eco Tourism project. The province of Bohol's Ecotourism Program is created in collaboration with the provincial government, the Tourism Offices. This is in collaboration with Japan's International Cooperation Agency for Sustainable Environment Protections Program (www.Ecotourbohol.com). This particular partnership encourages a stable development for Bohol, makes new promotions for Bohol, contributes to her sustainable economy, and attracts more tourism opportunities [37]. According to the Eskaya chieftain, they earn money by this eco tour and able to maintain the beauty of the community. They build structures

like centers for the community, and are given the chance to impart their script and literatures to local and foreign tourists. The tribal community is also requested by the local government for their involvement on the project, "Eskaya Tribe Cultural Heritage Preservation and Development Program". The project comprises capital formation for the establishment and operation of tribal school and special museum for the Eskaya tribe. The need for the project has gained attention for the young Eskayan generation, who can no longer use the script either orally or written. Because of this, tribal leaders found it imperative to preserve this heritage, and pass this to the succeeding generation, not only thru a museum, but the schools that actively integrates in the curriculum and in instruction.

Another strategy of the community is the DepEd's ALS-Literacy System Contracting Scheme with basic literacy class gears toward preservation of the Eskaya language. The tribal teachers encourage the community to join teaching of the Eskaya script, during weekends. They are designated with a particular time to study the Eskaya script specifically every Saturdays and Sundays from morning till noon. The villagers are pushing their vision in protecting their culture and script as seen in their vision statement in Figure 13. The different resorts near the Eskaya tribal community are extended also to help in preserving the Eskaya script and culture by giving lectures and tours for their customers. A community's relationship is a foundation that enables a person to make sense of the world. They provide a sense of identity and purpose, a sense of being a part of and belonging. These strategies have shown the importance of a harmonious relationship between the government and the community in helping one build a sense of self identity and community ties for them to navigate their demands and contingencies for everyday living' [38].

Usage of Eskaya script had deteriorated

The Eskaya script represents a symbolism that shapes the Eskaya tribes' identity. Once used as codes for war messages; but today, it is evident that the script has not been used in daily bases. The Eskaya community commitsthe use of the Visayan-Cebuano texts in speaking and in writing. Member A said "*Di man mi mugamit og Eniskaya kung mo storya og kung musuwat mi sa pinulungang Binisaya gihapon.*" (We don't use the Eskaya script in speaking and if we

write, we use Visayan). Member B also said “*Di man ko hanas sa Eniskaya, maong magbisaya nalang ko. Di man pod makasabot tanan*” (I’m not fluent in using Eskayan language that is why I tend to use the Visayan language. People will also not understand). This shows that knowledge on the Eskayan script and language has been deteriorating. This might be due to the fact that this generation has been influenced by the widely used Cebuano-Visayan way of speaking and writing.

The members are aware that the script brought their identity as an Eskayan though in their social lives it is not widely used. “*Basta maghisgot og Eskaya, ang pinulungan ug sinuwatang Eskayanun dayon ilang mahinumduman. Pero dili na jud na namo kayo magamit diresa panimalay kay di man pod mugamit ang uban.*” (If someone talks about Eskaya, our Eskayan language and script is what they always remember, but we don’t always use them in our home because other members will not use them) Member C pointed. One member also stated the importance of the script, “*Importante kayo kay mao manay tima-ilhan sa Eskaya. Aw, kung naay bawal nga pag-ibig, pwede pod na gamiton ang iniskeya arun di masakpan. Haha...*” (Eskaya script is very important because it sets our identity. Aw, if there is a forbidden love affair, then the Eskaya script can be used to avoid detection. Laughs...). Member E stated that “*Mag Binisaya man sila mao magbinisaya ko. Laena pod ako ray mag pinulungan ug sinuwatang Eniskaya*”. (They use the Visayan language that is why I always use it. It’s not nice if I will be the only one to use the Eskayan language and script.) The members exhibit a certain connection to that of the Eskaya script; but have to be chosen to put it aside to conform to other community members. Conformity means the influence of the majority in the group; either information or normative. Normative conformity is the process of accepting someone to get rid of fear and rejection, while informational conformity happens when someone lacks knowledge and seek guidance from other members of the group [39].

The action of the members can be explained by the communication accommodation theory, which states that when a person talks with other people, he or she can change his or her style of speech toward the commonly used style of the listener [40]. Due to the fact that majority of the Eskayan members speak the Visayan dialect, the minority who know how to speak and write the Eskayan language and script tend to

follow the majority which might result to the total wipe out knowledge on this script in the next few generation. This might cause a bigger challenge toward preservation of the Boholano heritage.

CONCLUSION

Eskaya writing system was based on the position of man’s body parts which conveyed communicative meanings like emotional response, physical interaction, mental desire and spiritual aspiration. This writing system paved the way to the creation of variety of literature ranging from biographies, code of conduct, myths, and histories that shaped the Eskayas’ unique Boholano identity. Bohol’s rich folklore radiates nationalistic identity, natural and mystical origin, indigenous way of mathematical calculation, Rizalian reformation, quest for knowledge, code of conduct, affinity with nature, tragic and pure love, and social regard for human and mystical connection. Due to this unique identity, strategies in the preservation of the script have been strengthened; but, conformity of the people to the use of Cebuano-Visayan language played a great role in the deterioration of its writing usage.

RECOMMENDATION

The study may recommend other researchers to conduct a similar study on the characteristics, syllabi, and syntax of the Eskayan writing system. Other government agencies like the Local Government Units (LGUs) and the Department of Education (DepEd) may be able to help in the preservation of Eskayan system of writing. The LGUs can include in their action plans with a special funding allocation to support the preservation of the community and their culture. DepEd can provide trainings through the use of the Eskayan script in the proper implementation of the Mother Tongue-based-Multilingual Language Education (MTB-MLE) implementation in the lower grades, more especially in the town of Duero, where most of the Eskayan communities are dominantly concentrated.

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