

## CONSTRUCT OF THE BAYLANON CHANTS AND TRADITION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC DISCOURSE

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The Mamanwas, one of the original settlers of Caraga region in the Philippines. A tribe with a very colorful and beautiful oral tradition. One of which the tribal institution of the Baylanon or folk healer otherwise known as diviner or spiritualist. The paper delves in the construct of the Baylanon in the Mamanwa society albeit the changes of times. And its role as cultural masters/experts as well as keepers of traditions.*

**Key Words:** *Mamanwa, Baylanon, Diviner, Tudem , Bagani , Tribe .*

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Filipino nation vigorously continue to preserve its cultural traditions for posterity and as part of Filipino heritage. As a nation It continuously value the source of the said traditions. As a culturally diverse country the tribal communities are a prime source of cultural heritage. I have chosen to indulged in this study hence, the Mamanwas provided a very rich cultural heritage for the Filipino nation to appreciate and value as one of the national treasure.

The Mamanwa tribe is one of the original settlers or residents of Caraga region as discussed by the scholars in the likes of Maceda ( 1964), Eleazar ( 1985) and Almeda ( 1994). Trinidad ( 2014) considered them as the first Tandaganon as he wrote:

*" Before the Spaniards came, the original inhabitants of Tandag were the Mamanwas and the Manobo's. These two tribal groups of indigenous peoples were among the objects of evangelization drive by the early missionaries priests during the Spanish colonization of the country. "*

Despite of varied introduced development interventions in the Mamanwa land the Mamanwas were able to retain their tribal culture and proudly have today its renaissance or esteemed cultural valuing. As a means of protecting their indigenous knowledge system and for its continuity to the next generations.

The Mamanwas have been called by scholars in the likes of Maceda ( 1964), Eleazar ( 1985) , Almeda ( 1994) and Trinidad ( 2014) as peace loving people due to their reverent respect to the environments or natural resources which they considered as sacred and secular Maceda ( 1994). Castro (1984) stated/discussed the following concerning the colorful Mamanwa culture as :

*"The Mamanwas are a culturally distinct group of people. Residing in the marginal out-of-the way places of Northeastern Mindanao, Philippines, in the Agusan and Surigao provinces. The term "Mamanwa" means "the inhabitants of the countryside." It is derived from the word "banwa" which means grassy uncultivated countryside as distinguished from settlements near the main of settled part of the river."*

One of the tribal institution which contributed to a revered tribal valuing of their indigenous culture is the Baylanon , the shaman or diviner. He is both considered as keepers of traditions and cultural master or expert.



**Plate Number 1 . Rattan stripping, one of the prime source of livelihood in the site.**

In order to fully understand the milieu of the Baylanon, it is but proper to comprehend the entire Baylanon culture . For this reason understanding it will be a tool in having a profound appreciation of the beautiful Mamanwa culture. Hence, the study.

## II. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1. What are the duties of the Baylanon as keepers of traditions and cultural master?
2. What is the milieu of the Baylanon as a tribal institution?
3. What are the different rituals performed by the Baylanon?
4. What are the chants ( Tudem) the Baylanon chanted and for what occasions?

## III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Value the role of the Baylanon as keepers of traditions and cultural master.
2. Describe the milieu of the Baylanon as a tribal institution.
3. Narrate the rituals in the institution of the Baylanon.
4. Present the chants ( Tudem ) of the of the Baylanon.

## IV. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used ethnographic design aided with participant and non participant observations. Moreover free and informed consent was secured from the key informants. The study covered only four ( 4 ) key informants who were Baylanon . Due to the fact there were fewer Baylanon in the site. For recording tape and audio recorder, camera and field diary or field notes were used.

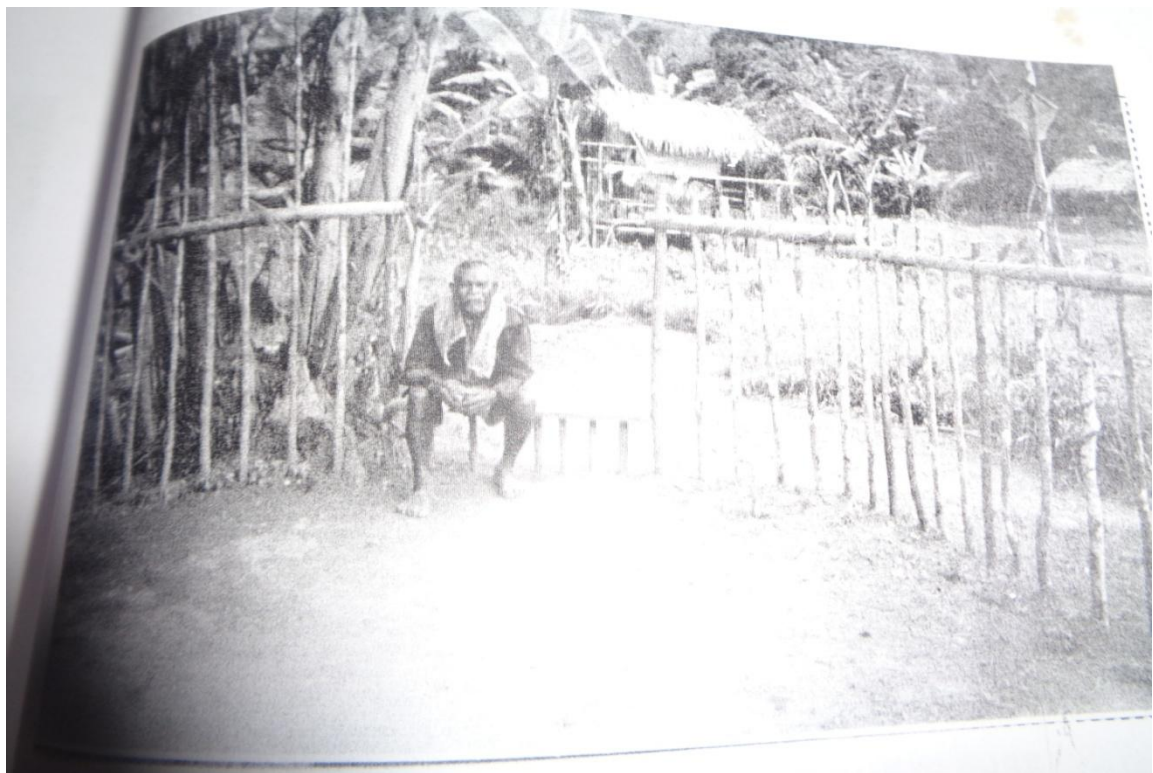
### The research procedure:

1. Permit from the Barangay Captain or village head was secured;
2. FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed consent ) was obtained ;
3. Permit from NCIP (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples) concerning the study was secured;
4. Field or ethnographic research conducted;
5. Termination of the research.





**Plate 2. The community welcoming the researcher.**



**Plate Number 3. One of the Baylanon.**

## V . DEFINITION OF TERMS.

**Abyan.** The guardian spirit of the Bagani.

**Bagani .** The traditional protector of the village .

**Bangkaso.** The altar built for the *Magdiwata/Kahimunan* ritual.

**Baylanon .** The healer or traditional shaman / diviner. Baylanon is also called Baylan.

**Bisaya .** The non Mamanwas residents in the site.

**Dakula.** The tribal chieftain. He is also called Mabalaw.

**Inazo .** The dowry practiced traditionally.

**Kahimunan.** The Mamanwa thanksgiving ceremony . And also conducted to welcome special dignitaries or performed during special occasions.

**Lumon .** The common term for brotherhood address by the Mamanwa to the Bisaya population.

**Magbabaja .** The supreme spiritual being or god.

**Magdiwata .** An indigenous ritual which require a pig for offering.

**Malaaser .** The council of elders.

**Panawagtawag.** The supplication before the ritual of *Magdiwata/ Kahimunan*.

**Tep-hage.** The thanksgiving ritual for a bountiful farm harvest

**Tudem.** The tribal chants and chanted by the Baylanon in most of the cases.



Plate Number 4 . One of the key informant.

## VI. THE SETTING

The study was conducted in Hitaob village of Tandag Surigao del Sur ( Philippines). Hitaob is a mountainous area. A village of Barangay Sotel . It is a village ( Purok ) which can be considered a secondary forest . It is situated in Kapatagan mountain which is a hunting ground of the Mamanwas .

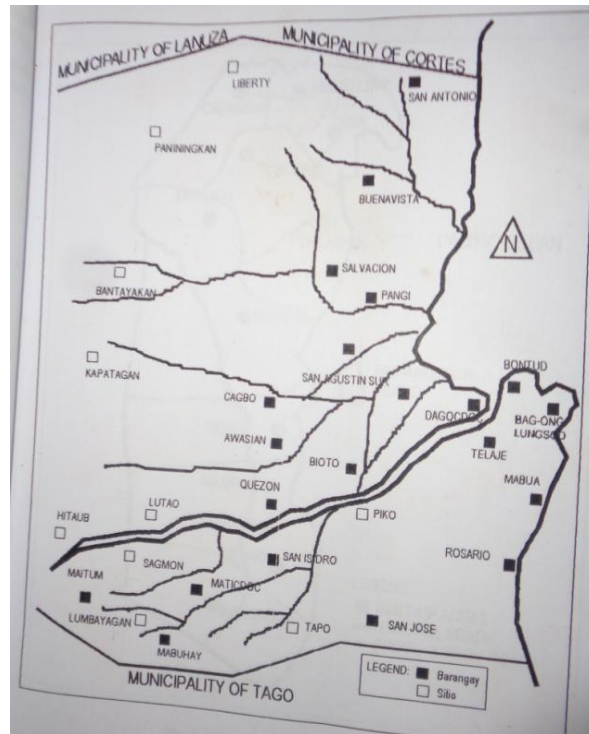


Figure Number 1. The map of Tandag. Source : Tandag LGU Planning Office.

## VII. DISCUSSION

### Baylanon as keepers of tradition and cultural master.

The Baylanon is the keeper of traditions in Mamanwa society. Most of the cases it is not a hereditary title. The individual Mamanwa can be a Baylanon by training of the sage or elder Baylanon. Through a dream or through desire of a particular Mamanwa to become one. The following are the significant role of the Baylanon in Mamanwa society:

1. As keepers of traditions. He a repository of tribal customary laws, way of life , chants called Tudem,
2. He is expert in the different community or tribal rituals;
3. He can be one of the peace maker in times of conflict;
4. He is knowledgeable in community herbal medicines ;



5. He is the most expert in rituals and chants of the tribe;
6. He is expert in the oral tradition the "Tudem".
7. As cultural master he makes sure the continuity of tribal oral tradition ;
8. As cultural master he makes sure the continuity of Mamanwas culture across generations;
9. He takes care of the materials or the implements of the tribal rituals.



**Plate Number 5. The Mamanwa Baylanon.**

#### **The milieu of the Baylanon as a tribal institution.**

As a tribal institution the Baylanon is one of the most important tribal institution of the Mamanwas for he is the expert in the "Tudem" or the oral tradition. The spiritualist/diviner ( *Baylanon* ) is an institution in Mamanwas society . He is a spiritualist and at the same time keepers of traditions. The individual who wishes to become one will be under the tutelage of the expert "Baylanon" . He will be trained in the worldviews of the shaman or sage . Including its rituals and the oral lore of the "Tudem". Including mastery of the herbal medicines . Unlike the "Dakula" which in some extent elected by the Mamanwa community the *Baylanon* is a choice of the interested Mamanwa to become one. He is also called cultural expert for the posses wisdom in the tribal lore particularly in the tribal chant the "Tudem".

## The full Moon or Nocturnal Prayer of the Community : A Supplication to the Supreme being.

The nocturnal or full moon prayers of the Mamanwas is a collective or a community affair. It is to be conducted during the full moon. The ceremony comprising of the following parts:

### 1. Preparation and cooking.

In early evening the community will converge to the site/setting of the ceremony. They will be placed in the table usually made of bamboo all the foods which they are going to consume in the said whole night ceremony.

### 2. The boar to be offered in the ceremony should be placed near the " Bankaso " or ceremonial area/altar.

### 3. After all the food had been cooked the ceremony will start.

4. The Baylanon will now officiate the " Panawagtawag" to be assisted by his wife. In the " Panawagtawag" the shaman or diviner will have his " Tudem" asking blessing from the supreme being ( "Magbabaja").

5. After the supplication the shaman (" Baylanon") will have his " Baylanon" dance accompanied by the " Gimbar " and other tribal musical instruments. In the "Baylanon " dance the shaman/diviner will continue his supplication . For almost one ( 1) hour. After his supplication his assistant ( his wife) will bring the "Mallorca" , bujo, 12 plates , young coconut leaves, rice, root crops to the constructed altar. The " Baylanon " this time/moment give his happy gestures for the creator " Magbabaja " was happy for the offering. This time he will order to the male population in attendance to slaughter the pig ( usually ) white in color. The blood of the pig will be sprinkled in the soil as an offering to the creator ( Magbabaja) which was instituted by the " Baylanon" and his supplication run as follows:

***" Kay daan na Malaaser da kalibutan pagkahinang. Kami banwa pagkatibe han Banwa para pagdayig kanmo Magbabaja".***

Translation:

***"Since the creation of world we have worshiped you dear creator Magbabaja".***

Then followed by continued chanting of the " Baylanon" .After the chant the state of trance was observed , meaning the "solob" had taken place. The connotation that the Baylanon was now possessed by the good Diwata and informed the community that message of the supreme deity ( Magbabaja) to the community.



6. The tribal feast is a communal meal of the tribe. Before the tribal meal the community will have community chant giving gratitude to Magbabaja (supreme being) for his goodness to the community. The young coconut leaves a form of thanksgivings by holding it high as community singings/chanting had been undertaken. After the chant the tribal meal follows.

7. After the community meal /dinner the community expressed gratitude to the "Baylanon" for the ceremony conducted. The Nocturnal prayer ends this part. And the community will be looking forward for the next full moon prayer.



**Plate Number 6. Mamanwa ( lagkaw) house.**

### **The Thanksgiving Ritual ( *Pasalamat kan Magbabaja* ).**

In the constructed altar the three ( 3 ) Baylanon will officiate the thanksgiving ritual. The prime intent of the ritual is to give thanks to Magbabaja for the good harvest. The shaman/diviner is composed of the following: The main Baylanon, and his two assistant.

The following are the implements/things/materials needed in the ritual:

1. " Bankaso " or the constructed altar,

2. Young coconut leaves,
3. Alcoholic beverage ( usually Mallorca);
4. Mao-on ( *boju*, lime),
5. Twelve plates;
6. Three ( 3) glass;
7. Gimbar or gong ( drum);
8. Bamboo flute ;
9. Red turban;
10. Three (3) white Chicken;
11. Kudlong ( Tribal guitar);
12. Water ;
13. Candle.
14. Biscuit



**Plate Number 7. One of the key informant.**

### Parts of the Thanksgiving Ritual.

1. The main " Baylanon" assisted by his associates . Prepared the supplication or " panawagtawag" .It lasted for ten (10) minutes.
2. After the supplication, the main "Baylanon" dances facing the " Bangkaso". And continued chanting.
3. After the dance of the " Baylanon". He enumerated the meaning of the offering such: for the young coconut leaves symbolizes green or productive harvest and peace, Mallorca an offering to the spirit world , *bujo* and lime for communal strength of the tribe, twelve ( 12) plates for abundance of food and harvest , three ( 3) white chicken as an offering to " Magbabaja".
4. The main " Baylanon" this time continued the chant . In this period the state of trance was observed or manifested by the main " Baylanon" and interpreted by his wife. The community listened well the interpretation made .
5. After the interpretation the " Baylanon" continued his chanting. The chant devotedly expressed thanksgiving to the supreme being " Magbabaja".
6. After the chant of the " Baylanon" . He now expressed gratitude to the community for their attendance. This time the thanksgiving ceremony ended.



**Plate Number 8. One of the key informant of the study.**



## The chants ( *Tudem* ) of the of the Baylanon.

### The Mamanwa Chants ( "Tudem" ).

The "Tudem" the oral narratives of the Mamanwas. This can done by singing , chanting or both. Traditionally it will be started by " Panawagtawag" or supplication to the creator ( "Magbabaja" or "Magbabaja"). There are genres of " Tudem" such " Tudem" of the institution of the Dakula, "Tudem" of " Kahimunan" , "Tudem" of the "Baylanon ", " "Tudem " in burial, "Tudem" of conflict resolution and peacemaking, "Tudem" in planting and harvesting, "Tudem" in fishing and among others forms of "Tudem". The chanter of the " Tudem" is the knowledgeable person in the tribal lore. He is also considered one of the keepers of tradition. As an oral narrative the "Tudem" is orally transmitted from one chanter to another across generations.

Cembrano ( 1999) writes the further meaning of the tod'om as:

*"The tod'om becomes sacred when it is performed by the ritual specialist especially during the kahimunan because the voices come from the Magbabaja, ancestors and other good spirits. This is spontaneous oral prose rendered in chant. The chant is about advice or reminder to the people, prescription on the proper way of living a human life associated with social values, rituals and practices. During difficult times, the chant may refer to omen or narrate historical events/figures from where the leaders may get ideas on how to resolve problems (Cembrano , 1999) .*



Plate Number 9. Mamanwa women taking a rest from work in the farm .



(N. B. The English translation of the Tudem. As translated by the researcher ).

### **Tudem in installing a Dakula ( chieftain)**

To the community in attendance

Listen.....

Dakula ( mention the name) had been entrusted to be our tribal leader

He is full of wit and wisdom to carry

The tribal oral tradition.

With this chants I offered my fervent prayer

That the Devine creator will grant you peace, wisdom and courage

To pursue your noble work as Chieftain

May this chants remind the unique traditions and culture of the Mamanwas

From generation to generation we have survived

Even though the discrimination of the lowlanders across the years

We have survived.....

May you help preserved the very colorful Mamanwa culture

To you our fervent hope of stamina and vigor

I offered this chants in remembrance of our ancestors

Our ancestors memories lives in you

You Chieftain dear , we are expecting

That in the exercise of your noble work

God be always with you. ....

### **Tudem of Magdiwata Ritual**

Since in the beginning we have given thanks to you almighty

From harvest in the farm

From bounties in the rivers

From bounties in the forest

May this pig offering will make you glad

May the ancestors be glad in this offering  
We give praise to you dear one  
Make our harvest more bountiful  
Make the soil fertile  
Our hope the you make the vegetation sprout.

### "Tudem "of Burial

God  
Please ask *Diwata*  
To Accept him in the paradise  
Don't give sickness to your  
Servant in paradise  
All his sufferings in this Earth had ended  
Please don't place him in the hell of fire  
Please send this dead  
With a new life besides you  
A place with no hunger  
Very soon god you will raise him  
From the dead  
All things had passed away  
All things had passed away  
All things had passed away  
*God* please don't give him to bad *Diwata* "*Kaporoan*"  
Please accept him in Paradise *Katahawan*  
His soul desires to be with you  
Let him be the Paradise  
A place where there is no more crying

## "Tudem" in the Community Nocturnal Prayer

The community in attendance this evening  
With high hope of community unity  
For continuity of tradition  
For continuity of life  
For continuity of tribal peace  
For continuity of hope for bountiful harvest

Hence, we offer to this evening ceremony  
The prepared "Bankaso" and the animal offering  
All of this for your glory  
May we hope the ancestors joins us in this ceremony  
May God almighty be glad in this offering  
May this pig offering and its blood symbolizes for the good harvest  
God (Magbabaja) please bless this community  
And accept this evening sacrifice.

## "Tudem" of Peace Making

May it be known of the desire of this two neighbors in conflict to end the feud.  
Hence this "Tudem" is offered as a form of peace offering  
The community in attendance are witnesses for the desire of peace  
Brings forth an abaca hemp to symbolizes the tribal bond  
Like an Abaca hemp strong and useful  
May this desire for peace be strong as the Abaca hemp  
Bring the young coconut leaves which further symbolizes peace  
Lastly bring the pig for offering to the divine almighty (Magbabaja)

God almighty as I offered the blood of this pig  
To end the feud of this neighbors/ friends may this offering  
Enlightened them that peace and brotherhood is needed for community  
In this prayer I give my hope for the parties settlement of their conflict

### **"Tudem" in clearing the land for farming"**

This soil is yours almighty (Magbabaja)  
Before using it I offer this prayer  
Please allow your son to use the soil for his family welfare

May you give him more harvest in this farm  
May you give protection to him  
May you give his farm a good harvest  
May you give the strength to make your son vigorous in taking good care of his farm

I offer you the blood of this chicken  
As a gesture of our thanks to you  
For your permission that this land will be used  
May you give your blessings in this endeavor.  
We praise you dear one.

### **"Tudem" of institution of Bagani**

God, as we desire for peace in the village  
We need protector of the village  
These young men have full of courage and stamina and vigor  
Their utmost dedication is to protect the village

I prayed to you dear god for their sustenance in their work  
May the " Abyan " guide them in this noble work  
They may bring forth honor to their families and clan for their dedication of their work

I formally institute them and present them to the community  
To the community in attendance  
Here are your Bagani  
May the Blessing of almighty Magbabaja be with them.  
Bring forth the offering of this celebration  
Hear us dear almighty Magbabaja



Here is the offering of white chicken which symbolizes purity of heart and blood for  
bravery of the Bagani  
Hear your loyal worker dear Magbabaja.

### **Tudem in welcoming dignitary /dignitaries**

Be it known to the community that our visitors are here with  
genuine intention to see the village;  
May God give them good health so they will visit again the community  
May ( Mention the name of the visitors) \_\_\_\_\_  
That despite for the distance of the village , still they have the desire to  
see us. May god gives them strength to  
carry their mission in this village  
( Mention the intension of the visitors \_\_\_\_\_ )  
Then followed by community dancing with the traditional dance.



**Plate Number 10 . The researcher assisting the village before the "Kahimunan".**

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Mamanwa oral literature or folklore be documented for posterity as part of Filipino heritage;
2. The School of Living Tradition be established in Hitaob to preserve the Mamanwas socio-cultural views ;
3. Integration of the various themes of the Tudem in humanities classes is also recommended.

## IX. CONCLUSIONS

1. The Mamanwa cultural and social milieu is very rich in oral traditions, indigenous knowledge system , values. Which should be preserved as part of the Filipino heritage.
2. The Baylanon is a tribal institution of the Mamanwas . He is a keeper of traditions, herbalist, and spiritualist . He is also a peace maker in times of neighborhood conflict.
3. The Baylanon is an expert chanter of the Tudem or the oral tradition of the Mamanwas.
4. The Tudem has several genres such : Tudem of peace, institution of Dakula, institution of Bagani, rituals such Kahimunan, Magdiwata , Tephagi or harvest ritual and others.
5. In order to become a Baylanon an interested Mamanwa will be under the tutelage of the elder or sage Baylanon. Other way of becoming a Baylanon is thorough vision or a dream.
6. Most of the Baylanon are males. Moreover in Mamanwa society women can also be a Baylanon but observed rarely by the researcher.

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