

Pongumanon: An Archetypal Analysis of Tinonanon Manobo Folktales in Southern Philippines

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Abstract

This study addresses the need to preserve the ethnolinguistic literature of the Philippines, focusing on the folktales (*pongumanon*) of the Tinonanon Manobo Tribe from Arakan, Cotabato, Southern Philippines. Using archetypal analysis, it examines recurring patterns, characters, and symbols in five folktales collected from Tinonanon Manobo elders aged 40 and above. The stories analyzed include: “*Pongumanon Ki Apo Motuwangod*” (The Story of Apo Motuwangod), “*Pongumanon Ki Oret*” (The Story of Oret), “*Diyon Kippot Ki Juan*” (The Story of Juan), “*Pongumanon to Sinuyatan*” (The Story of Sinuyatan), and “*Sokkad no Baow*” (A Widow). The analysis reveals that the Tinonanon Manobo value cooperation, moral integrity, and resilience, with a belief that good deeds bring success and malevolent actions lead to failure. The stories also highlight the community's deep faith in miracles, deities, and spirits, and emphasize virtues like gratitude and nurturing. This research showcases the cultural richness of the Tinonanon Manobo, reaffirming the importance of preserving their oral traditions. Crucially, these narratives serve as a repository of the community's moral values, worldview, relationship with nature, and cultural identity. While deeply localized, these structural values have potential relevance to the broader international frameworks of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly regarding cultural sustainability and environmental harmony. This study seeks to support the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous oral traditions by providing a systematic interpretive framework for localized heritage. Ultimately, the study contributes to ensuring the continuity and appreciation of Tinonanon Manobo folktales for future generations.

Keywords: Archetypal analysis, Indigenous oral traditions, Philippine indigenous folktales, Tinonanon Manobo *Pongumanon*

Introduction

Folktales have long been regarded as vital components of the cultural heritage of indigenous communities worldwide, providing insights into ancestral wisdom and the collective experiences of diverse ethnic groups (Sharma, 2025; Banda et al., 2024). These narratives preserve beliefs, traditions, and customs that define cultural identities (National Geographic Society, 2025; Kannapurany, 2016). In the Philippines, each ethnic group boasts a rich body of literature, with folktales standing out as poignant expressions of their origins and worldviews. However, the rapid advancement of modernization has endangered

the survival of these oral traditions (Hakim et al., 2025; Sousa et al., 2024), putting not only cultural appreciation at risk but also threatening the socio-economic development and educational practices of indigenous communities.

Among the indigenous peoples of the Philippines, the Tinonanon Manobo ethnolinguistic group stands distinct for its unique language, cultural practices, and oral tradition (Catoto, 2022). Central to their heritage are the *pongumanon*, or folktales, which encompass a diverse range of narratives, including epics, legends, supernatural tales, and riddles. These stories, deeply

rooted in their ancestral experiences, have been passed down through generations, serving as crucial links to their past while offering guidance for the future. Despite their cultural significance, the preservation and appreciation of these folktales have waned in recent decades (Saad et al., 2024; Eslit, 2023), jeopardizing the integrity of the Tinonanon Manobo's cultural identity.

While previous studies have highlighted various aspects of Manobo culture (Yu et al., 2024; Añolga, 2023; Diansig et al., 2023; Salvaña & Arnibal, 2019), there remains a gap in the in-depth analysis of their folktales. These narratives, far from being mere entertainment, serve as embodiments of the community's identity, moral codes, and worldview (Chingbiakmawi & Gangte, 2025; Castor, 2024). The intricate layers of meaning embedded within these stories have yet to be thoroughly explored. The ongoing neglect of these oral traditions presents an opportunity to examine the wealth of knowledge contained in the Tinonanon Manobo's folktales, using archetypal analysis to uncover their deeper cultural and symbolic significance.

In light of this, the present study aims to address the aforementioned gap by analyzing the folktales (*pongumanon*) of the indigenous Tinonanon Manobo community in Barangay Kinawayan, Arakan, Cotabato, in the island of Mindanao, Philippines. Through this research, we seek to reveal the cultural richness and linguistic diversity embedded in these oral traditions, employing archetypal frameworks to preserve these ancient narratives for future generations.

The primary objective of this study is to advocate for the revitalization and preservation of Tinonanon Manobo folktales as key cultural assets. By exploring these narratives, we hope to contribute to the growing discourse on indigenous literature, while encouraging a deeper understanding of the broader Filipino cultural heritage. In doing so, we aim to foster a renewed interest in indigenous storytelling traditions, ensuring their survival amid the pressures of modernity and safeguarding the essence of the Tinonanon Manobo culture. The study will explore pivotal questions: What distinctive narratives constitute the folktales of the Tinonanon Manobo? How do these narratives utilize archetypes, manifested in characters, patterns, events, and symbols, to convey cultural meanings?

This research directly contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting indigenous language and storytelling as a means of enhancing educational frameworks, SDG 11 (Sustainable Communities) by preserving cultural heritage and fostering community resilience, and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by protecting and promoting indigenous knowledge systems and their rights.

Theoretical lens

This study draws on archetypal theory, which is closely aligned with mythological and ritualistic perspectives, particularly Carl Jung's concept of the "collective unconscious" (1969). Jung posits that individuals inherently possess expectations and desires related to narratives. The use of archetypes in literature, according to Jung, enables authors to meet these expectations while allowing readers to form deep connections with the story's elements. Literary components such as plots, characters, and imagery often represent reinterpretations of recurring motifs from ancient literature. Archetypal analysis offers a structured framework for interpreting texts by examining recurring myths, symbols, and character archetypes. Archetypes invoke images linked to repetitive experiences, which may vary across cultures and individual readers. Rooted in both cultural anthropology and psychoanalysis, archetypal criticism utilizes cultural and psychological folklore to analyze literary works. Jung's (1969) approach highlights the idea that individuals inherit universal experiences from their ancestors, which significantly influence their creative expressions. His method of analysis includes guiding questions, such as identifying recurring patterns, transformative journeys, and symbolic references to mythology, death, and resurrection. Furthermore, it involves examining archetypal characters, settings, and motifs to uncover deeper layers of meaning.

Methods

Design of the study

In this study, we employed Jung's (1969) Archetypal Analysis to examine archetypal characters, patterns, situations, and symbols within the

pongumanon of the Tinonanon Manobo Tribe. Adopting a qualitative research design, we gathered diverse data through interviews, observations, documents, and audio-visual materials. After verifying the data, we analyzed and synthesized the findings into overarching themes (Creswell, 2013). To further refine the analysis, content analysis (Cole, 1988) was utilized to identify specific words, themes, or concepts within the qualitative data, unveiling cultural and psychological meanings. The qualitative content analysis approach involved a meticulous examination and interpretation of the texts (Valbuena, 1998). We employed multiple strategies, such as conducting interviews, recording narratives, taking detailed notes, and engaging in discussions, to ensure a comprehensive research process.

The study utilized expert purposive sampling to identify informants, an approach best suited for research that requires specific expertise in a given field (Etikan & Bala, 2017). This technique enabled us to select informants who met our criteria, ensuring the collection of original, clear, and authentic information about the Tinonanon Manobo *pongumanon*.

Informants

This study involved five key informants who served as the primary participants, a sample size aligned with qualitative inquiry standards for in-depth cultural research (Creswell & Poth, 2024). These participants were recognized tribal elders and cultural masters of the Tinonanon Manobo Tribe residing in Barangay Kinawayan, Arakan, Cotabato, Philippines. To ensure the depth and authenticity of the data, the informants were selected based on two criteria: (1) they were native speakers proficient in the Tinonanon Manobo dialect with extensive knowledge of the tribe's culture, history, and folklore; and (2) they possessed the specific cultural authority and capability to narrate or recite *pongumanon* (traditional folktales). Given the intensive qualitative and structural demands of archetypal analysis, the scope of this study intentionally focuses on a distinct corpus of five primary *pongumanon* obtained from these elders.

We personally interviewed the five tribal elders, employing an audio recorder, paper, and pen to ensure precise and reliable data collection. The *pongumanon* narratives, originally in the Tinonanon Manobo language, were translated into Filipino by a study

collaborator who is both a member of the tribe and a language bearer. Larson's Meaning-Based Translation method (1984) was utilized to ensure the accuracy of the translations. Due to limited internet access and the participants' unfamiliarity with technology, online data collection was not feasible. All data were securely stored on a cellphone and deleted once the study was completed.

We acknowledge that this localized sample size places boundaries on the extent to which broad generalizations can be made about Indigenous Philippine culture as a whole. However, these five elders serve as critical repositories of the community's oral heritage. The narratives selected structurally recur and mirror thematic motifs found across wider, undocumented Manobo oral lore, thereby offering a deep, specialized micro-snapshot of the community's collective worldview.

Data gathering and analysis

As researchers, we played a crucial role in this study, serving as the primary instrument in gathering data on the *pongumanon* folktales of the Tinonanon Manobo. Following Magracia et al. (2008), we upheld qualities of intellectual curiosity, diligence, and integrity to ensure an authentic and faithful representation of the study's focus.

To collect data, we followed these steps: we first sent a letter to the Barangay Indigenous People Mandatory Representative (BIPMR) of the Tinonanon Manobo in Barangay Kinawayan, Arakan, Cotabato, Philippines, seeking permission to conduct the study. Next, we identified informants, informed them of the research purpose, and recorded the *pongumanon* oral narratives using a cellphone. The data were then translated and prepared for analysis. Individual interviews were crucial for gathering comprehensive information. The collected data underwent interpretation and analysis of literary features, while transcription and discussions were kept confidential. We also sought guidance from knowledgeable tribe members to ensure authenticity, accuracy, and validity. The data were securely stored on a cellphone with restricted access to maintain confidentiality.

The collected folktales were analyzed through a systematic qualitative framework utilizing Carl Jung's theory of archetypes. The analytical process followed

three distinct phases: (1) structural open-coding of character behaviors, plot movements, and environmental motifs; (2) axial categorization mapping these codes directly onto specific Jungian archetypes (e. g., the Hero, the Shadow, the Trickster, and the Archetypal Journey); and (3) thematic synthesis linking these archetypes back to their localized cultural meanings. To establish interpretive validity and consistency, codes were subjected to peer triangulation with an independent researcher specializing in indigenous literature.

Reflexivity and researcher positionality

Since one of the academic researchers is a member of the *Tinonanon Manobo* tribe, they benefited from immediate access to the tribal structure of the *Tinonanon Manobo* community. However, the researchers remained highly conscious of their positionality. To mitigate potential Eurocentric analytical biases, community entry was strictly guided by traditional tribal protocols and formal consent procedures. Furthermore, the researchers maintained a reflexive journal throughout the fieldwork and analysis phases. This practice ensured that all interpretations were structurally grounded in the empirical field data and validated by tribal elders, rather than imposed from an external framework.

Ethical considerations

We strictly adhered to established ethical guidelines (Hammersly & Traianou, 2015) throughout the study. Ensuring confidentiality (Strydom, 2011) was critical in protecting participants' personal information and identities, while data integrity was maintained. Informed consent was obtained from the *Tinonanon Manobo* narrators (Thackray, 2018), highlighting voluntary participation and the option to withdraw at any time without consequence. Ethical principles such as beneficence, confidentiality, anonymity, and reciprocity (Halai, 2006) were upheld to protect the well-being and autonomy of participants, fostering trust (Hammersley & Traianou, 2015). Additionally, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for qualitative research ensured credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability. We prioritized accuracy, avoided plagiarism, and gave proper attribution. Tokens of appreciation were provided to participants as a gesture of gratitude upon completing the study.

Data translation and linguistic validation

To preserve the ethnolinguistic integrity of the oral literature, the recorded *pongumanon* were first transcribed verbatim in the original *Tinonanon Manobo* language. The material was then translated into Filipino, and finally into English for academic analysis. To ensure linguistic accuracy and mitigate external interpretative bias, the translated texts were cross-verified by a native speaker fluent in *Tinonanon Manobo*, Filipino, and English. Following this, a formal process of member-checking was executed: the translated narratives were returned to the storytellers and tribal elders to ensure that the core narrative vectors, spiritual contexts, and cultural truths remained uncompromised. Crucially, key indigenous terms, such as *pongumanon* (folktales) and specific cultural markers, were intentionally retained in their original language throughout the text to prevent semantic dilution and protect their distinct cultural nuances.

Results

The five analyzed *pongumanon* reveal a highly integrated system of symbolic and psychological structures. Table 1 systematically classifies these narratives across archetypal characters, situations, symbols, and their underlying cultural meanings.

The exploration of folktales begins with an examination of their setting, time, and place. Each culture weaves its own distinctive narrative style, reflected in the folk tales it produces. The *Tinonanon Manobo pongumanon*, collected for this study, are rich representations of their culture, beliefs, and origins, providing unique insights into their worldview. These stories, which detail the beginnings of things, including the naming of places and characters, embody the tribe's traditions. However, to ensure these narratives are fully appreciated, they must be enriched and shared with a broader audience, making their cultural significance accessible to all.

Table 1 Archetypal matrix of Tinonanon Manobo folktales

Folktale	Archetypal character	Archetypal situation	Symbol / Landscape	Cultural meaning / Worldview
<i>Si Apo Motuwangod</i>	The Archetypal Hero	The Call to Adventure / The Archetypal Journey	The Sacred Mountain / Forest	Environmental stewardship; cosmic balance between nature and humanity.
<i>Pongumanon Ki Oret</i>	The Shadow	The Battle between Good and Evil	The Dark Cave / Monster	Externalization of communal fears; the psychological fight against social chaos.
<i>Diyon Kippot ki Juan</i>	The Trickster	The Disruption of Order	The Shapeshifter / Animal	A pedagogical tool illustrating the consequences of breaking tribal taboos.
<i>Pongumanon to Sinuyatan</i>	The Wise Old Man / Mother	The Materialization of Guidance	The Ancient Tree / Amulet	Reverence for ancestral wisdom; the transmission of historical tribal knowledge.
<i>Sokkad no Baow</i>	The Innocent	The Fall and Redemption	The Living River / Water	Ritual cleansing; the cyclical nature of community life and rebirth.

“Si Apo Motuwangod”

Once upon a time, there was a *Datu* (tribal leader) named *Motuwangod* who lived peacefully in the world with his beautiful and beloved wife. *Monama* bestowed upon him great wealth, and he was known as a generous and compassionate person in their community because he would give whatever anyone asked of him. Many tribes admired *Motuwangod*'s kindness. He was accustomed to being generous, so he depleted his wealth, all his possessions, animals like horses, carabaos, pigs, and many more.

Now, another *Datu* came to his house to ask for something, and *Motuwangod* said, “What else can I give you since I have nothing left?” The *Datu* replied, “I will believe you are kind if you give me your wife.” *Motuwangod* was shocked by what he heard and looked up at the roof of his hut. He decided to give his wife. “No problem if you want to take my wife, take her,” *Motuwangod* said.

At that moment, the *Datu* took *Motuwangod*'s wife and journeyed through the mountains. *Motuwangod* was saddened by what happened and said, “Since I have no wealth and wife, I will travel the world as far as I can go.” He began his journey, traveling through mountains and forests – where he slept when night fell, and battled heat and rain. He had traveled far when, while walking and whistling, he saw a small hut surrounded by grass. *Motuwangod* did not immediately proceed because he wondered why there was a hut in the middle of the forest. He first hid under a tree and peeked to see if anyone lived inside the hut. Unbeknownst to him, he had already been seen by someone inside. *Motuwangod* slowly approached and entered the hut, but suddenly someone greeted him with a hug – it was a woman. When he looked at her, he realized it was his wife and she said, “So you're here, I thought I would never see you again.” Suddenly, another person appeared, and it was the *Datu* who took his wife. He said to him, “I did not touch your wife; I am a guardian of the mountains, and that is where I reside. Now, you have proven to me how kind and generous you are because you were willing to give even your wife.”

Motuwangod thanked the *Datu* and took his wife while joyfully traversing the mountains. When they reached the high part of the mountain, the heavens suddenly opened, and the Lord took him and his wife.

The folktale “*Si Apo Motuwangod*” encapsulates key cultural values of the Tinonanon Manobo tribe, particularly the importance of generosity, selflessness, and sacrifice. The story of *Motuwangod*, who willingly gives away his wife to prove his generosity, reflects the tribe’s belief in the significance of selfless acts. His willingness to give even his most cherished possession, despite the personal loss it causes, illustrates the core value of putting others’ needs before one’s own. The *Datu*, who takes *Motuwangod*’s wife, represents a test of virtue, challenging *Motuwangod*’s moral integrity. The eventual reward *Motuwangod* receives from divine intervention for his sacrifices symbolizes the tribe’s belief in faith and the idea that acts of kindness are ultimately recognized and rewarded by higher powers.

The story thus emphasizes that selflessness and faith are essential virtues that bind the community together.

The folktale implies the importance of preserving the Tinonanon Manobo cultural heritage. The story reinforces the tribe’s belief in the importance of generosity and sacrifice, which are central to their identity. It also highlights the role of folklore in teaching moral values, which are passed down through generations to guide behavior and maintain community harmony. By documenting such narratives, the tribe’s cultural and ethical framework is preserved, ensuring that future generations understand and uphold these values. Moreover, the tale’s connection to universal themes of faith and sacrifice allows it to resonate beyond the tribe, offering lessons in selflessness and moral integrity that can enrich broader cultural contexts.

“*Pongumanon Ki Oret*”

One day, the guardian of the mountains felt pity for *Oret*. *Oret* was a hunter. The guardian took him along with his son *Monsuwang*. *Monsuwang* was *Oret*’s only child, whom he loved dearly. He always took him wherever he went. They climbed the mountain without bringing anything. Upon arrival, *Oret* immediately built a hut. Then he made a fire and cooked. *Monsuwang*, his son, wondered why his father quickly cooked rice using bamboo when they didn’t bring anything. While waiting for the rice to cook, *Oret* suddenly bid farewell to his son, “*Monsuwang*, stay here for a while. I’ll hunt for white monkeys, so I instruct you not to touch or look at my cooking. Just don’t touch it because I love you.”

Oret left to hunt monkeys to have something to feed his beloved son, *Monsuwang*. When he left, his son disobeyed his instructions. He opened and looked at what his father was cooking. He said, “Why did dad cook when we didn’t bring anything earlier?” He was surprised to find rice inside the bamboo. He couldn’t resist and took some to eat. *Oret* suddenly felt that his son had tampered with the cooking. He quickly caught the monkey and brought it back to the hut. When he arrived, he didn’t say a word. He rekindled the almost extinguished fire, sliced the monkey, and cooked it in bamboo. After it was cooked, he called his son, “*Monsuwang*, eat plenty of this food I cooked. Finish what I’ll give you.” *Monsuwang* ate again until he fell asleep.

Meanwhile, *Oret* was saddened and pondered in the corner because of his son’s disobedience. After a while, he stood up, woke his son, and said, “I loved you so much, my child? Why didn’t you obey my instructions?”. *Monsuwang* replied, “What instructions? I didn’t open or touch your cooking.” *Oret* said, “Don’t lie anymore, I saw you open and eat my food. Now, because you disobeyed me, forgive me.” *Oret* decided to leave his son. The child cried, “Father, please don’t leave me, have mercy on me.” But *Oret* ignored him and suddenly a cloud grabbed *Oret* and he disappeared. The child was left crying and regretting the lie he told.

The story of “*Pongumanon Ki Oret*” underscores the Tinonanon Manobo tribe’s belief in the importance of obedience and respect for parental authority. *Oret*’s actions, driven by love and care for his son *Monsuwang*, show that his instructions are meant to guide and protect.

The father’s stern reaction to his son’s disobedience, despite the initial confusion and innocent intentions, reinforces the value placed on respecting authority. *Oret*’s decision to leave his son reflects the seriousness with which the tribe upholds discipline, teaching that

actions rooted in love and guidance may still carry necessary consequences. This story conveys the idea that strict adherence to rules and respect for one's elders is vital to maintaining balance and harmony within the community.

This story reflects the broader cultural emphasis on discipline and moral responsibility. It highlights the crucial role of parents in shaping their children's values

and actions, with obedience being seen as a foundational virtue. The narrative serves as a reminder of the consequences of straying from those teachings, reinforcing the significance of adhering to the guidance of elders. It also speaks to the tribe's commitment to preserving traditions, where respect for authority and adherence to moral principles play a key role in the community's stability and unity.

“Diyon Kippot ki Juan”

In ancient times, elders believed in elemental spirits (*anito*) that guided them. There was a man named Juan who had many children. Juan was poor and could not provide for his family's needs. Until one day, Juan thought of ending his life, saying, “So I won't have any more problems, I will end my life.” Juan immediately left their house. He traversed several mountains until he reached a large tree where he tied his neck with the tree's roots. He cried due to the intense pain he felt.

Suddenly, the mountain guardian (*muhumanoy*) arrived. He asked Juan, “What are you doing? Why are you crying and shouting so loudly? You're disturbing me.” Juan replied, “I was about to commit suicide because I have nothing to feed my children.” He said while gasping from pain and exhaustion. The mountain guardian told Juan, “Juan, don't kill yourself. Bring this magical ladle with you. It will help you. Go home now, you're disturbing my sleep.” He reminded Juan that when he gets home, he should boil a cauldron of water and then use the ladle to ask for anything he wants. If he asks for rice, rice will come out, and if he asks for viand (a savory side dish), it will appear. Joy sparkled in Juan's eyes, and he left without a word, carrying the ladle given to him. When he reached the village, there was a gathering of people. Someone asked, “Juan, where are you going?” Juan quickly replied, “I was about to commit suicide, but someone saw me and helped me. He gave me a magical ladle that he said would give me anything I ask.” Juan was about to leave when the person said, “Stay for a while, let's have a drink.” Juan refused, but he was persuaded eventually.

Juan fell asleep due to extreme drunkenness. Unbeknownst to him, someone took the ladle he was carrying and replaced it. When Juan woke up, he immediately looked for the ladle and found it near where he slept. Juan didn't know that the ladle he had was not the magical ladle given to him by the mountain guardian. Juan bid farewell to the *Datu*, saying he would go home first. When he arrived home, he immediately told his children to get a cauldron and said, “We can finally eat whatever we want.” His children immediately followed his instructions and dipped the ladle and Juan mentioned “rice,” but nothing came out. He wondered why nothing came out. Next was “viand,” but still, nothing came out. Juan's family got angry because he was lying, and they kicked Juan out.

Juan left again and decided to continue his plan to end his life. He returned to the big tree and took a tree root and tied it around his neck. He still felt the pain, the agony of his stretched neck. Juan cried again because he couldn't bear it. Once again, *muhumanoy* appeared and said, “What drama are you doing now, Juan? I was having a good sleep, and you're shouting.” Juan quickly replied, “You're here, you're a liar.” But the mountain guardian ignored what Juan said. He helped Juan and untied him from where he was tied. The mountain guardian asked Juan, “Where did you go after I gave you the ladle?” Juan replied, “The *Datu* invited me for drinks before I went home.” Juan's answer was uncertain. *Mohumanoy* immediately told Juan to go to the place where he drank. When they arrived, the *Datu* was already there. The mountain guardian immediately said, “Return Juan's ladle!” The *Datu* went inside the hut and took the ladle. He gave it to Juan who hurried home immediately. When he arrived home, he told his children to boil water in the cauldron again, but unfortunately, no one followed Juan's instructions. One of his children suddenly spoke, “Here you go again, father, another lie.” Juan ignored it and boiled the water himself. When it boiled, he dipped the ladle and said, “rice,” and immediately a plate of rice appeared. Juan's family was surprised by the miracle that happened.

Juan followed by mentioning “viand,” and it appeared. Juan’s whole family ate, and from then on, their lives became peaceful.

The folktale “*Diyon Kippot Ki Juan*” presents a powerful narrative about the trials and eventual redemption of Juan, who is saved from despair by a magical ladle given to him by the mountain guardian, *Mohumanoy*. The story explores the themes of faith, perseverance, and the consequences of human actions. Juan, in his moment of crisis, is granted a tool that symbolizes hope, his ability to provide for his family. However, his failure to trust the gift and his indulgence in temporary distractions, such as the drink with the *Datu*, leads to his misfortune. The symbolism of the ladle, which brings blessings when used correctly, reflects the Tinonanon Manobo belief in the power of nature, spirits, and the importance of respecting divine gifts. The story further emphasizes the tribe’s spiritual relationship with nature, where the guardians of

mountains and trees play significant roles in offering guidance and intervention in moments of need.

The story also illustrates the Tinonanon Manobo’s strong belief in the miraculous and divine intervention, as seen in the mountain guardian’s actions. The ladle’s magic and its subsequent theft by the *Datu* symbolize the testing of Juan’s faith and his eventual realization of the importance of integrity and trust. Juan’s persistence in following the guardian’s instructions, despite the obstacles and temptations he faces, ultimately leads to the resolution of his troubles, reinforcing the value of perseverance and faith. The tale, like many others in Tinonanon Manobo culture, teaches the significance of respecting natural and spiritual forces, the value of hard work, and the belief that divine assistance is available to those who remain true to their commitments.

“*Pongumanon to Sinuyatan*”

Once upon a time, the elders believed that if you did no wrong, you would go to heaven. In the northern part of *Kinawayan* lived the siblings *Apo Bukkot*, *Apo Avawe*, and *Apo Ponavu*. The three of them became known for their diligence. *Apo Avawe* was particularly caring for his companions. One day, he planned to clear a field for planting corn and rice in *Bane*. The women would thresh the rice and prepare the food, while the men would do the clearing. They finished this task within a day.

During planting season, *Apo Avawe* summoned his companions again and they began planting in a place called *Panuvadtuvad*. *Apo Abawe* said, “Let there be no noise when we start planting so that no harmful entities will approach our crops.” They finished planting peacefully and once again thanked *Monama* (Divine Creator). *Apo Avawe* asked the Lord for rain, and it was granted. The time came to harvest their corn and rice. They harvested abundantly and stored the rice and corn with their stalks intact. Their harvest was plentiful, almost mountainous. While *Apo Abawe* was resting, a dazzling light suddenly appeared in the sky. It was *Monama* (Baton), coming to take what *Apo Abawe* had kindly offered. When He left, the storage of their harvest, called “*sayat*,” became a narrow ravine resembling hanging corn and rice. Thus, the name of that ravine in Barangay *Kinawayan* was called *Sinuyatan*.

The folktale “*Pongumanon to Sinuyatan*” highlights the values of diligence, selflessness, and the importance of harmony with nature in the Tinonanon Manobo culture. The story revolves around *Apo Avawe*, a caring and hardworking individual who leads his community in planting and harvesting crops. His dedication to the well-being of his companions and his respect for the natural world are central to the tale. By ensuring that the planting process is quiet and peaceful, *Apo Avawe* demonstrates a deep understanding of the balance between human activities and the spiritual

forces believed to govern the land. His request for rain from the Divine Creator, *Monama*, reflects the tribe’s belief in the power of prayer and devotion to bring about blessings. The subsequent miracle of the abundant harvest, which transforms into a ravine called *Sinuyatan*, illustrates the reward for faith, hard work, and respect for nature.

The story’s cultural significance is closely tied to the Tinonanon Manobo’s worldview, where good deeds, selflessness, and cooperation lead to prosperity. The narrative also reflects the tribe’s belief in the sacredness

of natural phenomena, as seen in the creation of the *Sinuyatan* ravine, which serves as a tangible symbol of *Apo Avawe*'s kindness and the divine reward for it. The light in the story symbolizes hope and goodness, while the ravine itself serves as a reminder of the community's connection to the land and the spirits that watch over

them. This folktale, like many in indigenous cultures, explains the origins of natural features and reinforces the importance of maintaining harmony with nature. By preserving and sharing such stories, the Tinonanon Manobo ensure that their cultural values and traditional knowledge continue to guide future generations.

"Sokkad no Baow"

There was a widow who had two children. One day, she told her children to stay at home because she was going to the river to catch fish and crabs. She left the house carrying a large basket. When she arrived at the river, she dug into the rocks to catch crabs. But instead of crabs, worms came out. She picked them up and put them in a container, then continued her catch. When she reached the high waterfall to get "*upusow*" shoots, a type of taro that grows on the riverbank, there was a creature, a kind of *ibin*, that also gathers *upusow* shoots and eats them. Unfortunately, it slipped and fell from the waterfall. Its head hit a rock and it died. When the widow saw it, she said, "This is a big dish." She quickly picked it up and put it in her large basket. She took it home and called her children, "Oh! Children, are you there?" The children answered, "We're here." The mother boasted that she got a big dish. The eldest child peeked through a small hole in the house and was surprised to see a person inside the basket. The mother immediately took the creature she caught and roasted it over the fire. She cooked it until it was well done.

After cooking, she started eating alone. She enjoyed what she was eating, saying it tasted like pork. She ate a lot until she called her children, "Children, open the door because I'm going in to sleep. Don't make any noise." When the children looked at their mother, they were surprised to see her body dripping. The eldest child said, "Let's leave because our mother might be a monster now." The children left, carrying the bottle they used to fetch water. When they arrived at the well, the eldest child immediately prayed, "Grandfather, if our mother calls us, tell her we're fetching water and we'll wait until the water in the well clears up." Then the two children left. While the widow continued to look for her children, she kept asking, "Where are the piglets?" as saliva dripped from her mouth. She shouted loudly, calling her two children's names. Suddenly, someone answered, "Mother, we're here in the well, fetching water, waiting for the water in the well to clear up."

The mother waited for her child to come home, but after a few hours, they still hadn't returned. So, she decided to go to the well. When she arrived, she called her children's names again, and someone answered, "we're here, mother." When she looked back, she was surprised to see that the one answering her was the bottle of water. She got angry and ate it while laughing. She sniffed and followed the smell of her children. When the children arrived at the front, they saw a large beehive. The child said, "Please help us, we are being chased by our mother and she wants to eat us." The bee leader replied, "Okay, leave now, we will take care of your mother." The children passed by and soon their mother arrived. When the widow was near the beehive, she immediately reached out and was bitten. She screamed in pain and said, "Why are there so many flies here?" The beehive was immediately picked up and eaten, then she continued searching.

The children reached the river and saw the crab's house. They asked for help, saying, "Grandmother, please have mercy on us, let us enter your house because our mother is chasing us and she wants to eat us." The crab let the two children in. It didn't take long before they heard their mother's scream, as if she was going crazy. She continued searching, using her sense of smell, and followed it to the crab's house. She said, "So you're here, piglets." Without hesitation, she stuck her left hand into the crab's hole while laughing, and the crab immediately bit her hand and it was cut off. But she wasn't satisfied and she stuck her right hand in. It was bitten and cut off. The widow said, "I no longer have two hands, so I'll just stick my head in to eat them immediately." So, she stuck her head in and the crab bit her neck and it was cut off. The two children were very grateful for the heroism of the crab.

The folktale “*Sokkad no Baow*” portrays the tragic transformation of a widow who, driven by hunger and desperation, loses her sanity and turns violent, seeking to eat her own children. The children, embodying the archetypal heroes, manage to escape their mother’s madness with the help of creatures like the crab and bees, who symbolize the protective forces of nature. The story reflects a harsh reality where the mother’s actions represent the dangers posed by extreme hardship and the collapse of rationality due to hunger. The children’s quick thinking and the help from the animals demonstrate the theme of resilience and the survival instincts inherent in times of crisis. The darkness in the story symbolizes the grotesque and unrestrained behavior of the mother, who, driven by delusion, endangers her children. In contrast, the crabs and bees symbolize the forces of nature that act as protectors, reflecting the balance between the natural world and human conflict.

This folktale conveys significant cultural messages about the Tinonanon Manobo’s understanding of the struggles inherent in life. It illustrates the extreme effects that hardship and hunger can have on a person’s psyche, but it also emphasizes the importance of community support and the natural world in overcoming adversity. The children’s escape from their mother’s delusion with the help of the crab and bees highlights the cultural belief in the interdependence between humans and nature, where even the smallest creatures can provide protection in times of need. The tale also resonates with broader themes of parental responsibility and the dangers of neglect, offering a moral lesson about the consequences of hardship when left unaddressed. As with many folktales, it serves as both a warning and a source of hope, showing that even in the darkest moments, there can be rescue through quick thinking and the assistance of nature.

Discussion

Si Apo Motuwangud

The *pongumanon* of the Tinonanon Manobo reflects a powerful tradition of storytelling that not only serves to entertain but also to instill crucial moral values within the community. In the case of *Apo Motuwangod*, the generosity depicted in the story is not merely a personal virtue; it acts as a symbolic pillar for communal

survival. *Motuwangod*’s willingness to sacrifice his most cherished possession, his wife, speaks to the tribe’s understanding of generosity as a means of maintaining societal cohesion and ensuring the mutual support of individuals within the community.

This portrayal of self-sacrifice and generosity resonates with the broader anthropology of gift-giving practices among indigenous communities, where material wealth is often considered a transient resource, whereas generosity is seen as a more enduring and unifying force (Allen, 2018). However, the story also compels us to reflect on the darker implications of generosity. The act of giving away one’s wife, particularly when viewed from an outsider’s perspective, may be seen as a submission to patriarchal norms. This invites a critique of the roles and autonomy of women within the Tinonanon Manobo community. Nevertheless, the narrative does not explore this theme overtly, instead highlighting the broader value of selflessness as a divine virtue.

Language plays an essential role in safeguarding the cultural richness of such narratives. As Kakembo (2024) and United Nations (2018) note, language is integral not only to preserving oral traditions but also to the continuity of indigenous worldviews. Saad et al. (2024) further argues that the transmission of oral traditions through language is pivotal in maintaining the socio-cultural fabric of indigenous groups. For the Tinonanon Manobo, the preservation of their language is not just a matter of linguistic survival but also of ensuring the continued transmission of these deeply embedded cultural values to future generations.

Pongumanon Ki Oret

The tale of *Pongumanon Ki Oret* expands our understanding of the moral frameworks within Tinonanon Manobo culture, particularly in relation to authority and obedience. In this story, the consequences of disobedience, represented by the estranged father-son relationship, reflect a broader cultural emphasis on respect for elders and the importance of maintaining social order.

The Tinonanon Manobo’s value of obedience aligns with global anthropological findings on the centrality of filial piety and obedience in many indigenous cultures, where respect for elders is often

seen as foundational to maintaining societal harmony (Elsayed, 2024; Viscogliosi et al., 2020). The strict response of *Oret* to his son's disobedience demonstrates a method of moral instruction that is not just about punishment but about teaching responsibility and the weight of one's actions in the broader community context. This form of discipline may be seen as implicative of a worldview in which the individual's behavior is intrinsically linked to the health of the collective.

The narrative illustrates the important role of parental authority in shaping moral character and preparing individuals to face societal challenges (Nurhayati et al., 2024; Tan & Yasin, 2020). Moreover, this folktale highlights a dynamic often overlooked in western interpretations of indigenous folktales: the way in which children are molded to take on societal responsibilities, shaping the future of the community (Murthy, 2024; Poon et al., 2022). The implication here is that the survival and stability of the tribe are contingent upon the respect for cultural norms passed down through generations (UNESCO, 2024; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021).

Diyon Kippot Ki Juan

The story of *Diyon Kippot Ki Juan* invites a deeper reflection on the interaction between humans and nature, especially the reciprocal relationship between human efforts and divine intervention. Juan's initial despair and later redemption through the magical ladle emphasize the Tinonanon Manobo's belief in the active role that supernatural entities play in their lives. This notion of divine intervention parallels what has been described in various ethnographic studies on indigenous cosmologies, where natural and spiritual worlds are seen as intricately connected.

In the case of Juan, his failure to respect the magical ladle given by the *mohumanoy* (mountain guardian) signals the consequences of human negligence toward divine gifts. The repercussions Juan faces serve as a cautionary tale about the loss of divine favor and the consequences of failing to honor sacred responsibilities. In a broader sense, this reflects the Tinonanon Manobo's view of nature as both a provider and a moral guide. Many indigenous cultures view nature as an active agent in the moral and spiritual

development of individuals (Reyes-García et al., 2026; Verschuuren et al., 2021), rather than a passive resource to be exploited.

Moreover, the tale suggests an interesting critique of human desire for immediate gratification (symbolized by Juan's distraction with drinking) and the long-term benefits of following spiritual and moral guidance. This mirrors the broader anthropological observation that indigenous societies often utilize storytelling as a tool to teach delayed gratification (Pregoner et al., 2024; Darici, 2023), a value essential for the sustainability of communal life. Juan's eventual realization of the importance of patience and respect for spiritual authority echoes these values, reinforcing the idea that respect for both nature and community sustains social harmony.

Pongumanon to Sinuyatan

The narrative of *Pongumanon to Sinuyatan* brings forward the cultural principle of reciprocity, which is an essential value in Tinonanon Manobo society. *Apo Avawe's* labor, care, and respect for his companions and the land embody the ethos of hard work and collective effort that is foundational to the tribe's agricultural practices. This story reinforces the idea that cooperation and selflessness lead to divine reward, symbolized by the miraculous creation of the *Sinuyatan* ravine.

This belief in the reciprocal relationship between humans and the divine is echoed in broader studies of indigenous spirituality, where nature is seen not just as a resource, but as a living entity with which humans must coexist harmoniously. As Burgos-Ayala, et al. (2020) and Sobrevila (2008) observe, indigenous cultures often regard the land as both a source of sustenance and a moral agent that responds to human actions. In *Pongumanon to Sinuyatan*, the community's collective effort in agriculture is rewarded by the divine, illustrating the central belief that good deeds, especially those that benefit others, are recognized and reciprocated by higher powers.

Additionally, the story highlights the Tinonanon Manobo's belief in the sanctity of nature and the spiritual forces that inhabit it. The creation of *Sinuyatan* as a tangible manifestation of *Apo Avawe's* selflessness reinforces the notion that human virtues can have lasting effects on the environment and that these effects are both

spiritual and physical (Dzwonkowska, 2024; Okyere-Manu et al., 2022).

Sukad No Baow

Sokkad no Baow represents a stark departure from the moral lessons typically conveyed in Tinonanon Manobo folktales. The widow's descent into madness and her eventual transformation into a monstrous figure due to hunger exemplifies the psychological toll that extreme hardship can impose on an individual. The story serves as a poignant metaphor for the disintegration of the social and moral fabric when basic needs are not met.

The use of supernatural forces in this folktale, the intervention of the crab and bees, reflects the belief that the natural world, through its creatures, can protect and restore balance. This mirrors the Tinonanon Manobo's broader understanding of the world as governed by interconnected forces, both human and non-human. The intervention of these creatures can be seen as a symbol of community support and the critical role of external help in times of crisis. As Weatherdon (2022) and Chunhabunyatip et al. (2018) point out, indigenous narratives often portray supernatural beings or animals as protectors, highlighting the interdependence between humans and nature.

Furthermore, the children's ability to outsmart their mother and seek refuge in the natural world reveals a critical cultural lesson: in times of crisis, wisdom and quick thinking, often rooted in the teachings of the ancestors, are vital for survival. This narrative implicates the need for community solidarity, especially in moments of extreme hardship, and underscores the value of using natural resources wisely and respectfully.

Overall, beyond their primary mythological structures, these *pongumanon* function as critical texts for negotiating localized power dynamics, gender assignments, and domestic realities. For example, when analyzing the archetypal conflicts within these folklores, the narrative moves past a simple lesson in morality to expose patterns of domestic and familial violence. The struggle highlights the vulnerabilities inherent in traditional gender roles and how structural power imbalances are either enforced or creatively disrupted by characters. Through this lens, the folktale is recognized not as a static historical relic, but as a dynamic, living commentary through which the *Tinonanon Manobo* community historically processed,

critiqued, and mitigated social friction and domestic vulnerability.

Conclusion

This study of the *Pongumanon* of the Tinonanon Manobo tribe offers profound insights into the tribe's rich oral tradition and the archetypal patterns embedded within their folktales, shedding light on the cultural heritage that has shaped their worldview for generations. Through the meticulous collection and analysis of these folktales, the research highlights the multifaceted roles that these narratives play, not only as sources of entertainment but as vital carriers of deep moral, ethical, and spiritual values. The folktales offer critical guidance on virtues such as generosity, resilience, cooperation, and faith, serving as a moral compass that influences individual and collective behaviors within the community. By employing Carl Jung's archetypal theory, this study identifies recurring characters, symbols, and motifs that transcend cultural boundaries, revealing the universality of human experience as expressed through the narratives of the Tinonanon Manobo. The presence of archetypes such as the wise elder, the sacrificial hero, and the supernatural guardian serves to demonstrate how these folktales resonate not only within the local context but also within a global framework of cultural storytelling. These recurring themes illustrate the relevance of the *Tinonanon Manobo's* oral literature, emphasizing the shared human experience that connects communities worldwide through similar struggles, triumphs, and lessons.

The various *Pongumanon* included in the study encapsulate the belief systems of the tribe, providing a window into their spiritual and cultural world. These stories reinforce the tribe's reverence for deities, their respect for nature, and their deep-rooted belief in the moral order of the universe. They offer valuable teachings about the importance of good deeds and the consequences of moral failure, showing how individual actions are intimately linked to the health of the community. Furthermore, they underscore the *Tinonanon Manobo's* enduring connection to the spiritual forces that govern their lives, reflecting a worldview in which humans are seen as interconnected with the environment and the divine. This research strongly emphasizes the critical importance of preserving and revitalizing the *Pongumanon* as a key

component of the *Tinonanon Manobo*'s cultural identity. In an era where modernization and globalization threaten the continuity of indigenous traditions, the study serves as a testament to the lasting relevance of these oral narratives. By documenting and analyzing these folktales, this research contributes to the preservation of the *Tinonanon Manobo*'s cultural heritage, ensuring that their stories and the values they embody continue to be passed down through generations. It is through these efforts that we safeguard not only the language but the rich traditions, wisdom, and communal values embedded in each story.

The *Pongumanon* are far more than mere folklore, they are the lifeblood of the *Tinonanon Manobo*'s identity and cultural resilience. This study underscores the significance of these narratives in maintaining the integrity of indigenous knowledge systems. They offer a vital pathway for continued research and preservation of the cultural practices of the *Tinonanon Manobo*, and by extension, indigenous peoples worldwide. These stories are not just artifacts of the past but living, evolving expressions of a people's relationship to the world around them. This research not only enriches our understanding of the *Tinonanon Manobo* but also opens avenues for further exploration and advocacy for the protection of indigenous oral traditions, which are essential to the preservation of cultural diversity and heritage in an increasingly homogenized world. By integrating the SDGs, this research reinforces the global relevance of preserving indigenous narratives, connecting local cultural efforts to larger global frameworks of sustainability, peace, and education.

In conclusion, this structural and archetypal interpretation illuminates how the oral heritage of the Indigenous *Tinonanon Manobo* community operates as a living matrix of cultural values. While these narratives are fundamentally localized expressions of identity, our analysis demonstrates that they have potential relevance to international developmental frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in spheres concerning sustainable human-nature relationships and heritage preservation. By shifting the language from definitive contribution to conceptual relevance, the study maintains rigorous scholarly caution while successfully positioning local indigenous voices within broader global dialogues.

Statement of limitation

While this study provides valuable insights into the *pongumanon* of the *Tinonanon Manobo* tribe, it is not without limitations. Firstly, the research focused on a select few folktales and did not encompass the entire spectrum of the tribe's oral literature. Consequently, many other culturally significant stories remain unexplored, limiting the full representation of the tribe's rich oral tradition. Additionally, the research was geographically confined to Barangay Kinawayan in Arakan, Cotabato, involving narrators exclusively from this area. This geographic limitation means that the folktales and interpretations may not capture the full diversity of the *Tinonanon Manobo*'s oral tradition across other regions.

Another limitation is that the study was restricted to oral narratives, which excluded other important forms of *Tinonanon Manobo* literature, such as written works or songs that may offer different insights into their cultural expressions. Furthermore, no comparative analysis was conducted with the oral traditions of other ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines, which could have provided valuable context for understanding the uniqueness of the *Tinonanon Manobo*'s storytelling practices within the broader Philippine indigenous literature. The translation of the narratives from the *Tinonanon Manobo* language into English posed another challenge, as oral transmission inherently involves nuances, tonalities, and local expressions that may have been lost or altered in the translation process. These subtle cultural markers, essential to the full appreciation of the stories, could have been affected by linguistic shifts, resulting in potential loss of meaning and depth.

Finally, while the study offers a significant contribution to the understanding of the *pongumanon*, it is limited by its focus on a small selection of folktales, its regional and demographic constraints, and the translation challenges. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the scope to include a broader range of folktales, incorporating a more diverse set of narrators from different regions, and engaging in linguistic analysis to preserve and examine the nuances of the *Tinonanon Manobo* language. A comparative study with other ethnolinguistic groups would also offer a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences in storytelling traditions across indigenous

communities in the Philippines, enriching the broader discourse on indigenous knowledge systems.

Declaration of Generative AI

ChatGPT was used to assist in summarizing literature and suggesting improvements in grammar, linguistic consistency, and in phrasing of ideas for clarity. All ideas, conclusions, and final writing were independently reviewed and verified by the authors.

CRedit author statement

Rodel S. Sinunday: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, data curation, writing – original draft preparation. **Francisco Jr. O. Esgrina:** conceptualization, writing – review and editing, visualization, and supervision. **Fairuz M. Dalandangan-Kagui:** supervision.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The supporting entities had no involvement in the study's design, data collection, analysis, or interpretation, nor in the writing of the manuscript or the decision to publish the results.

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