



Ramo Folksongs: An Ecocritical Study

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ABSTRACT: The rationale behind this study is an attempt to analyse the elements of eco-criticism in the collected and translated Ramo folksongs by the scholar. The paper will explore the role of the human relationship with the physical environment through the theoretical perspective of ecocriticism. The Ramos are people of considerable ideological aspiration who live their lives in close connection with nature and adopt natural objects as the medium of aspiration. Nature plays a great influence on their thought and imagination. The folksong of the Ramo community is called as Jajin. The meaning of the term Jajin is self-respect or pride or joy. The term Jajin is an adjective word. It makes everything meaningful and colorful. All the living things and non-living things could be associated with the word Jajin. Because the word itself is significant, valuable, sincere, deep, expressive and serious. The Jajin itself is purposeful, and it has the power to charm and add beauty in every word. Basically, in the Ramo folksong, there is a repetition of the term Jajin in the beginning and at the end of the sentence. Because the repetition of the word enhances to realize, justify the precious ideas and narration of the stories. Jajins are in narratives forms, which helps in the reconstruction of the history, giving advice and shows their socio-cultural life.

Keywords: Ramos, folksongs, ecocriticism, human-nature relationship, human and animal relationship.

Introduction:

This paper seeks to analyse the Ecocritical elements inscribed in Ramo folksongs. The attempt is to mark the core values and beliefs preserved in the Ramo folksongs exploring human's associations with nature. The selected Ramo folksongs that have been considered under three genres namely. The folksongs of origin- *Paneh Holoka Maneh* (Ladies and Gentlemen), *Chingchup Diyu* (An Insect), *Meku-Meteh* (The Creator), *Siching Ga Aoh Abotani* (Abotani the first son of mother earth). Festival folksongs -*Podi-Denah Ga Lenko Ramo* (An Introduction of Podi-Denah), *Ngolu kah Podi-Barbi* (Dear Podi-Barbi), *Podi-Barbi Mei Longrik Nyeju* (Welcoming Podi-Barbi), *Sumbhi Ponglo Ga Yupnyo Alo* (5th December), *Gunte-Gomteh* (God of Fortune). Prayers Though Egg- *Pipih Ga Lenko* (The Creation of Egg), *Pipih's Ga Melornam* (Power of an Egg), *Pipih Peenam* (Prayer to the Eggs), together form a total of twelve folksongs that this paper has sought to discuss.

"Describing a poem as stored energy, Rueckert explains that reading is an energy transfer and that critics and teachers act as a mediator between poetry and the biosphere, releasing the energy and information stored in poetry so that it may flow through the human community and be translated into social action" (Glottfelty, xxviii). William Rueckert emphasize social action through the notion of poetry. He says that poetry has to be used for important social purposes. Poetry impart permanent knowledge to the society. Poetry act as a messenger concerning people and environment. They share relationship between human culture and the physical world. Poetry indicates independent properties, combined systems and strong connections among each part. Eco critics believe that their ecological truth comes from the ancient truth like traditional culture, folklore and history. In this context, the poem *Paneh Holoka Maneh* and *Chingchup Diyu* are examples of the poem as an informative source about Ramo people's association with the universe.

Paneh Holoka Maneh (Ladies and Gentlemen)

Ladies and gentlemen Jajinja,
It is a beautiful evening for the gathering Jajinja,
I welcome you all for this lovely evening Jajinja,
I am going to share you some story Jajinja,
In the olden days, there was no creatures Jajinja,
There were only nine suns and nine moons Jajinja,
Mother earth was dull and warm Jajinja,
Earth was not fit for survival Jajinja,
Billions of years an insect was born Jajinja,
Its name was Chingchup Diyup Jajinja,
Ladies and gentlemen Jajinja,
I hope you enjoyed the story Jajinja. (collected and translated by Nasi Koje)

The poem narrates that, at the beginning of the universe there were only sun, moon, earth, and an insect which are ecocritical properties because it reflects Ramos connection with natural world. The mother earth was without any creatures, dull and warm for the human livelihood. Chingchup Diyup the first insect and a creature born on earth. This analysis of the researcher shows the presence of spiritual power and believe of the universe. Before the human being was born, nature and insect were the dominate creatures of mother earth. The poem gives a glance about the power of nature that has been influencing and creating the universe. This justifies the notion of ecocritical elements in the form of insect. Another poem,

Chingchup Diyup (An Insect)

Chingchup Diyu Jajinja,
There was an insect named Chingchup Diyup Jajinja,
Chingchup had a son who was his everything Jajinja,
But heat of the sun killed his son.
Chingchup Diyup morn for day and night Jajinja,
Chingchup Diyup determines to take revenge Jajinja,

So, he made bows and arrows with his power.

Sun always rise on the east Jajinja,

Before the sunrise, he shot into the eyes of sun Jajinja,

And there was darkness everywhere on the mother earth Jajinja,

Chingchup Diyup Jajinja. (collected and translated by Nasi Koje)

In the given poem traditional cultures, humans, plants, animals, ancestor spirits and even materials, such as rocks have been considered to possess soul and consciousness. For examples, Chingchup Diyup being an insect battle with the sun with bows and arrows because the heat of the sunlight killed his son. Chingchup Diyup successfully took revenge by shooting into the eyes of the sun and there by bringing darkness on the earth. The theme of revenge in the poem shows how even the insects have strongly fought for their justices against powerful sun which is very much ecocritical.

William Howarth in his essay *Some Principles of Ecocriticism* details the root of the term ecocriticism. Historically "Ecocriticism is a term derived from Greek words *Oikos* and *Kritis*, and in tandem, they mean "house judge". "*Oikos*" means "household," an interconnection of humans, nature and the spirit. "*Kritis*" means judge, "the arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order" (Glotfelty, Fromm, 69). Howarth's definition includes a deep concern for mother nature. Ecocriticism need to be held in balance because the influences of nature and non-human creatures in human life and society, nature and culture are flowing in the same direction. For example, in oral narration like folksongs, when a person falls sick or meets an accident the priest sings, dances and prays to heal the disease or prevent from disaster because they believe that it is caused by the disharmony and imbalance in nature. The poems *Meku-Meteh* and *Siching Ga Aoh Abotani* exemplify the idea of the bonding amongst human, nature and spirits.

Meku-Meteh (The Creator)

The mighty Meku-Meteh Jajinja,

Meku-Meteh the creator Jajinja,

Meku-Meteh for understanding the darkness on earth Jajinja,

Meku-Meteh for creating Sun and Moon Jajinja,
and there was brightness again.

The powerful Meku-Meteh Jajinja,

For making earth warmer Jajinja,

For the ray of hope Jajinja,

For creating first species,

The kingdom of plants was created Jajinja,

Meku-Meteh Jajinja. (collected and translated by Nasi Koje)

The poet praises the spiritual creator of the universe for understanding the problem of darkness on earth. The poet extends gratitude to the creator for creating Sun and Moon to show the brighter traits of the life on earth. The almighty keeper created the first species kingdom of plant, warmth and ray of hope on earth. The analysis of the poem shows that the spiritual creator of the universe, mother earth, sun, moon, light, and species have been influencing each other to create and sustain the universe. The creation of the universe and mother earth was no single-handed. Untouched and unseen, nature and spirits have always played a prominent role. Thus, ecocriticism expands the idea of the world that everything is connected to everything else. In another poem,

***Siching Ga Aoh Abotani* (Abotani the first son of mother earth)**

The first human being Jajinja,

He was different from modern man Jajinja,

He was the first son of mother earth Jajinja,

He was our great grandfather Jajinja,

He was called as Abotani.

The first human being Jajinja,

He was the man of ancient Jajinja,

He was a strong man Jajinja,

He was very powerful Jajinja,

He had supernatural power Jajinja,

Abotani ajinja. (collected and translated by Nasi Koje)

The poem displays the Ecocritical relationship between human, life-force, non-human creature, nature, supernatural and mother earth on the spiritual level. The observation of Abotani as the first human, first son of the mother earth and grandfather of the Tani community is very much ecocritical. It is believed that he used to have supernatural power to fly, to see, to communicate and to understand the language of non-human creatures on the earth. As a result, the poem detail that the relationship of human with mother earth is as deep as ancient which very much ecocritical.

The Eco critic Hubert Zapf in his book *Literature as Cultural Ecology* (2016) states that “*cultural ecology looks at the interaction and living interrelationship between culture and nature, without reducing one to the other. Literature is seen as a cultural form in which this living interrelationship explored in specifically productive ways, providing a site of critical self-reflection of modern civilization as well as a source of creative cultural self-renewal*” (Zapf, 1). Ecocriticism reading of nature shows the ways humans dwell the earth. Eco critics try to present the environment and nonhuman life in their works. Interdisciplinary is an important aspect of Ecocriticism because it can touch almost any discipline. When it translates into action, it generally comes back to its home ground that is the human relationship with the earth. One of the significant qualities of ecocriticism is that it sees nature and human culture as intertwined rather than separate aspect. Eco critics and scholars explore the role of nature in texts more concerned with human cultures, nature in culture and culture in nature. In this context, the poems *Podi-Denah Ga Lenko Ramo*, *Ngolu kah Podi-Barbi*, *Podi-Barbi Mei Longrik Nyeju*, *Sumbhi Ponglo Ga Yupnyo Alo*, *Gunte-Gomteh*; amplifies the notion of the interrelationship between culture and nature in Ramo folksongs.

***Podi-Denah Ga Lenko Ramo* (An Introduction of Podi-Denah)**

Podi-Denah Jajinja,

Let me introduce you Podi-Denah Jajinja,

Podi-Denah is a cricket like insect Jajinja,

Podi-Denah is an insect named Cicada Jajinja,

Podi-Denah lives in a high mountain Jajinja,

Podi-Denah makes melodious noise Jajinja,

Podi-Denah's noise brings good news Jajinja

Podi-Denah's noise brings bad news Jajinja

Our Podi-Denah is special Jajinja,

Podi-Denah Jajinja Jajinja. (collected and translated by Nasi Koje)

The given poem details about a non-human creature called podi-denah, and how she is associated with the Ramo tradition, and culture in the broader perspective. According to the Ramo culture, Podi-Denah is considered as a messenger who resides within the mountain. With the aspiration of nature, spirits, podi-denah brings good as well as bad news for the people of Ramo society. Podi-Denah is a fragment of Ramo culture and is celebrated as a festival. Today Ramo people worship podi-denah as a divine creature, a signal of information. As a consequence, the poem is unveiling ecocritical studies of the unification of nature, living and culture. In another poem,

Ngolu kah Podi-Barbi (Dear Podi-Barbi)

Podi-Barbi, Podi-Barbi Jajinja,

Migrates from far of place Jajinja.

Podi-Barbi, Podi-Barbi Jajinja,

Migrates at season of harvesting.

Podi-Barbi, Podi-Barbi Jajinja,

Celebrated to welcome harvesting Jajinja.

Podi-Barbi, Podi-Barbi Jajinja,

Celebrated to thanks mother nature Jajinja.

Podi-Barbi, Podi-Barbi Jajinja,

Perform in every year Jajinja.

Podi-Barbi, Podi-Barbi Jajinja,

Perform will never end Jajinja. (collected and translated by Nasi Koje)

In this poem, the poet exhibits the journey of princess Podi-Barbi. The poet addresses that Podi-Barbi migrates from the mountains during the harvesting season. Traditionally the Ramos celebrate her, and extend thankfulness to the mother nature for blessing with good crops to the human being. It is celebrated

every year. The celebrating non-human creature Podi-Barbi, its association with the mountains, harvest, crops and human are ecocritical evidence. In another poem,

Podi-Barbi Mei Longrik Nyeju (Welcoming Podi-Barbi)

Podi-Barbi festival is here, Jajinja

The great festival of enjoyment Jajinja,

When the local dress and ornaments light up the sky Jajinja,

When the delighted people dance with joy Jajinja.

Podi-Barbi festival is here Jajinja Jajinja,

The beautiful festival of happiness, Jajinja

When everyone enjoys the local food Jajinja,

When old and young shares love Jajinja

Podi-Barbi festival is here Jajinja,

The ancient festival of myth Jajinja,

When people pay respect to mother nature Jajinja,

When people pray to mother nature Jajinja,

Podi-Barbi, Podi-Barbi festival is here Jajinja. (collected and translated by Nasi Koje)

The poet welcomes the queen Podi-Barbi in the world of humanity. Traditionally the coming of Podi-Barbi is considered as an auspicious day of celebration. It is associated with joy, happiness, dancing and singing because she brings good news from the mother nature. She carries hope and happiness. The Ramo people welcome princess Podi-Barbi with beautiful dresses and ornaments brightening the sky in joy. Culturally, and as gratitude the Ramos serve food, wine, and prayer to mother nature. Therefore, the poem is an ecocritical significance of nature, culture, non-human creature and human relationship. Another poem,

Sumbhi Ponglo Ga Yupnyo Alo (5th December)

Podi-Denah, Podi-Denah Jajinja,

Fifth December is the day of Podi-Denah Jajinja,

Fifth December is very special Jajinja,

Fifth December is the day of celebration Jajinja

Podi-Denah, Podi-Denah Jajinja,

Protect us from evils Jajinja,

Protect us from poverty and death Jajinja

Podi-Denah, Podi-Denah Jajinja,

We are waiting for you on fifth December Jajinja.
(collected and translated by Nasi Koje)

The title of the poem signifies the birthday of the princess Podi-Denah. The poem is an image of the traditional festival of Ramo society which is celebrated on fifth December. Association of day and month is the echo of the influence of nature because during December the environment is very cold. One can see the effect of ice in the mountains, one can see the yellow grasses, and trees shading their leaves. Within the power of nature, the Ramo communities worship and pray to princess Podi-Denah for showering with good news, happiness, protecting from death, evil spirits, and poverty which is ecocritical. Another poem,

Gunte-Gomteh (God of Fortune)

We are waiting for Gunte-Gomteh Jajinja,

The God of fortune Jajinja,

We are waiting for your arrival Jajinja,

We are waiting for your sweet sound Jajinja,

We are waiting for your blessings Jajinja,

We are waiting for your love Jajinja,

We are waiting for your goodness Jajinja,

We are waiting for your support Jajinja,

We are waiting for happiness Jajinja,

We are waiting for Gunte-Gomteh Jajinja,

The God of fortune Jajinja. (collected and translated by Nasi Koje)

The above poem picturizes traditional beliefs in the energy of spiritual God. Ramos considered Gunte-Gomteh as the God of good luck, which signifies the inspiration of spiritual power in the Ramo world. They

eagerly wait for the blessing of the God of good luck. They have a strong faith and pray for the love, goodness, support and contentment. The above five festival folksongs justify the notion of ecocritical knowledge because the elements of the association of human, nature, spirits and culture are very much prominent in the poem. The study clearly shows that nature, good and bad spirits play an important role in influencing the human mind and their culture. Even the developments of Ramo culture, its cultural ethics comes from nature. Hence, Hubert Zapf's concept of ecocriticism as one of the interrelationships of culture and nature is clearly evident in the poems.

Axel Goodbody who is an Eco critic in his work *Ecocritical Theory: Romantic Roots and Impulses from Twentieth-Century European Thinkers* defines ecocriticism as "Eco-theorists are sometimes also concerned with theory and practice in the natural sciences, anthropology, social theory, and other branches of knowledge, which relate to nature/culture and human/nonhuman relationship" (Westling, 61). Eco poetry associates with the 'oikos' which means habitat, that comprises spirits, human, nature and culture. In this framework, the poems *Pipih Ga Lenko*, *Pipih's Ga Melornam*, *Pipih Peenam*, illustrates the ecocritical evidence.

Pipih Ga Lenko (The Creation of Egg)

Let me tell you the story of the creation of pipih Jajinja,

Pipih is the name of an egg Jajinja,

God created pipih as an angel Jajinja,

God gifted supernatural power to pipih Jajinja,

God created pipih to protect Abo Tani Jajinja,

God created pipih to save human being Jajinja,

God created pipih to protect human from devil Jajinja,

God created pipih to save the life of Abo Tani Jajinja,

This the story of creation of an egg Jajinja. (collected and translated by Nasi Koje)

The title of the poem itself shows the idea of supernaturalism. The Ramos considered egg as an angel, and messenger created by the God which possesses supernatural power. Angel egg was created to protect Abotani, and human beings from the evil

spirits. Ramo communities believe in spiritual power, and often uses egg for various rituals like festivals, marriage, sickness etc. to communicate with the spirits. And such rituals associated with the eggs is part of the traditional culture. The poem evidence that God has created nature in the form of egg to influence the Ramo culture which is ecocritical. In another poem,

Pipih's Ga Melornam (Power of an Egg),

This is the story of a power of an egg jajinja,

An Egg is considered as very powerful jajinja,

An Egg is the angels of God jajinja,

An Egg cannot be harm by devils' power jajinja,

An Egg has a power to talk with God jajinja,

An Egg speak with human beings jajinja,

An Egg cannot be harm by the heat of a fire jajinaj,

An Egg cannot be destroyed by heat of a water jajinja,

Jajinja the powerful Egg. (collected and translated by Nasi Koje)

Traditional Ramo people have tremendous faith in the power of an egg because they believe that it has been made by God as a mediator between them, human, animals, nature and spirits. An egg possesses a special power. The poem shows that egg is considered as a powerful angel of God which cannot be destroyed by evil spirits, the heat of fire, and coldness of ice. It can talk with God and human being. The Ramos connection with the idea of an egg, worshiping and using as a part of cultural practiced is an ecocritical proof because egg in the form of nature variously effects human life. In another poem,

Pipih Peenam (Prayer to the Eggs)

I pray the angle eggs created by Meku-Meteh jajinja,

I pray the powerful Meku-Meteh the creators of universe jajinja,

I pray the angle eggs to protect us from evil spirit jajinja,

I pray the angle eggs to cure us from sickness jajinja,

I pray the angle eggs to inform the presence of evils through his power jajinja,

I pray the angle eggs to turn the yolk into red color to inform the presence of evil spirit jajinja,

I pray the angle eggs to turn the yolk into transparent color to inform the absence of evil jajinja,

I pray angle eggs created by Meku-Meteh jajinja. (collected and translated by Nasi Koje)

Ramo people often practiced the rituals and prayers during the need of the hour. And such cultural prayer is carried out through priest and egg. The poem in the form of prayer reflects the interaction between the priest with eggs to convey messages of humanity to the spiritual creators of this universe Meku-Meteh. Egg act as a mediator between human beings and God. Changing of the yolk into red color is an indication of evil spirits, and if the yolk transformed into transparent signifies the good spirits. They pray the spiritual power of Egg for good health, happiness, prosperity, and protection from the evil spirits. Thus, overall analyses substantiate the ecocritical elements of the association of human, nature, spirits, and culture. Hence, Westling idea of the practiced of eco theory in nature/culture and human/non-human relationship is very much relevant.

Therefore, in conclusion, it has been explored through Ramo folksongs that the existence of ecocritical elements is very much evident. The ecocritical elements are observed in the form of culture, society, life-force, spirits, supernatural believes, human-nature relationship, and human-animals relationship. Eventually, the features and narration of Ramo folksongs reflect that they are traditionally and culturally influenced from their ecological environment. Their bonding is as primitive as the existence of natural environment since generation.

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