

# *Samiweng Ti Umili* through the Lens of Ecocriticism

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**Abstract:** *The beauty and wonder of nature sometimes ease the horrid and negative vibes people felt. Philippines is rich in beautiful and magnificent sceneries and Nueva Vizcaya is one of the provinces in the country endowed with superb landscape, which astounds nature lover people and even writers. The study aimed to analyze and interpret the Samiweng Ti Umili, the selected municipal hymns and folk songs of Nueva Vizcaya, which were subjected to analysis and used as narrative springboard. This is a qualitative research employing Ecocriticism. It undertook a new synthesis to extract and reveal the ecocritical framework employed in reading the municipal hymns and selected folk songs in terms of ecological themes and metaphors through the ecological perspective of Cheryll Glotfelty. The study found out that the array of agricultural towns of the province arranged from the southern to northern part and their natural landscape and agri-industrial descriptions, the vastness of nature-related terms in the municipal hymns and selected folk songs presented and elucidated space consciousness, ecological themes and metaphors of nature. There is Literature in the physical landscape of the province. Literature and environment have a perfect blend into the municipal hymns and selected folk songs.*

**Keywords:** Ecocritical, Ecological Themes, Folk Songs, Hymns, Metaphor, Nueva Vizcaya, *Samiweng Ti Umili*

## 1. Introduction

People and environment are reciprocal in terms of their relationship. The natural habitat can provide abundantly what the dwellers need. But first, they must be conscious enough or aware of what they can enjoy from the place they live in. The natural endowments of a place may not always come in forms of finished products; people should be resourceful and creative enough to utilize what are found in their environment. And by looking into these gifts of nature around them, people, who are innately artistic and appreciative, find it insufficient to simply deal with their environment in its physical utilization. They go beyond mere existence of nature to the extent of putting what they feel, hear, touch, taste and see around them. By the passing of years, a great number of writers have come up expressing their awareness, studies, and interpretations of the environment and from these, many theories concerning nature were crafted.

Gaikwad (2016) asserts that there is always a link between literature and nature. It is evident in poets and writers' works down the ages, as seen in almost all of the world's cultures. The literature's world crowds together in great numbers, especially with works about the nature's magnificence or splendor and its influence or power. Gaikwad also posits that thinking seriously is encouraged by Ecocritics, especially on the artistic and moral problems the crisis on environment posed and on the ways literature and language pass on values with insightful implications of ecology.

Time passes and change is always there. Modifications in writing styles are exposed over time. Trends on literature also change. Similarly is to the environment. The earth underwent changes over time, too. Civilization is the one posing changes. Urbanization, commercialization, and expansion contributed a lot to environmental changes. Factories are built and rice fields and mountains are converted to commercial establishments, high rise buildings, and residential areas. There are also bombings, illegal loggings, and other disastrous human doings to nature. Mother Earth

must be taken care of to retain its wonder and splendor, and the feeling that makes people spend some of their time in the nature's lap.

The study aimed to analyze and interpret the *Samiweng Ti Umili*, the selected municipal hymns and folk songs of Nueva Vizcaya, which were subjected to analysis and used as narrative springboard. This study was conducted to provide a wider understanding and keener appreciation of the relationship between literature and nature. It paves the way for the awareness of the reading public that the forms of nature encompassing the physical landscape and topography of Nueva Vizcaya in each of its fifteen towns and the utilization of these forms of nature by its people can serve as a vehicle for the onset of writing the hymns and folk songs. Moreover, this is also a way to uncover the metaphorical words of nature in the hymns and selected folk songs, the connection between the ecological location and its inhabitants, and the role of ecocriticism in the composition and interpretation of the hymns and selected folk songs. Specifically, it aimed to determine how the ecocritical framework be employed in reading hymns and selected folk songs in terms of ecological themes and metaphors.

This study focuses only on the selected municipal hymns and folk songs of Nueva Vizcaya. Being a pioneer study in dealing with the local hymns and folk songs of the province, it also endeavors to bolster the idea that there exists a Literature in the physical landscape of Nueva Vizcaya.

## 2. Related Studies and Literature

Some relevant studies and literatures on Ecocriticism were reviewed, which serve as guide in the conduct of this research.

As Gladwin (2017) notes, ecocriticism is a broad way, especially for literary and cultural scholars, to investigate the ecological crisis worldwide given the intersection of literature, culture, and physical environment. Gladwin further notes that ecocriticism originated as an idea called "literary

ecology.” Ecocriticism expanded as a widely-used literary and cultural theory by the early 1990s with the formation of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) at the Western Literary Association (1992). Then, the launch of the flagship journal *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (cited under Journals) in 1993 followed and later, *The Ecocriticism Reader* (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996, cited under Collections of Essays) was published. Glotfelty and Fromm (1996 cited under Collections of Essays) state that “ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies,” rather than an anthropomorphic or human-centered approach (p. xviii).

Mother Earth must be nurtured and protected. People must be eco-conscious and eco-friendly. A study of Mishra (2016) claims that environment has posed a great threat to human society and Mother Earth these last few decades. The natural resources are misused expansively leaving people at the edge of trench. The cutting down of rainforests, the decrease of fossil fuel, the disorder in the season cycle, and other ecological disasters are evident and frequent now worldwide. With these, a new theory called ecocriticism arose during the last decade of the previous century; the nature writing is read. It is a worldwide emergent movement which came into existence as a reaction to man's anthropocentric attitude of dominating nature. The study explored the ecocritical viewpoint as imagined in a number of selected world literatures and Indian writing in English. This study is environmentally oriented bringing literacy on ecology to the readers, who become eco-conscious in the process, thus, Mother Nature must be taken good care of. Ecocriticism is an interpretive tool in analyzing nature writing that is commonly associated with Environmental criticism, Animal studies, Green Cultural Studies, Ecosophy, Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism, Ecospiritualism, and the like.

Bruce (2011) mentions that a utilizable foundation is provided for those who want to learn more about or to get involved in green(ing) English with these new fields of ecocriticism, especially in studies on literature and ecomposition in rhetoric and composition. Bruce asserts that nature contemplation has been "a dominant or at least residual concern for literary scholars and intellectual historians ever since these fields came into being." Ecocriticism and ecomposition have opened numerous pedagogical doors, some of which Bruce reviewed for their direct environmental possibilities in teaching and learning English language arts. The seven approaches and subjects for the study of English language arts were explored at the secondary level as: 1) ecological literacies; 2) reading green; 3) "nature" writing or environmental literatures; 4) insights from ecomposition; 5) place-based reading and writing, including indigenous literatures; 6) environmental justice movements; and 7) war as an environmental concern.

In a study of Slocombe (2005), the relationship between ecocritical theory and postmodern theory on the selected works of Umberto Eco, Jean Baudrillard, J.G. Ballard, and Italo Calvino were examined. The study followed the argument the ecocritics made showing that postmodernism is a fundamentally textual theory repressing the true natural world and causes sign pollution. It was noted that this sign

pollution directs to the creation of a metaphoric desert, in the same manner that desertification is induced by actual pollution. The study revealed that both ecocriticism and postmodernism have hermetic qualities or characteristics although there is a distinction between textuality and reality; and that ecocriticism is stayed locked in the textuality against which it argues.

Another study on ecocriticism is by Bergthaller et al. (2014), which took up ecocriticism and environmental history. The environmental humanities have been embraced by these two fields with fervor. It was argued that both these two fields are concerned with the practices of environing. Each of them studies the material and the metaphoric changes or transformations the environment is made up as a breathing space for human act. There were three areas of research singled out, which offered promising models between two fields: the ecocriticism and the environmental history. These areas as: environmental justice, eco-historicism, and new materialism.

Ecocriticism, as Birkets (1996) notes, seemed to take place the moment when the text, in the hands of its elucidative theorists, developed into a theoretical cloud formation offering a purchase to the presuming demands or strong need of sense. Ironically, this can be drawn into a comparison between the will or determination of the early New Critics to being specific and the drive that the ecocritics have to bring the natural world into the literary lens or viewfinder. The text undergoes scrutiny by the New Critics and the extra-textual consciousness of the world is banished. In contrast, ecocriticism uses mainly the text as means to get at the world itself. It is further noted that any uses of language, especially those that are not direct channels to the nature they claim such devotion might be ignored or disregarded by ecocritics.

Dadia (2018), in her study "A Super Typhoon and the Literary Imagination: Eco-poetics and Ecological Themes in Select Poems from Yolanda Relief Anthologies," explores the subject of disaster in the literary imagination. The event of typhoon Yolanda in November 2013 was revisited through the published poems in its wake. This has been done with the aim to identify the ecological themes that make them a paradigm of Philippine ecopoetry. Dadia asserts that those ecological themes expressed in the select Yolanda poems revolved on: 1) Landscape and Loss; 2) Witness and Agency; and 3) Disaster Survival. A narrative pattern comes out when the poems are interpreted either in their totality or per category. By category, each poem is powerful with the central trope that it deploys. Collectively, the poems are connected by these same tropes to illustrate how a national tragedy can permeate the personal and public spheres. She opines that the poems undertake issues on the loss of loved ones and the struggle to survive with diminished natural resources; on surviving the disaster and facing its immediate aftermath and long-term repercussions; and on demonstrating the Filipino strong sense of *kapwa* and depth of empathy for one another in the time of environmental and humanitarian crisis. Further, Dadia posits that the analysis of the select poems reveals that while their narratives humanize the disaster experience by “tug[ging] at the heartstrings” of the readers and giving a voice to those who have been directly

affected by the calamity, they also “inspire analysis” of how Filipinos view themselves as a people constantly at risk to such events (Kaufman, “Postcards from climate ground zero”).

Another study was from Salas (2017). She studied the Repercussions of Isinai Lyric Poetry on Culture-Based Values Education. For her, lyric poetry is a significant indicator of the people’s psychology, character, and individuality. The Isinai belonged to one of the ethno-linguistic groups of Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. They embrace a rich lyric poetry. They are the inhabitants of Dupax del Sur, particularly in the barangays of Domang, Dopaj, Balzain, Buag and Banggot in Bambang. The study investigated the folk songs of Isinai, which features origin, musical structure, cultural and social traits, and implications to values education. The results prompted better viewpoints especially on preparing prospective teachers of the university through the integration of culture in values education; participation of school administrators and local officials in preserving the culture of the Isinai; participation of music and literature teachers and researchers of the university as well in the exploration and promotion of the culture of the Isinai; and supporting the program of the local administration in preserving the dialect, the songs and the dances of the Isinai.

**3. Research Design**

This is a qualitative research employing Ecocriticism. Through Ecocriticism, this study explores the role of the natural landscape of the place in ecomposition by considering how location and other forms of nature participate as premises and sources of writing.

The term Ecocriticism is used for the examination and study of the relations of literature and the environment. Ecocriticism, as defined by Glotfelty and Fromm (1996), is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. It takes the literary endeavor from the ecological perspective and its related intricacies. It obtains an “earth-centered” approach to literary studies. Ledesma (2018) states that the concepts or perceptions of nature, wilderness, environment, ecological wisdom, values, and physical settings played an important role in giving a significant site to literature for the discourse on environment and as means of examining or investigating the negotiation of the human and non-human domains.

The study undertook a new synthesis to extract and reveal the ecocritical framework employed in reading the said hymns and selected folk songs in terms of ecological themes and metaphors through the ecological perspective of Cheryll Glotfelty. Mishra (2016) notes that, as a literary theory, Ecocriticism may serve as the simplest approach in understanding and recognizing the style in literary theories in relation to environment.

In Ecocriticism, according to Mishra (2016 in Ledesma 2018), one does not study nature as an entity on a one-sided stance. The study of environment is inclusively made including the intricacies of the physical surrounding or

environment projecting the connection of human to non-human sphere.

Conducting an Ecocriticism requires the interpreter the knowledge about it for a better understanding of its intrinsic appeal. In analyzing the texts (hymns and selected folk songs), it requires one to take a careful look at the ecological themes, metaphors, and other factors that had an influence on it.

In conducting this study, the researcher followed a process under the influence of Glotfelty. First, the researcher selected the hymns and folk songs to be decoded. The selected hymns and folk songs were chosen for their noteworthy eco-poetic connotation. Second, the techniques of the ecocritical framework were employed in reading the said selected hymns and folk songs in terms of ecological themes and metaphors. Third, the researcher sketched the overall context in which the reading and analysis appeared. Lastly, after examining the hymns and selected folk songs and developing the answer to the question, the researcher established into concrete words their interpretation and meaning.

**4. Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation**

Using Ecocriticism, the selected municipal hymns and folk songs of Nueva Vizcaya were examined and analyzed. The summary of interpretation is shown in a tabular presentation.

Table 1 presents the summary of the analysis through ecocritical framework.

**Table 1:** Summary of the analysis of the selected hymns and folk songs through ecocritical framework

A. HYMNS				
	Trope	Space Consciousness	Metaphorical Meaning	Ecological Theme
1. Aritao March	Mountains	Mountains surrounding the municipality making Aritao known as the	Shield (against strong winds and typhoon)	Natural protection from calamities
		“melting pot” of Nueva Vizcaya	Life (for agricultural crops and Aritaoenos)	Appreciation of nature
		Upland plantations	Shelter/ Green home	Agricultural livelihood
	Rivers	Tourists’ sites attraction	Relaxation	Aquatic livelihood
		Abundance of water supply in forms of rivers, water	Home	Contentment to one’s place
	Trees	impounding (dam), fishponds, streams, and Creeks for food fishing and irrigation of agricultural crops	Shield from soil erosion and flood	Agricultural production
Land	Food sources	Green home (for peaceful, loving, loyal, humble and free people)		

		Vast forests and sources of timber  Wide range of plains and fields for agricultural crops		
2. Bagabag We Love Thee	Mountains	Green mountains  Habitats for animals	Golden fruits  Life  Fresh air source	Forest conservation  Agricultural livelihood  Watershed protection  Climate change mitigation
3. Bambang Welcome Song	Mountains Water Trees Land	Rolling hills  Winding stream  Existence of Salinas Salt spring Verdant Hills Verdant Plains	Freedom  Pride  Home of peace and love	Appreciation of natural wonder and beauty  Comely place
4. Beloved Bayombong	Mountains Water Land	Verdant Mountains  Existence of Bangan Hill Bansing Falls Magat River  Verdant rice fields Ancestral land	Life  Energy  Unity  Endurance  Home of peace and unity	Nature's characteristics depicting people (productive, high spirited, united, enduring, peaceful)  Love for one's native land
5. Diadi Hymn	Mountains Water Trees Land	Mountains surrounding the municipality  Fresh and clean bodies of water Towering trees Fresh air Clean and green surroundings	Abundance of nature's gifts  Trained hands  Wealth	Adoration of a place  Agricultural production
6. Kayapa Hymn	Mountains Land Trees	Mountain ridges hills  Existence of flowers  Pine breeze	God's gift  Home  Summer capital of Nueva Vizcaya	Gratefulness for nature's gifts  Adoration of a place
7. Quezon March	Mountains Land Water	Existence of mineral resources  Vast corn and vegetable plantations verdant ricefields	Wealth  Life  Home  Pride	Soil fertility  Agricultural production  adoration of a place

	Trees	Clean Anggadan River  Clear Mapalyao and Lintungan Falls  Fruit-bearing trees	Abundance	
8. Sta. Fe Hymn	Mountains Trees Water Land	Historical Balet Pass/Dalton Pass Forest Park thick forest  Imugan falls  Small but naturally rich town	Nature's nest  God's gift  Home of different cultures  Gateway of Cagayan Valley	Adoration of a place  Agricultural production  Contentment on natural endowments
9. Villaverde Hymn	Mountains Land	Sierra Madre mountain range  Cordillera range vastness of ricefields	Home  Diligence	Love and loyalty to a place  Appreciation of nature  Self-dedication to a place
10. Beloved Nueva Vizcaya	Mountains Trees Land Water	Sierra Madre range  Existence of mountains surrounding the province hills  Teeming trees/vastness of trees  Naturally rich valley Vast ricefields golden grains  Winding Magat River Salinas Salt Spring	Pride  Abundance  Home of peace and happiness Diligence	Agricultural livelihood  Agricultural production
<b>B. FOLK SONGS</b>				
	<b>Trope</b>	<b>Space Consciousness</b>	<b>Metaphorical Meaning</b>	<b>Ecological Theme</b>
1. Sassarabet (Hear Ye)	Water	River	Life for the Gaddangs	Honest fishing  Aquatic abundance
2. Don Don Simon (Mr. Simon)	Land Trees	Source of food	Promise Thoughtfulness	Hunting Birds
3. Atta Cami (We are Negritos)	Mountains	Shield or protection	Joy Simplicity	Hunting
4. Aggani (Harvesting)	Land		Bayanihan or team work	Harvesting

		Rice field	Unity	Gratitude for simple Agricultural life
5. No Manoc Cu Borbon (My Bearded Rooster)	Land	Poultry house for rooster Cockpit Cockfighting	Recreation Joy Luck Inspiration	Poultry production
6. Ite, Ite Gangarite (One, Two, Get Set)	Water	River - children chasing across the river bank	Innocence Joy	Aquatic production
7. Azucena (Azucena)	Land	Source of inspiration Gaddangs' devotion to St. Joseph who holds Azucena in His statue	A flower in the garden of a lover's heart Pure, delicate and fragile woman Radiance and strength	Love for flowers Flower cultivation

As illustrated in Table 1, the selected hymns and folk songs were analyzed and interpreted. It was found out that the array of agricultural towns of the province of Nueva Vizcaya arranged from the southern to northern part and their natural landscape and agri-industrial descriptions, the vastness of nature-related terms in the municipal hymns and selected folk songs presented and elucidated ecological themes, space consciousness and metaphors of nature with the trope such as mountains, trees, water, and land.

There is Literature in the physical landscape of the province. Literature and environment have a perfect blend into the municipal hymns and selected folk songs.

Nueva Vizcaya is endowed with magnificence of nature. Through the municipal hymns and folk songs, the researcher found out how naturally gifted and vibrant the province is ever since, through the revealed space consciousness, metaphorical meaning and ecological themes. The mountains that surround the municipality make the “melting pot” of Nueva Vizcaya, befits the tourists’ site attraction, and upland plantations for the people occupying the area. There are green mountain ranges, verdant hills and plains, naturally rich valleys, clean rivers and winding streams and falls surrounding the province that make good spectacle to tourists and travellers such as the Sierra Madre and Cordillera Mountain Ranges, Bangan Hill, Magat River, Salinas, Salt Spring, Banging Falls, Mapalyao and Lintungan Falls, Imugan Falls, to name a few. The vast forests become the sources of timber and the teeming trees as habitat for animals. The rice fields, forests, abundance of water supply in forms of rivers, water impounding (dam), fishponds, streams, and creeks become the sources of food, fishing and irrigation of agricultural crops.

The mountains serve as shield for protection against strong winds and typhoons; the rivers and land as life for agricultural crops and the people; the trees as stoppage of soil erosion and flood, shelter for birds and animals. Being the

green home, the inhabitants are relaxed and peaceful because of the fresh air around. There is radiance and strength since the environment serves as the inspiration of the dwellers.

The hymns and folk songs revealed ecological themes such as safety and protection from natural calamities, forest conservation, agricultural and aquatic livelihood and productivity. They also displayed agricultural survival and climate change mitigation. Appreciation of nature, watershed protection and preservation of nature’s gifts were also manifested.

Provincial and municipal hymns are songs expressing people’s pride and adoration of their respective habitats and awareness of their natural giftedness. The hymns show vivid descriptions of the forms of nature existing in each municipality and how they affect the people’s views of life and how greatly they help them in their ways of life, in their survival and avenue to progress. The hymns serve as inspiration to the people of Nueva Vizcaya as manifested in the lyrics.

The Gaddang folk songs are found to arouse the interest of Gaddang children and adults in the Gaddang folk music. One binding reason is the cultural value enclosed in the folk songs as they permeate life. These songs also bid thought-provoking succession of puzzles in literary origins and influences. Many of these Gaddang folk songs are concoctions, which may account for their lure.

The Gaddang folk songs mirrors the ways of life of the Gaddangs. These serve as their lifelong learning, since through the experiences in life and their struggles in living though simple, they still value their existence. The folk songs gave them innate insight as they explore their theater of life with artistry of forms and language. There is truth in the telling, blissful indebtedness and radical richness, which is undeniably pleasurable.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

The hymns and folk songs depicted space consciousness and metaphorical meaning. They also revealed overall ecological themes such as safety and protection from natural calamities, forest conservation, agricultural and aquatic livelihood and productivity, agricultural survival, climate change mitigation, appreciation of nature, watershed protection and preservation of nature’s gifts.

Gaddang folksongs give a vivid mirror of the common activities, customs, beliefs, awareness of what are seen in places of the Gaddangs as people. The themes of their songs reveal an array of people’s way of life, emotions, sentiments, love and other life experiences. Their songs may speak of appreciation of nature’s beauty, abundant harvests, expressions of longings and pains, desires and prayers, aspirations, love, etc.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The environmental sector of the province should intensify the need to continuously craft and implement programs or environmental measures to protect, restore and further develop the plains, valleys, mountains, forests, and bodies of water of Nueva Vizcaya for more productive utilization by the people.

The agricultural sector must promote effective programs to address the need to protect crops to ensure abundant harvests and thus, to increase the productivity of the entire vegetation to lessen the poverty level in the entire agricultural province.

The tourism sector must promote local destinations and may rekindle to the concerned agencies and to all Novo-Vizcayanos how vastly and fortunately Nueva Vizcaya is gifted by God beautiful sceneries and fertile lands and how intense is the need to protect, nurture and promote these natural endowments in the province to domestic and possibly foreign tourists.

The education sector may kindle the need to revisit and improve their curriculum with the integration of lessons that will enhance the learners' initiative and level of awareness to care for nature; further, the learners will be equipped with a novel and effective tool in composing and analyzing environmental literary texts.

The literary enthusiasts and critics must be acquainted and interested to develop and apply a general understanding on looking at the literary texts particularly on hymns and folk songs through the lens of ecocriticism for the interpretation of said texts in relation to the environment.

To the indigenous peoples and communities in Nueva Vizcaya, this study would give motivation to compose more songs in their respective local dialects with environmental themes anchored on their awareness of how verdant and vibrant the province is.

The people of Nueva Vizcaya must be aware and appreciative of the hymns and folk songs in their province.

The future researchers may be inspired to conduct studies in other fields or genres, using Ecocriticism.

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