

Orendain, M. R. (1991). *Images of the Cordillera in selected Filipino children's literature*. (Unpublished master's thesis). Baguio City: Saint Louis University.

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ABSTRACT

There is an entire body of Filipino children's literature in the Philippines that have increasingly been the concern of publishers, writers and illustrators since the 1960s. There is also a considerable body of Filipino children's literature on the Cordillera that began to be written even before this time. However, other than the form of analysis represented in the selection of worthwhile books made early and recent award-giving bodies in the country, little discussion along scholarly lines has been done.

It is in this context that this study proposed to delineate the images of the Cordillera in selected Filipino children's literature. Specifically, this study proposed to investigate the genres into which such literature may be classified, the themes of and the images reflected in them, and the results of a comparison between the images reflected and the objective description of the Cordillera, its people and its culture as recorded in the social science materials.

To arrive at the answers to these problems, 46 prose works for children on the 7 ethnolinguistic groups of the Cordillera were analyzed. After classifying the stories and articles into the genres of children's literature in general, a discussion followed regarding their content, the aspects or features on Cordillera life such literature treated and from which the themes were identified, the images of the Cordillera drawn from such themes and how these compare with anthropological and sociological data on the land, its people and culture, and finally, a consideration of these selected texts as true literature.

The study basically used the descriptive method, supplemented by library research and, where needed, the interview technique.

Library research involved tracing the children's books back to their publication houses in Metro Manila and locating relevant and valuable sources in the libraries and special collections of institutions and individuals in Baguio City and Metro Manila. Interviews too were conducted in these places.

Two literary approaches were further made use of. The formalistic approach was utilized in determining the different genres into which selected prose works may be grouped and in classifying these same works under those genres. The sociological approach was utilized in delineating the relationship among particular works on the Cordillera, the objective description of the land, people and culture, and the possible perceptions of the reading audience for whom the literature has been written. This need to compare material from different disciplines led then to the additional use of the interdisciplinary approach.

Conclusions

From an enumeration of the findings of the present study can be drawn the following conclusions:

1. There is a body of Filipino children's literature on the Cordillera classified under the 5 genres or classes of realistic or modern fiction, informational book, modern fantasy, picture story book, and traditional or folk literature.

2. Taken up as theme or focuses in such literature are:

Themes of the family

- a. Parenthood seals a marriage and brings obligations and duties.
- b. Children, though much desired in a marriage and raised with great affection, have duties to perform and obligations to fulfill.
- c. A marriage may either be pre-arranged or freely entered into. It may also result from god's bidding.

d. Marriage partners help one another in the work at home and in the fields.

Themes of social living

e, Bontoc, Kankanay, Ifugao and Ibaloy societies are plutocracies where a class of wealthy families called kadangyan or baknang exerts influence and authority over the rest. In these societies, there is no separate class for either the priest or the warrior.

f. Each member of village society has obligations to fulfill not just towards his family but towards all others in the community.

Themes of friendship

g. Friendship is characterized by a concern for another's welfare, cooperation, respect and administration, honor and justice.

h. Friendship ends when there is jealousy and theft, greediness and treachery, vanity and disobedience.

Themes of beliefs and rituals

i. People believe in a soul and an afterlife.

j. Powerful gods and nature and ancestor spirits are responsible for the blessings and misfortunes in life.

k. Nature's bounty is a gift from the gods and on man has been entrusted its care.

l. Recourse to the power of the gods and spirits for appeasement, intercession and thanksgiving is achieved through ritual performance.

Themes of change

m. Change can come in the form of non-customary practices or an incursion of the completely new and alien.

n. Change can become a source of conflict in the family and of upheaval in village society.

o. A people's response to change can mean a matter of survival.

3. Reflected as general images of the Cordilleras, its people and its culture in such literature are:

On the land

a. Land is precious to the people not only because of its resource but because it has been home to their resources but because it has been home to their ancestors and their spirits.

b. When the terrain is harsh, people carve out terraces from mountain slopes or use other methods of crop production like the swidden technique.

c. The people live like agriculture, hunting, fishing, mining and some trade.

On the people

d. Marriage is sealed with the birth of children.

e. Family life is important and all family members share in the work at home and in the fields.

f. While at least two social classes may be distinguished in many Cordillera societies, everyone irrespective of rank cooperates in all efforts that prove beneficial to the interest of the entire community,

On the culture

g. There are powerful deities and spirits who exert control over all important stages of human life.

h. Everything comes from the gods and spirits--nature's bounty, wealth, health and misfortune.

i. Such beliefs necessitate the performance of rituals.

j. Change, especially when sudden and alien, brings conflict and upheal.

4. Story aspects that may provide an inaccurate picture of the Cordillera, its people and its culture are:

On the land

- a. Illustrations of the terrain and the people's houses do not distinctly characterize their Cordillera origins or location.
- b. The name Mountain Province can be confused with the old Mountain Province created in 1908 that consisted of 7 subprovinces.

On the people

- c. The names Isnags, Itnags, and Bontoks more accurately refer to the people of Apayao, Abra and the Mountain Province respectively.
- d. The final word of authority in the village rests, not on a single person or on the entire village membership, but on a council of elders and on the wealthy.
- e. In a plutocracy where the wealthy and those who are not wealthy comprise two distinct social classes, there is no separate class for either the priests or warriors.
- f. The people of the Cordillera are portrayed as too weak and too helpless when they have successfully struggled against Spanish subjugation for almost 400 years.

On the culture

- g. The names of certain concepts are mistakenly used. Rituals are known by other names and not as kanyaw. The word kabunyan is a generic term for a class of gods and goddesses, not the name of a single or creator god.
- h. The region known as the Skyworld is home to the deities. Should souls of victims of violent death find their way there, they are to be forced out of it through the performance of a ritual.

i. Certain practices appear to have no basis in fact. These include, among the Bontoks, the planting of a soul-twin tree and the burying of a child 12 years and younger away from the house; and among the Ifugaos, the use of ceremonial drum instead of the gangha or gong.

5. The 46 children's books and stories selected for purposes of the present study do not only approximate but also qualify as true literature.

Recommendations

The findings and conclusions of this paper lead to the formulation of the following recommendations:

Care must be given in the choice of subject matter, preparation of the text, and the attainment of the highest literary and aesthetics standards in children's literature. Research for verification and clarification of details along with a serious perception of the artistry involved in such an endeavor is as essential as it is in all literature. Children's book writers, even illustrators, must possess the conviction that their work requires both great skill in the craft and sensitivity for a child's world and dreams. A deep sense of professionalism must be developed especially now that prestige and recognition can come with national awards such as the Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for literature, short story for children division, and the National Book Award for the best books published in the country, children's literature category.

Active promotion of such literature may be undertaken beginning on the local level such as community centers, government and non-government offices, and institutions such as schools. Interest in this literature may be encouraged not just by book reading but by complementary activities like storytelling, puppetry, theater and other art forms.

And finally, research may be pursued further on such aspects as the dearth of humor in both text and illustration, the care and education of children including orphans, and the concept and place of friendship in village society.

Moreover, investigation may also include such materials for children as stories on the people identified as the Igorots, other genres like poetry and historical fiction, and publications like textbooks and weekly periodicals where children's stories and poems may be found.

