

The Language of the Land: An Ecolinguistic Semiotic Analysis of Indigenous Soil Paintings

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Abstract: *The 'Language of the Land' is vividly expressed in Waway Saway's soil paintings, which serve as cultural narratives reflecting the human-environment relationship and sustainable development. This study employs an ecolinguistic semiotic analysis, informed by Arran Stibbe's framework, to explore how these artworks articulate the interconnectedness of language, culture, and ecological sustainability within the Talaandig community. Utilizing Peirce's semiotic framework, it aims to: (1) identify the semiotic elements (icon, index, symbol) present in Waway Saway's soil paintings and analyze how they function within an ecolinguistic framework to convey ecological narratives; (2) determine the ecological ideologies and environmental understandings constructed through the visual language of Saway's paintings, and examine how these align with or diverge from UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 15 and SDG 4; and (3) determine the environmental meanings suggested by the signs. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study interprets signs, images, and symbols in Saway's paintings, focusing on their ecolinguistic significance. Findings reveal that the artworks function as semiotic repositories of: (a) peace as a foundational value for sustainable living; (b) the ancestral domain as a living, culturally significant ecosystem; (c) traditional tools as symbols of cultural resilience and sustainable resource management; and (d) key landmarks that signify the Talaandig community's profound connection to their territory. By understanding and promoting the cultural and ecological dimensions of sustainability, this study contributes to the broader discourse on achieving the UNESCO SDGs.*

Keywords: Ecolinguistics, Semiotics, Charles Sanders Peirce, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Ancestral Domain, Talaandig, Cultural Sustainability.

1. Introduction

Paintings function as profound visual narratives, encapsulating complex human experiences and societal expressions. Indigenous paintings, in particular, serve as potent repositories of cultural identity, historical narratives, and indigenous worldviews. These artworks, imbued with symbolism and intricate artistic choices, offer invaluable insights into the lives, beliefs, and resilience of indigenous communities. Rodelio "Waway" Linsahay Saway's soil paintings of the Talaandig Tribe stand as compelling subjects for critical analysis, embodying the very "**language of the land**" itself. Saway's unique artistic expression transforms the earth into a canvas, allowing the very soil of his ancestral domain to speak. Through these paintings, the interconnectedness of the Talaandig people with their environment is not merely depicted, but profoundly articulated, revealing a deep cultural narrative that reflects both the human-environment relationship and the imperative for sustainable development.

Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, provides a crucial framework for deciphering the layered meanings embedded within indigenous art. By dissecting the visual language of Saway's paintings, the social, spiritual, and historical contexts that shape the Talaandig worldview can be illuminated. Semiotics, as a linguistic discipline, allows an understanding of how signs and symbols, as articulated by Chistyakova (2010), function as a "language of culture," conveying complex meanings through symbolic representation. Vischer and Yanacek (2015) reinforce this, noting that signs and symbols are images with hidden meanings, and semiotic analysis is the process of unveiling those meanings. Hodge et al. (2014) further emphasize semiotics' ability to translate visual art into verbal understanding. Applying these principles to Saway's paintings enables a deeper comprehension of the messages intended for conveyance.

However, a more comprehensive understanding necessitates the integration of ecolinguistics. Arran Stibbe's ecolinguistic framework, which focuses on how language constructs "stories we live by" that impact the relationship

with the environment, is particularly relevant. This approach allows examination of how Saway's paintings not only reflect cultural narratives but also articulate the Talaandig community's ecological worldview. Ecolinguistics, when integrated with semiotics, enables exploration of how visual signs and symbols function as "ecological stories," shaping perceptions of the natural world and promoting or hindering ecological sustainability.

Specifically, this study analyzes Saway's selected paintings through an ecolinguistic semiotic lens, focusing on how they convey the interconnectedness of language, culture, and ecological sustainability. By employing Peirce's semiotic framework to identify icon, index, and symbol elements, and utilizing Stibbe's insights to deconstruct the "ecological stories" embedded within these elements, a deeper understanding of the Talaandig community's relationship with their ancestral domain can be achieved. This approach also allows assessment of how Saway's artworks align with UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 4 (Quality Education, especially cultural education).

The significance of Saway's work extends beyond local contexts, as international partnerships and exhibitions highlight the global relevance of indigenous art. This study contributes to the documentation and preservation of Talaandig cultural heritage, while also fostering a broader understanding of the role of art in promoting ecological awareness and sustainable practices. By integrating semiotics with ecolinguistics, this research aims to provide a more nuanced and holistic interpretation of Saway's paintings, revealing the profound ways in which indigenous art can serve as a powerful medium for ecological and cultural communication.

Several studies have used semiotic analysis to understand the meaning of signs and symbols. Kim, Man-Ki (2016). *A Semiotic Study on the Artworks of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera*. This study utilized Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotics to analyze ten paintings, revealing how cultural meanings and artists' emotions influence interpretations. While focusing on personal and cultural interpretations, this research highlights the importance of Peirce's framework in deciphering visual art. In the context of the current study, this work establishes a precedent for employing Peirce's model to understand the layered meanings within indigenous art, particularly how cultural context shapes the interpretation of signs and symbols.

Another study was of Junaidi & Hamuddin (2019) on *Malay River Civilization in Riau Malay Paintings: A Semiotic Approach*. This research explored 21 Malay artworks, using Ferdinand De Saussure's semiotic approach to uncover the civilizational understandings conveyed through visual elements. Notably, it identified messages related to environmental devastation and marginalization alongside cultural identity. This study connects to the current research by demonstrating how art can serve as a platform for expressing ecological concerns. Integrating an ecolinguistic perspective, one can analyze how these paintings frame the relationship between the Malay people and their riverine environment, identifying the "stories they live by" regarding ecological stewardship or its absence. This provides a bridge to understanding how art can be used to display ecological ideologies.

Also, Mohajeri & Fahimifar (2019) examined *Unveiling the Mystical World: A Semiotic Analysis of Bihzad's "Alexander and the Hermit"*. This study used Peirce's semiotic classification to analyze the mystical symbols in a Persian painting, revealing a hidden universe of religious and mystical meanings. It demonstrates how visual art can communicate complex, abstract concepts through signs and symbols. When viewed through an ecolinguistic lens, the study can be expanded to study the visual representation of nature within the mystical context of the painting. How nature is displayed, and what symbols are used, can be used to understand the relationship of the artist to the environment.

While these studies highlight the effectiveness of semiotic analysis in interpreting visual art, they lack explicit integration of ecolinguistic perspectives. This research addresses this gap by employing Peirce's semiotics and Stibbe's ecolinguistic framework as complementary analytical tools. This integrated approach shifts the focus from simple interpretation of signs and symbols to understanding how they construct ecological narratives. This allows for a more profound exploration of how indigenous art, like Saway's paintings, reflects and influences the culture-environment relationship. This study sought to answer the questions:

1. What are the semiotic elements (icon, index, symbol) present in Waway Saway's soil paintings, and how do they function within an ecolinguistic framework to convey ecological narratives?

2. What ecological ideologies and environmental understandings are constructed through the visual language of Saway's paintings, and how do these align with or diverge from UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 15 and SDG 4?
3. What meanings are suggested by the signs in relation to the environment?

This study employs a dual theoretical framework to analyze visual ecological narratives, combining Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotics with Arran Stibbe's ecolinguistic approach. Initially, Peirce's semiotics, as a science of signs, provides a structural foundation for understanding meaning generation. Central to this framework are three fundamental elements: the icon, which resembles its object through similarity; the index, which indicates its object through a causal or existential connection; and the symbol, which represents its object through convention or social agreement. Consequently, these elements constitute the components of a sign, encompassing the representamen, the sign itself; the object, what the sign refers to; and the interpretant, the meaning derived by the interpreter. Furthermore, Peirce's emphasis on the dynamic process of semiosis underscores the ongoing interpretation and re-interpretation of signs.

Subsequently, to extend the analysis beyond mere sign interpretation, this study incorporates Arran Stibbe's ecolinguistic framework. In essence, ecolinguistics examines how language, and by extension, visual language, constructs "stories we live by" that shape our relationship with the environment. Notably, key ideologies within ecolinguistics include the analysis of how narratives promote or hinder ecological sustainability, the exploration of how language reflects and influences our perceptions of nature, and the examination of how language constructs human and non-human relationships. As a result, this framework allows for the analysis of visual narratives as ecological texts, revealing underlying worldviews and connections to the environment.

Therefore, by integrating Peirce's semiotics with Stibbe's ecolinguistics, this study aims to identify and categorize the iconic, indexical, and symbolic elements within visual narratives using Peirce's model. Moreover, it seeks to analyze how these semiotic elements construct ecological ideologies and environmental understandings through Stibbe's framework. Additionally, the study will explore how visual narratives reflect and influence the culture-environment relationship.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design, utilizing both semiotic and eco-linguistic analyses, to interpret the cultural and environmental messages embedded in five selected paintings by Rodelio "Waway" Linsahay Saway. The selected paintings are: Sacred Grounds (2023), Panalabugta (2017), Harana sa Kinaiyahan (2023), Katyapi Player (2019), and Harvester (2019). These paintings were chosen based on their:

- Cultural significance in representing Talaandig traditions.
- Ability to communicate societal issues within indigenous Filipino contexts.
- Effective use of artistic elements (color, composition, texture) to convey meaning.
- Clear representations of the natural environment.

Rodelio "Waway" Linsahay Saway, a Talaandig artist and cultural activist, provided the source material.

Coding System

The coding process involved analyzing each painting through Peirce's triadic model, supplemented by an eco-linguistic framework:

- Icon: Identifying signs that resemble their referents (e.g., a painted image directly representing a tree).
- Index: Recognizing signs that have a causal or existential connection to their referents (e.g., smoke indicating fire).
- Symbol: Interpreting signs with arbitrary relationships to their referents, understood through cultural conventions (e.g., specific colors representing spiritual concepts).
- Ecological Signification: Identifying signs that reflect the relationship between the Talaandig people and their surrounding environment, including representations of flora, fauna, and landscapes, as well as indications of ecological values and practices.

Detailed Coding Process:

1. Image Segmentation: Each painting was divided into distinct visual elements.
2. Sign Identification: Each element was assessed to determine if it functioned as an icon, index, symbol, or an ecological signifier.
3. Meaning Interpretation: The cultural and ecological context of each sign was analyzed to understand its meaning within the Talaandig worldview. This included examining how the paintings use visual language to convey environmental values, beliefs, and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK).
4. Thematic Synthesis: The individual sign interpretations were integrated to reveal the overarching cultural and ecological messages and stories embedded in each painting, including the identification of ecological discourse and potential place-based identity.

Intercoder Reliability

To ensure validity, a Language and Letters Department expert with a Ph.D. in English Literature, and the painter himself, validated the coding process.

Data Analysis

The analyzed data, categorized through Peirce's model and the eco-linguistic framework, was interpreted to reveal the cultural and environmental messages and meanings within the paintings. The interpretations focused on how the selected paintings function as a vehicle for the Talaandig culture and its ecological worldview. This included analyzing:

- How natural elements are represented and the language of nature conveyed.
- The expression of the Talaandig cultural ecological worldview.
- The presence of any ecological discourse or advocacy.
- The paintings contribution to a place based identity.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis of data collected from Rodelio "Waway" Linsahay Saway's soil paintings, as documented on his Facebook posts. The analysis aims to address two primary research questions: (1) What are the semiotic elements (icon, index, symbol) present in Waway Saway's soil paintings, and how do they function within an ecolinguistic framework to convey ecological narratives? (2) What ecological ideologies and environmental understandings are constructed through the visual language of Saway's paintings, and how do these align with or diverge from UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 15 and SDG 4? (3) What meanings are suggested by the signs in relation to the environment?

Table 1. *Shows the summary of the signs present in the paintings of Waway Saway.*

Paintings	Sign	Icon	Index	Symbol
Painting 1	Figure of a man	✓		
	Vase			✓
	Moon		✓	
Painting 2	Mountain			✓
	Panika Headdress		✓	
	Sibat			✓

Painting 3	White butterfly Stone Stump	✓	✓
Painting 4	Man playing katyapi Tangkulo Headdress	✓	✓
Painting 5	Woman a basket of corn Basket Corn	✓	✓

The table revealed the elements of signs in the paintings of Waway Saway. The researcher identified three distinct sign elements in Saway's artwork. They are prominently evident and suitable for analysis. Figure 1 below presents the first sample paintings of Waway Saway.

Figure 1 presents the painting known as the Captivating Piece. Three elements of signs are found: a man, a vase, and a moon.



Figure 1. Sacred Grounds (2023)

The table reveals the sign elements in Waway Saway's paintings. The researcher identified three distinct sign elements in Saway's artwork, prominently evident and suitable for analysis. Figure 1 presents the first sample painting by Waway Saway. Figure 1, "Captivating Piece," contains three sign elements: a man, a vase, and a moon.

The first figure, a man, is an "icon" representing history, unique features, and cultural symbolism. In a painting, a man's figure indicates a position in society and human identity, reflecting the principles and views of that society. Here, the figure represents the Datu, a revered ritualist, positioned before an imposing jar and engaged in a ritual for unity, conveying solemnity and purpose. A man's figure in a painting represents not only his physical form but also ideas that inform our understanding of cultural values and can have a structural function, adapting to different

environments, norms, and platforms (1). Frame 1 powerfully represents traditions, beliefs, and unity, offering insight into cultural heritage and the significance of a sacred place with the figure of a man.

From an eco-linguistic perspective, the Datu's representation is crucial. It signifies the embodied knowledge and ecological wisdom of the community. The Datu is not just a figure; he is a speaker of the land, a narrator of the community's relationship with its environment. His presence foregrounds the importance of human agency in maintaining ecological balance and cultural continuity. The depiction of the Datu participating in a ritual emphasizes the performative aspect of language in shaping and reinforcing ecological practices. The ritual itself can be seen as a form of ecological discourse, a way of communicating and enacting the community's values and beliefs about the environment.

The second sign, a jar, is a symbol representing peace, as it contains oil used to untangle hair. This symbolizes harmony and tranquility, suggesting that resolving conflict and maintaining inner peace leads to clarity and beauty in life. According to Cromwell (2), jars represent a safe, confined space with just enough soil to sustain life, a form of protection from the outside world, allowing one to observe life from within rather than being "in their life." The jar against the sacred grounds evokes reverence and spiritual presence, capturing the essence of the annual gathering and its rituals.

Eco-linguistically, the jar can be interpreted as a metaphor for the containment and preservation of life-sustaining resources. It symbolizes the community's understanding of the importance of protecting and nurturing the elements that contribute to their well-being. The "oil used to untangle hair" further links to the idea of care and maintenance, not just of the physical self but also, metaphorically, of the environment. The jar, therefore, becomes a symbol of ecological sustainability and the community's efforts to maintain a harmonious relationship with their surroundings. It also subtly hints at the concept of resource management, a critical aspect of ecological awareness.

The third figure, the moon, is an index, directly symbolizing concepts like time and dreams, connecting to the artwork's intended meaning. The moon symbolizes the guiding presence of a tribal calendar, adding timelessness and tradition. As an index, the moon has a significant purpose, guiding the audience's interpretation. Since the beginning, the moon has inspired human curiosity (3), symbolizing change, mystery, and time.

Eco-linguistically, the moon's representation as an index to time and tradition is significant. It highlights the interconnectedness of natural cycles and cultural practices. The tribal calendar, guided by the moon, signifies the community's deep understanding of and reliance on natural rhythms. This connection emphasizes the importance of ecological time in shaping cultural identity and practices. It also underscores how language, through the construction of the calendar and associated narratives, helps to encode and transmit ecological knowledge across generations. The moon, in this context, becomes a symbol of ecological literacy and the community's ability to "read" and interpret the language of nature.

The painting contains three symbols with historical significance, distinctive qualities, and cultural meaning: the moon (index) and the jar (harmony and serenity). Frame 1 depicts Datu, a ritualist, in a visual representation of customs, beliefs, and unity. The jar, a symbol of calm, represents a secure, enclosed space and protection. The moon, an index referencing time and dreams, links directly to the artwork's intended meaning, providing a potent visual representation of local customs and cultural legacy.

Figure 2 presents the painting known as Panalabugta. As seen, three elements of signs are found. These are the Mountain, Panika Headdress, and Sibat



Figure 2. Panalabugta (2017)

The second painting presented above is entitled Panalabugta (2017). The mountain is the first symbol, representing the community's ancestral domain and anchoring the ritual in their heritage and connection to the land. It implies reverence for nature's beauty, its vastness reminding us of nature's unpredictable forces. According to Yegorova (1), mountains have an encouraging presence that affects a person's sense of existence due to their massive height and infinite nature. The mountain symbolizes not just its physical presence but also challenges and strength, offering a glimpse into the community's spiritual practices, connection to the land, and gender roles within their traditions. Eco-linguistically, the mountain is more than a geographical feature; it's a toponym, a place name imbued with deep cultural and ecological significance. It represents the community's sense of place and their ecological identity. The mountain speaks of the community's history, their ancestral connections, and their dependence on the land for sustenance and spiritual well-being. It's a key element in their ecological narratives, shaping their understanding of their relationship with the environment. The mountain also signifies ecological boundaries and the community's recognized territory, highlighting the importance of land rights and environmental stewardship.

The second figure found is the panika. The panika headdress symbolizes cultural identity and traditions, with women wearing headdresses denoting their equal status to men, signifying their leadership roles. This emphasizes gender equality and shared leadership within the cultural framework, connecting to a particular culture and highlighting the value of preserving the organization. According to Samdhan (2) Panika, women's headdress is a sacred obligation to maintain cultural traditions, symbolizing cultural identity and personality, reflecting the community's unique character, history, and customs. This portrayal underscores the importance of gender equality and the shared leadership roles within the cultural framework depicted in the artwork. Eco-linguistically, the panika headdress, especially when worn by women to denote equal status, illustrates the linguistic construction of gender roles within an ecological context. It challenges the often-patriarchal narratives that exclude women from environmental decision-making. The headdress, as a symbol of women's leadership, foregrounds their active role in shaping and maintaining ecological practices. It also represents the embodied knowledge of women, often deeply connected to plant life, healing practices, and sustainable resource management. The headdress, therefore, becomes a symbol of ecological empowerment and the recognition of diverse voices in environmental discourse.

The third symbol, Sibat o Bangkaw, is crucial in Filipino history and culture as a traditional tool and weapon, implying significant cultural and historical value. It symbolizes ability and knowledge passed down through generations, demonstrating the community's respect for fighting abilities and their cultural identity. According to Wiley (3), sibat is a spear used by indigenous people as a weapon or instrument. The Sibat held by a man represents power, strength, and the cultural significance of firearms, potentially related to martial arts or fighting styles, emphasizing community safety and self-defense. Eco-linguistically, the Sibat o Bangkaw represents the intertwining of culture, survival, and ecological adaptation. It symbolizes the community's ability to hunt and protect themselves within their environment. The Sibat, as a tool, embodies the practical knowledge of resource utilization and the skills necessary for interacting with the natural world. It can also be seen as a symbol of ecological defense, reflecting the community's need to protect their territory and resources from external threats. While a weapon, it also speaks to the community's reliance on the

environment for their sustenance and the narratives around hunting and resource management that are central to their cultural identity.

Painting #2 depicts the community's ancestral domain, spiritual rituals, and relationship with the Earth. The mountain represents the community's power, spiritual challenges, and reverence for nature. The Panika headdress signifies women's leadership positions and equal status to men, emphasizing the importance of women's equal leadership within cultural frameworks. The Sibat o Bangkaw, a customary tool and weapon, symbolizes the community's reverence for combat prowess and its cultural importance. Throughout history, the Sibat has symbolized strength, power, and the cultural relevance of weaponry, highlighting self-defense and communal safety. Figure 3 presents the painting known as Harana sa Kinaiyahan. Three elements of signs are found. These are the White Butterfly, Stone and Stump.

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Figure 3. Harana sa Kinaiyahan (2023)

Harana sa Kinaiyahan (2023). The third painting is about the Harana sa Kinaiyahan. The stump symbolizes the legacy of loggers from a bygone era, evoking reflection on human impact on the natural environment. It implies understanding nature's resilience and how human influence can help or harm nature. According to Stanek (1), stumps are a vital source of natural power for sustainable fuel combinations. It symbolizes the cyclical aspect of life and the significance of harmony and balance, indicating the ongoing relationship between humans and the natural environment. The painting weaves together music, spiritual symbolism, environmental reflection, and cultural heritage, inviting contemplation of the interconnectedness of tradition, nature, and spirituality within the Talaandig community. Eco-linguistically, the stump is a powerful example of absent presence. It represents the erasure of the living tree, a stark reminder of deforestation and the impact of logging practices. The stump speaks of the past, a silent witness to the changes in the landscape. It also symbolizes the commodification of nature, where trees are reduced to economic resources. However, the mention of its potential use for "sustainable fuel combinations" introduces a counter-discourse, a re-framing of the stump from a symbol of destruction to a potential source of renewal. This highlights the complex and often contradictory ways in which language is used to represent and negotiate human-nature relationships.

The stone represents a significant landmark within the Talaandig community's ancestral territory, symbolizing the community's connection to their land and heritage. It implies security and stability, providing assurance and ease. According to Sharma (2), stone symbolizes the solid foundations of identity in society, demonstrating the strength of community values. Stone symbolizes strength and determination, emphasizing resilience and facing difficulties individually and as a society. It serves as an image anchor, providing consistency and harmony, creating a focal point for analyzing the other elements of frame 3. Eco-linguistically, the stone represents the materiality of language and the embodied memory of the community. It's a place marker, a tangible link to their ancestral territory and cultural heritage. The stone, unlike the transient nature of spoken words, is a permanent fixture, symbolizing the enduring connection between the community and their land. It serves as a focal point not just visually, but also narratively, anchoring the community's stories and traditions. The stone, therefore, becomes a symbol of ecological continuity and the community's deep-rooted sense of belonging to their environment. It also signifies the non-human agency within the ecosystem, a silent observer of human activities.

The white butterfly symbolizes the presence of the white spirit, adding a spiritual and ethereal dimension. This ghostly presence infuses the scene with transcendence and otherworldly significance. The butterfly's life cycle symbolizes human development and transformation, implying that the stages of growth and change are similar to personal development journeys, highlighting the positive effect of accepting change and its beauty. According to Olesen (3), butterflies represent a new start, encouraging the pursuit of something positive and unique. The white butterfly symbolizes the opportunity for transformation and its beauty, serving as a visual reminder of the possibility of change and the beauty of accepting progress and personal growth. Eco-linguistically, the white butterfly represents the symbolic representation of nature and the use of metaphor to convey spiritual and ecological concepts. It's a non-human actor in the painting, carrying significant cultural meaning. The butterfly's transformation symbolizes ecological renewal and the cyclical nature of life. It also represents the interconnectedness of all living beings and the spiritual dimension of the community's relationship with the environment. The "white spirit" further emphasizes the spiritual ecology of the community, where the natural world is imbued with sacred meanings. The butterfly, therefore, becomes a symbol of ecological hope and the potential for transformation and healing, both personally and environmentally.

Painting #3 illustrates the Talaandig community's connections to their ancestral land, symbolizing nature's endurance and the value of harmony and balance. The stump symbolizes the loggers' history and the interaction between humans and the environment. The stone represents the community's links to their history and land, showing how deeply rooted identity is in society. The white butterfly symbolizes the white spirit and the beauty of metamorphosis, adding a spiritual element. The mysterious figure 'akinuna,' a custodian of the Earth, adds mystique and spiritual protection to the Talaandig tradition, blending music, spiritual symbolism, and cultural history.

Figure 4 presents the painting known as Katyapi Masterplayer. Three elements of signs are found: a Man playing katyapi, katyapi, and a Tangkulo headdress.



Figure 4. Katyapi (2019)

Katyapi Player (2019). The man playing katyapi represents a deep relationship with the environment and ancestors, symbolizing the instrument's cultural significance and origin. The Katyapi player demonstrates skill and calm wisdom (1). The man playing katyapi symbolizes an index, showing music's existence and influence, indicating music's role in composition and storytelling. Figure 4 portrays Waway Saway, a revered figure within the Talaandig tribe, playing the katyapi, a traditional two-string boat lute with cultural and familial significance. Eco-linguistically, the man playing the katyapi exemplifies the role of art in mediating human-nature relationships. The act of playing music, especially with a traditional instrument like the katyapi, can be seen as a form of ecological performance. It's a way of expressing a deep connection to the land and ancestors, and of transmitting cultural and ecological knowledge through sound and rhythm. The music itself can be considered a form of ecological communication, a way of interacting with and responding to the environment. The katyapi player, in this context, becomes an ecological storyteller, using music to narrate the community's history, values, and relationship with their surroundings. This highlights the importance of indigenous knowledge systems and the role of art in preserving and transmitting them.

The katyapi symbolizes the significance of music within culture and traditions, implying that music is fundamental to identity and a way of life. Beyond its appearance, the katyapi may have a deeper cultural meaning, symbolizing a community's creative influences, musical customs, or cultural identity. According to Waway (1), katyapi is a transcendence force of music, binding people over distance and time, representing the ability of music to convey stories and the importance of protecting indigenous music customs due to their cultural significance and ties to the community's identity. Eco-linguistically, the katyapi itself is a material artifact of culture-nature interaction. It's made from natural materials, connecting it directly to the environment. The sounds produced by the katyapi can be seen as a form of acoustic ecology, reflecting the community's understanding of and interaction with the sounds of their environment. The katyapi, as a symbol of music's power to "convey stories," highlights the role of narrative in shaping ecological consciousness. The emphasis on protecting indigenous music customs underscores the importance of preserving cultural heritage as a form of ecological heritage. The katyapi, therefore, becomes a symbol of cultural-ecological resilience and the interconnectedness of cultural and environmental well-being.

The Tangkulo headdress signifies the importance of societal norms and artifacts, implying that the headdress is essential to the community's identity and holds cultural values. Terando (2) states that tangkulo is a masculine Bagobo headdress representing a brave warrior and leader, symbolizing the community's cultural pride and illustrating their culture's depth and richness. Waway is depicted wearing a tangkulo, symbolizing his leadership status within the community, highlighting Waway's role as a respected leader and cultural steward within the Talaandig tribe. The painting celebrates Waway's father's legacy, the cultural significance of the katyapi, and Waway's role as a leader and custodian of Talaandig traditions. Waway Saway commemorates his father's influence and guidance, preserving and celebrating Talaandig heritage for future generations. Eco-linguistically, the Tangkulo headdress is a powerful

example of cultural encoding of ecological knowledge. The materials and designs of the headdress likely reflect the community's deep understanding of their environment. It also symbolizes specific ecological roles, particularly that of a leader or warrior responsible for protecting the community and its resources. The Tangkulo contributes to the linguistic construction of cultural-ecological identity, marking the wearer as a member of a specific community with a distinct relationship to their land. When worn by a leader like Waway Saway, it foregrounds ecological leadership, highlighting the importance of traditional authority in environmental stewardship. As a wearable artifact, it embodies and transmits embodied ecological knowledge across generations. The painting celebrates Waway's father's legacy, the cultural significance of the Katyapi, and Waway's role as a leader and custodian of Talaandig traditions. Waway Saway commemorates his father's influence and guidance, preserving and celebrating Talaandig heritage for future generations.

Figure 5 presents the painting known as Aglay Harvester. As seen, three elements of signs are found. These are women carrying baskets and corn.



Figure 5. Harvester (2019)

Harvester (2019). Figure 5 presents the painting known as Aglay Harvester. As seen, three elements of signs are found. These are women carrying baskets and corn. First, the woman carrying a basket indicates the significance of labor and everyday chores for the community's survival and lifestyle. This implies that carrying a basket represents the effort and support women give to their loved ones and community. According to Adejo (1), women play an essential role in agriculture, particularly in activities related to harvest and postharvest. The woman carrying a basket symbolizes more general ideas like abundance, sustenance, or women's crucial role in upholding and enhancing communities. Therefore, Figure 5 offers a poignant reflection on the enduring values and customs of Talaandig people, celebrating the continuity of tradition and the resilience of cultural heritage in the face of modernity. Eco-linguistically, the woman carrying a basket represents the embodied knowledge and labor of women in sustainable agriculture. It symbolizes the gendered dimensions of ecological practices and the vital role women play in food production and resource management. The act of carrying the basket can be seen as a metaphor for carrying and transmitting ecological knowledge across generations. The woman, in this context, becomes an ecological agent, actively shaping and sustaining the community's relationship with the land. This highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing women's contributions to ecological sustainability.

The second symbol is the basket. The basket in the painting indicates the importance of using traditional handicrafts within the community. This implies that the basket suggests the community's dedication to maintaining and

transferring its cultural tradition by producing essential and beautifully designed objects. According to Zerrudo and Bautista (2), baskets embrace nature and civilization, both the physical and the intangible, an ornament and work, the privileged and the typical. The basket symbolizes lifelong skill transfer and ancestry knowledge. The material reflects the locals' beliefs and ties to the environment. Due to this, the basket in the artwork has significant cultural value and is a visual reminder of the community's handmade items, history, and entrenched beliefs. Eco-linguistically, the basket is a material artifact of culture-nature interaction. It's made from natural materials, showcasing the community's resourcefulness and their ability to utilize natural resources sustainably. The basket, as a handcrafted object, represents the intertwining of culture, craft, and ecology. It also symbolizes the transfer of ecological knowledge through generations, as the skills and techniques for basket-making are passed down within the community. The basket, therefore, becomes a symbol of cultural-ecological heritage and the community's sustainable practices.

Moreover, the third symbol shown in the painting is the corn. The corn in the painting indicates the community's reliance on natural resources, agriculture, and sustenance. This implies that corn is essential as a staple crop that feeds people supports society, and symbolizes fertility and the rhythm of everyday life. According to Xu et al. (3), corn is a major crop that provides a significant source of nutrition and sustenance to many people in many places. The corn symbolizes fertility, abundance, and the relationship between humans and nature. It shows agricultural expertise, habits, and the community's close ties to the environment and its cycles. Eco-linguistically, the corn represents the cultural and ecological significance of food. It symbolizes the community's reliance on agriculture for sustenance and their deep connection to the land. The corn, as a staple crop, highlights the importance of biodiversity and the community's knowledge of cultivating and utilizing specific plant varieties. It also represents the cyclical nature of life and the community's understanding of ecological rhythms and processes. The corn, therefore, becomes a symbol of food security, ecological sustainability, and the community's agricultural heritage.

As seen in painting #5, the image highlights the value of labor, traditional handicrafts, and corn while illustrating the Talaandig people's surviving traditions and practices. The woman with the basket stands for the work and assistance to women, particularly those involved in agriculture, give to their families, friends, and community. The basket represents tradition, knowledge, and lifetime skill transfer, representing humans' environmental ideas and connections. The primary crop, grain, symbolizes fertility, abundance, and the bond between humans and the environment. It also reflects the community's reliance on agriculture, natural resources, and sustenance. The picture offers an inspiring contemplation on the persistence of customs and the courage of cultural legacy in the face of change. The results showed that all of the sign elements categorized by Sanders Peirce were identified within the signs and symbols in Waway Saway's paintings. This revealed that most categorized signs fell into the symbol category, with ten signs identified, followed by three indexical and two iconic signs on the five paintings analyzed in this study. Most symbolic signals implied that Waway Saway had embedded more profound messages unique to each individual rather than painted images. It was also interesting to note that the dominance of symbolic signs suggested a deliberate and coded communication system within the paintings. Furthermore, all three Peirce categories indicated the richness and complexity of how Waway Saway conveyed his message. The results demonstrated that the paintings had a deeper meaning than their physical image. Waway Saway's paintings provided a complex and profound image of the community's traditions, beliefs, and way of life through signs and symbols that transcend their physical form and become imbued with cultural importance and profound meanings.

4. Conclusion

Waway Saway's paintings effectively utilize Peircean semiotic sign elements to communicate complex cultural narratives. Predominantly employing symbolic representation, the artist conveys vital aspects of Talaandig identity, including ancestral domain, peace, and traditional practices. The paintings' visual language serves as a powerful medium for preserving and interpreting the community's cultural heritage. Further research could explore the specific socio-historical context that influences the artist's choice of symbols, deepening our understanding of their cultural significance.

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