

DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

AN ETHNOBOTANICAL STUDY OF THE ALANGAN
MANGYANS OF NORTHEASTERN MINDORO

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
De la Salle University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Biology

by
Miss Emelina H. Mandia
January, 1987

THE DLSU-EAC LIBRARY



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	iii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF PLATES	x
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	8
Significance of the Study	9
Scope and Limitations of the Study	10
2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	12
3. METHODOLOGY	18
Ethnographic Data-Gathering	18
Collection of Botanical Specimens	21
4. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	24
The Alangan Mangyans	24
The Alangans and their Place of Habitation	30
The Useful Plants	32
Plants and the Alangans' Quest for Subsistence	47
Plants and the Alangans' Dwelling	63



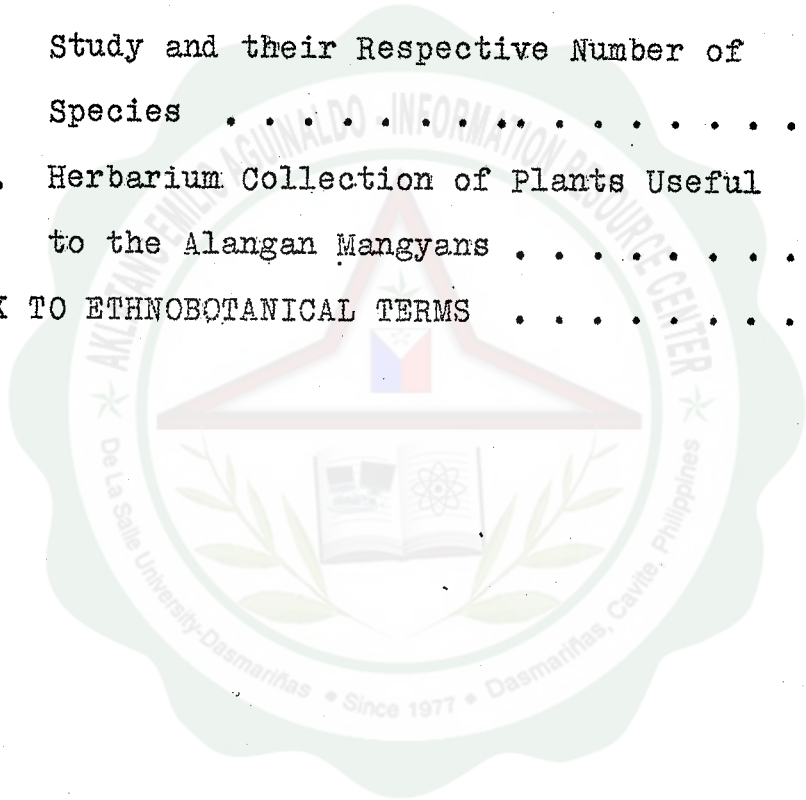
DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

vii

Plants and the Alangans' Medicine . . .	65
Plants and the Alangans' Firewood and Fire-Making Technique	75
Plants and the Alangans' Household Articles	78
Plants Used as Cordage Materials	81
Plants Used as Stimulant	83
Plants and Personal Ornamentation . . .	84
Plants for Miscellaneous Uses	87
Plant-Related Alangan Beliefs, Cultural Practices and Literary Works	92
Plants and the Alangan Belief on the Spirits of the Dead and the Forest . . .	92
Plants and the Alangans' Planting and Harvesting Beliefs	93
Other Alangan Beliefs and Practices . .	95
Plants and the Songs of the Alangans . .	99
5. GENERAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	103
LITERATURE CITED	109
APPENDICES	121



Appendix	Page
A. Glossary to Alangan Terms Included in the Study	121
B. Field Guide	125
C. List of Plant Families Covered in the Study and their Respective Number of Species	127
D. Herbarium Collection of Plants Useful to the Alangan Mangyans	129
INDEX TO ETHNOBOTANICAL TERMS	149



DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. The Useful Plants of the Alangans	34
2. Important Swidden Food Crops	51
3. Garden Plants in Paitan and Capernaum	54
4. Alangan Wild Food Plants	58
5. Alangans' House Posts and Rafters	64
6. Alangans' Medicinal Plants	68
7. Firewood of the Alangans	75
8. Alangans' Cordage Materials	82
9. The Ethnobotanical Classification of the Useful Plants of Alangan Mangyans	91



DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Mangyan Tribes on Mindoro Island	2
2. Map of the Republic of the Philippines . .	4
3. Alangan Villages Included in the Study . .	12



DE LA SALIE UNIVERSITY

LIST OF PLATES

Plate		Page
1.	An Alangan Settlement in Sinay, Naujan . . .	113
2.	Communal Houses in Ramayan, Naujan	113
3.	The researcher's week-long station in Basal	114
4.	An Alangan woman winnowing the newly pounded rice	114
5.	Dulangan River, the Alangans' source of fish and other aquatic food	115
6.	Dulangan River finding its way between boulders of rock	115
7.	<u>Tibvayong</u> (<u>Trichosanthes cucumerina</u> L.) a wild food plant of the Alangans	116
8.	<u>Agutay</u> (<u>Musa errans</u> Blco.), a wild banana believed to have an anti-evil spirit effect.	116
9.	An Alangan woman braiding "lingob"	117
10.	An Alangan woman preparing a bark cloth . .	117
11.	An Alangan woman in native attire	118
12.	Alangan mother and child	118
13.	Alangan baskets	119
14.	Well crafted "tabud" in various sizes . . .	119
15.	Alangan primitive cooking vessels	120
16.	Dried bottle gourd fruits as water container .	120



Chapter 5

GENERAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. General Summary

This study attempted to make an ethnobotanical survey of the Alangan Mangyans of Northeastern Mindoro in order to determine the role of plants in their culture. Knowledge of such relationship can contribute to our awareness of the useful elements of the flora of Mt. Halcon and also to our understanding about the Alangans.

In order to obtain relevant data, the researcher stayed in five Alangan villages for a total of three months (July to September, 1985) carrying out the ethnobotanical investigations such as observation, participation, interviews and collection of botanical specimens. Most of the Alangans are unable to read and write, hence, it was not possible to disseminate the prepared set of questionnaires. Nevertheless, the questionnaire was found useful in facilitating the interview process. Cited useful plants, except the very common ones, were collected, processed, nomenclaturally determined and classified. Eventually the specimens will be systematically filed in the PNH



and DLSU herbarium for reference use. Tape recorder was also used to record details of interviews and native songs. Photographs of the Alangans doing plant-related activities as well as habits of some useful plants and plant products were taken for record purposes (see Plates 1-16).

Information obtained from observations and interviews showed that the Alangan Mangyans of Northeastern Mindoro possess a remarkable knowledge of plants and their utilization. A total of 223 plant species were found to be culturally significant to the Alangans. However, only 169 were identified to species level while the rest were determined up to genus (44) and family (10) levels only. Failure to fully determine the scientific identity of some plants collected is due to the lack of fertile organs needed for proper identification, which could not be avoided as plants differ in their flowering season. A total of 74 plant families were covered in this study with family Moraceae and Poaceae having the most number of species (13 species) and family Euphorbiaceae ranking second (12 species) (see Appendix C). Appendix D shows the herbarium collection of the Alangans' useful plants.

The useful plants of the Alangan Mangyans covered in this study consisted of 99 species related to their sources of subsistence, e.g. food, fish traps and poison



and cash crops, 52 species of medicinal plants, 26 species used for tools and household articles, 25 species for firewood, 21 species for dwelling materials, 20 species for cordage, 11 species for personal ornamentation, 6 species for stimulant and 36 species for miscellaneous uses. Many species were found to have multiple uses and they were repeatedly listed under different categories.

Swidden cultigens (mostly food crops) provide the largest amount of usable plant products for the local people. Sweet potato is the main food crop of the Alangans but rice, bananas and other rootcrops are also utilized along with some fruits and vegetables. Wild food crops such as namu, bantuon and labey are of greater concern to the Alangans mostly during times of famine and crop failure. Fishing, hunting and trapping animals are other important sources of food for the Alangans. The Alangans usually resort to selling their crops and some plant products to their non-Mangyan neighbors in order to buy things they consider most important such as bolo, ax and kettle.

Familiarity of the Alangans to the local flora is manifested in many ways. Relief from illnesses is usually obtained from herbal plants which are largely prescribed by the balaonan or medicine man. These plants are planted in yards or found in nearby forests. In



serious cases, however, recourse is made to offerings and divinations.

Self-sufficiency among the Alangans is apparent from their fire-making technique which utilizes mutya (hard stone), bakal (steel) and kumbad (fine rattan or wood shavings) as tinder. The same is true with the Alangans' household articles which are usually fashioned from either treebark, rattan or bamboo strip, dried bottle gourd fruits or wooden blocks. Betel nut chewing constitutes the Alangans' most popular stimulant without which a day is considered dull and empty. Alangan women wear abayon (bark cloth), lingob (rattan skirt) and ulango (breast cover) all taken from local source, and men usually wear katsa (loin cloth) as standard garments. In addition, unmarried men and women use other ornaments to indicate their single state. Familiarity with the local flora is also apparent from the Alangans' utilization of plants for miscellaneous purposes such as those pertaining to their concept of the season.

Considering the wide-range of plant-related Alangan beliefs and practices as well as plant-inspired songs, it is evident that a special relationship is existing between plants and the culture of the Alangans. But as the Alangans are generally shy, aloof and secretive by



nature, it was not possible to extract from them all the needed information. In view of this, there is still much to be learned from the Alangans that this study leaves for future research.

B. Conclusions

In the light of the foregoing findings, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. A total of 223 plant species belonging to 74 families are considered culturally significant by the Alangan Mangyans; most of these have multiple uses.
2. An intimate relationship exists between plants and the culture of the Alangans evident from the wide-range of plant-related Alangan beliefs and practices as well as in the plant-inspired songs.
3. The Alangan Mangyans of Northeastern Mindoro constitute an upland population who are remarkably self-sufficient and largely dependent upon their immediate natural surrounding.

C. Recommendations

As a result of this study, the following points are recommended:



1. That a continuation of this study be conducted on the Alangans living in the forest interior as they have not been covered in this study. It might reveal other interesting aspects about the Alangans and their useful plants.
2. That more intensive ethnographic investigations be made on the disintegrating Mangyan culture in Northern Mindoro for this might shed more light on the life of our aborigines.
3. That further investigations be conducted by chemists, pharmacists and other plant specialists to verify the efficacy of the lesser known medicinal plants of the Alangans.
4. That instructions be given by proper government agencies or culturally-concerned organizations to the Mangyans regarding the correct preparation and right dosage of their medicinal flora so as to enhance their curative efficacy.

