

Coconut myths essay sample



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The coconut plant is found vastly across the tropic area and in time, it has proven its title as the “ Tree of Life”. It is known for its great versatility as seen in the many domestic, commercial, and industrial uses of its different parts. The coconut palm is grown throughout the tropics for decoration, as well as for its many culinary and non-culinary uses. Its versatility is even noted in its naming. In Sanskrit it is kalpa vriksha which means “ the tree which provides all the necessities of life”. In the Malay language, it is named pokok seribu guna meaning “ the tree of a thousand uses” while in the Philippines, the coconut is commonly called the “ Tree of Life”. Nearly all parts of the plant are useful and can be utilized by humans for culinary, commercial, industrial, household use, culture, religion, medicinal, tool and shelter for animals and even as food and fragrance. If ever one gets deserted on an island, all he or she needs is a coconut tree to survive, thus, dubbed as the “ Tree of Life”. In the Philippines, it is considered as one of the major dollar earner industry that provides livelihood to most of the country’s population. It sustains the Filipinos’ lives through its vast usefulness from roots to leaves which ultimately becomes the source of living of many people.

The coconut plant as the “ Tree of Life” has been shown through history and even in legends and in folk tales. This plant has been recognized as a source of every thing a man may need. Several stories have depicted the origin and the uses of the plant and several motifs were also shown. This paper aims to discuss a brief summary of some of these stories, how the plant came to be, how some of its utilities are presented and how different themes and motifs are implied and discussed.

There are actually a lot of histories about the coconut. The coconut has been a staple source of food shelter and water for the people within the tropics, shores, and islands. There are great stories about the coconut. There are actually two versions to the story of the tale of the coconut in the Philippine version. The first talks about the friendship of the gods and their rivalry, and the second talks about the love story of a couple that became tragic. The first story is entitled “ The First Coconut Tree and The Creation of Man” from the Tagalogs that tells the story of three lonely gods: Bathala (god of creation), Ulingkalulua (a large snake an god o the skies) and Galangkalulua, (the god with a winged head).

When Bathala met Ulingkalulua, they engaged in a duel and Ulingkalulua was defeated and his body was burned. When Galangkalulua visited the temple of Bathala, he was welcomed and soon, they were friends. Until Galangkalulua became ill and was buried next to the burned body of Ulingkalulua. A few months passed by, Bathala noticed a coconut tree grew from where both the two dead gods was buried. The tree had the features of the head of the snake god with similar facial features, round eyes, flat nose, and a round mouth. The leaves of the tree have the shape of the wings of Galangkalulua and the trunk of this enemy, Ulingkalulua. Later in the creation of the first man, the coconut tree served to be the tree for the soul and provided the people with food, drink, and shelter until now.

This story not only showed how coconut came to be but it was shown how it became part of the origin of man and how it was believed to sustain the first generation of people with all the necessities in life. Coming from the Tagalogs, this myth truly proves that the coconut tree is the tree for the soul.

The everlasting essence of friendship and respect was depicted in the story and the Tree of Life served as a tool for the continuity and preservation of life.

On the other hand, coconut plant proved to be a product of love, sacrifice and hope—the essence of life itself. This myth tells the tale of a young beautiful woman, whose father denied all of the suitors from visiting her. Little that he father knew that she was actually meeting up with another man behind their house. Every night, the man would visit the Datu's (Great Chief) house to tell her stories about his journeys around the forest and island. A few weeks later, the Datu noticed footmarks below the stairs leading to the back side of his daughter's room. The Datu slashed and injured the man and he was beheaded by the Datu; his head was buried on the ground. A few weeks had gone by; the daughter's heart was broken. Just outside by the back of the house grew a tree bearing the fruit with the face of the man whom the Datu killed. This myth does not only describes the love between the two but it also implies that this love have been the reason for their life. Upon the loss of her love, she felt she lost everything she had and instead, a tree that can sustain a person's life was offered as a surrogate of her lover.

Another legend tells the tale of Lapulapu. He trekked the trail to Suong where his fast was to end. There, amidst the burning rocks, he wrestled with Impacto from sunup till sundown until Impacto lay dying on the hot rocks. Impacto ordered that his body be buried in the land of Abuno and when he sees a tree spring from the grave, he should take care of it for such is the tree promised by Bathala for the nourishment and improvement of his people. Its juice will be sweet. Its meat will be wholesome. And every part

will have its own utility. Lapulapu did as he was told. And shortly after, a straight and palm-like tree emerged and bore fruit. And it was thus that the spread of the coconut to other islands started. This myth tells the tale of how the coconut plant was spread across the tropics and it also mentioned the promise that Bathala had for the people. The coconut plant served as a fulfillment of this promise to nourish and to provide for the people.

According to this myth, once there was a kingdom in Mindanao known as Bangonansa Pulangui (“kingdom by the river”), which was ruled by a just and kind sultan. The myth says the kingdom was known for Putri Timbang-Namat, the sultan’s only daughter. She was a most beautiful and charming woman. Putri’s admirers came from the seven seas, but she did not care for any of them. A tournament was held to determine who among the suitors was worthy of the princess’ love. In the palace garden, meanwhile, the princess met a young and handsome gardener, Wata-Mama. The myth says a general was very jealous of Wata. So, that night, in the dark corner of the palace, he and his aides waited for the young lovers. The general suddenly struck Wata-Mama and beheaded him. The princess, fearless, picked up Wata’s head and buried it. One morning, while the princess was watching the spot, she saw a tiny plant growing from the ground. Suddenly, it grew into a tree and reached the height of the window where the princess was sitting at. It produced a round fruit the size of a man’s head. This myth tells us so much about hope and love and how love’s passion and jealousy’s wretchedness can suddenly change lives disastrously. This myth on the coconut teaches that love is best kept going on its natural course. Aside from that, the

coconut plant served as a symbol of their never-ending love and promise to each other.

The Virtue of the Coconut says how a man took his blow-gun one day and went to the forest to hunt. As he was making his way through the thick woods he chanced upon a young coconut tree growing in the ground. It was the first tree of this kind that he had ever seen, and it seemed so peculiar to him that he stopped to look at it. When he had gone some distance farther, his attention was attracted by a noisy bird in a tree, and he shot it with his blow-gun. By and by he took aim at a large monkey, which mocked him from another treetop, and that, too, fell dead at his feet. Then he heard his dog barking furiously in the distant bushes, and hastening to it he found it biting a wild pig. After a hard struggle he killed the pig, and then, feeling satisfied with his success, he took the three animals on his back and returned to the little plant. He dug up the plant very carefully and started home, but he had not gone far when he noticed that the leaves had begun to wilt, and he did not know what to do, since he had no water. Finally, in despair, he cut the throat of the bird and sprinkled the blood on the coconut. No sooner had he done this than the plant began to revive, and he continued his journey. However, the leaves again began to wilt, and revived it with the blood of the monkey.

Then he hastened on, but a third time the leaves wilted, and he was compelled to stop and revive it with the blood of the pig. The coconut began to wilt again before he reached his house, but when he planted it in the ground, it quickly revived, and grew into a tall tree. This hunter was the first man to take the liquor called tuba from the the coconut tree, and he and his

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friends began to drink. After they had become very fond of it, the hunter said to his friends: “ The coconut tree is like the three animals whose blood gave it life when it would have died. The man who drinks three or four cups of tuba becomes like the noisy bird that I shot with my blow-gun. One who drinks more than three or four cups becomes like the big monkey that acts silly; and one who becomes drunk is like the pig that sleeps even in a mud-hole.” This myth is a manifestation of the utilities of the coconut plant. This story proved that even before, the coconut plant was used as a drink. While another tale from Bicol, The Coconut Shell Ring tells the tale of an angel and a demon who had a contest in terms of who had the greater influence on men. They tested a couple who lived peacefully for years.

The demon contended that he would separate them while the angel strongly believed it was impossible. But somehow, the devil convinced the woman that a beautiful woman like her is not fit to be with an ugly man like her husband so she ran away with a golden ring on her finger. She then saw a handsome man (the angel in disguise) looking for something, she approached him and asked what he was looking for. She was told that he was looking for a ring made of coconut shell. Thinking she could woo him, she offered her ring. But the angel refused and told her that the coconut shell ring was better than all the gold in the world because it has served him for years and it was his so he will never part with it. With that, the woman realized what she had done and immediately started for home, for her husband whom she remained faithful to. This tale proves that the plant can also be used as accessories and ornamentations.

A legend tells the story of a very kindhearted mother who had 10 children and lived in the mountains of Cristobal. One day, she got sick and suddenly just died. The children were miserable and concerned of who will feed and take care of them now. Suddenly, a very beautiful lady approached them and comforted them. She told them to bury her and guard over her grave until a tree grows. They were told that the tree will be the source of food and their daily needs. They obeyed her until a tree grew and bore fruits. They lived well because the tree provided their needs and sustained their lives. This is a perfect example of how

A myth from Capiz entitled “ The First Palay, Coconut Tree, Sugarcane, Gabi and Camote” tells the tale of two brothers and a sister named Galgaran, Boaran and Cayla, respectively. They two brothers were deeply concerned with what they would feed their sister now that they don’t have anything to plant. They decided to kill her instead of seeing her die from hunger. Until one old man approached Boaran and told him to kill their sister but should keep her head intact and plant her bones on the sides of her chopped flesh. And so they did it and buried her head in the middle of the field and built a hut. After two days, the brothers missed their sister and so they went to the hut they built and saw her there. She was very weak but the field was indeed full of crops, plants and food. They took her home and then she told them that God has bestowed His blessings to them. She wanted to be remembered. She told them to stay there but she shall leave. They should rejoice for they now have a means of livelihood.