



Research article

Harmony Unveiled: Human-Nature Dynamics in *From the Land of Green Ghosts*

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Abstract

In the realm of our circadian rhythm, discussions about nature unveil a myriad of contrasting dimensions. Living beings are an integral component of the natural order, akin to other creatures on Earth. Often labelled as both environmental degraders and nature protectors, humans exist within the interconnected web of nature and the environment. The significance of the environment has been vital throughout history, and the deterioration of the natural world raises concerns for all living entities. The surge in environmental awareness has become apparent with the widespread adoption of technology in society. This paper aims to shed light on the rural framework of the contentedly residing Padaung ethnic group within a village, exploring how their lives are intricately intertwined with nature, serving as their primary sustenance source. Pascal Khoo Thwe's 2002 memoir, *From the Land of Green Ghosts*, underscores the importance of the landscape and natural forests in showcasing the culture of the Padaung Hill ethnic group. These forests, functioning as both sources of green vegetables and hunting grounds for wild animals, depict the community as environmental stewards. The memoir emphasizes the community's cultivation of crops not readily available in the surrounding forests, highlighting their resilience in the face of border-related challenges. Despite the pervasive influence of Western culture on the author's experiences, the analysis aims to underscore the paradox that those who alter their environment can also assume roles as its guardians. Bridging this divide is crucial, emphasizing the need for collective efforts to preserve the natural world.

Keywords: Co-existence, Culture, Eco-gastronomy, Environment, Food



1. Introduction

The prioritization of environmental concerns has always been a focal point for humans, as they have consistently observed and participated in both environmental degradation and protection. Nevertheless, they are mindful of rejuvenating the depleted trees and forests, striving to foster sustainable livelihoods for humanity. Arne Naess, in his 1973 ecology paper, played a pivotal role in the development of deep ecology, offering a distinctive perspective on the environment. David

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Rothenberg further elucidated Naess's theory in his deep ecology paper, providing an insightful exploration, "Concern for the environment should never be opposed to concern for the self". In this context, he elaborated on the coexistence of the 'human' and 'non-human' realms, emphasizing that such harmony is achievable only when "people's obligation to protect" environment is understood (Rothenberg, 2012, para. 4). According to David Rothenberg:

This is why deep ecology should not be seen as totalizing, dogmatic, and exclusive. It is an open call to realize that the science of wholes and relationships in the biosphere involves a moral insistence on the preservation and admission of the intrinsic value of nature and the search for the best human place within it (Rothenberg, 2012, para. 4).

This paper will explore Pascal Khoo Thwe's memoir, *From the Land of Green Ghosts*, which portrays Thwe's life immersed in an environment where discussions about the environment where discussions about the environment are not explicit. Despite this, Thwe and his community inhabit a healthy ecosystem, indicating a natural understanding of their environment that differs from conventional discourse. In the realm of ecocriticism and its related fields, it is essential to begin our discourse by examining the origins of the term "ecocriticism". While William Rueckert is commonly attributed with its coining, its conceptual emergence can be traced back to Joseph Meeker. Before delving into the critical examination of the environment, understanding the genesis of the term is crucial. In his 1972 book *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*, Meeker originally referred to the concept as "literary ecology." The preface of Meeker's later work, *The Comedy of Survival: In Search of an Environmental Ethic* (1980), further elaborates on the genesis of this term, "If cherished human traditions have led to damage of the world, then those traditions must be revised" (Meeker, 1980, p. 8). This statement acknowledges the vital role of forests without sidelining humans; instead, it emphasizes the adjustments and alterations that lie within the hands of humans. In Pascal's memoir, he discusses his community's existence in an environment where conventional terms may not be explicitly understood, yet they possess a deep awareness of the vitality, importance and human dependence on the environment. This paper will further illustrate the various roles the environment played in their lives and vice versa.

Ecocriticism originated with the noble objective of globally elevating awareness regarding the importance of the environment within literature. It is often referred to as literary ecology, emphasizing the pivotal role of the environment in literary works. The question of whether it will contribute to the future frequently arises in the study of the environment:

If the creation of literature is an important characteristic of the human species, it should be examined carefully and honestly to discover its influence on human behavior and the natural environment-to determine what role, if any, it plays in the welfare and survival of mankind and what insight it offers into human relationships with other species and with the world around us. (Meeker, 1980, p. 25)

This inquiry delves into the role of humans in the environment, emphasizing the significance of human existence within nature and acknowledging that the well-being of humanity and the survival of species in a thriving environment are interconnected, "nature-dependent people as those that directly rely on locally available natural resources to fulfill their basic needs" (Fedele et al., 2021, p. 2). Its classification as human stems from the faculty of reason. However, its evolution has led to a profound exploration of the intricacies and dynamics of the natural world, often

reaching an extreme level. Pascal and his community depended on the environment for sustenance. His memoir describes his house enveloped by trees, including fruit-bearing ones, underscoring their reliance on nature. Researchers have presented diverse perspectives and concepts on this matter. In terms of the environment, the geographical explanation is that "All human activities are believed to be triggered by causes or forces beforehand" (A. Pallathadka & H. Pallathadka, 2021, p. 6667). Arun and Harikumar Pallathadka also deliberated on how human behavior is influenced by the natural world:

People with many changes in the weather are often described as inspired. This theory affirms that societies are rising and dropping as nature shifts and people migrate (A. Pallathadka & H. Pallathadka, 2021, p. 6668).

This is evident in Pascal's memoir, where his fulfilling life is undoubtedly shaped by his environment. However, his inclination toward the West and a desire to explore beyond his community's boundaries is also apparent.

In a critical review, Valentine Seymour explores the complex interplay between the relationship of humans and nature, examining its profound implications on health, "social factors being inextricably linked to overall health, inclusive of diet, exercise, and environmental conditions." In Pascal's memoir, specific mention of his health condition or his ethnic group's immune system is absent, suggesting he may not have experienced nutritional deficiencies. The community's consumption of raw, organic food from the environment and wild animals from the forests, without embellishment, contributes to maintaining their healthy gut. Researchers assigned blame to humans for the depletion and degradation of the environment, "Human actions have also fragmented habitats via conversion of native ecosystems to agricultural lands, urban or suburban lands, roads, power line rights-of-way, etc." (Tilman & Lehman, 2001, p. 5435). Humans seem to wield substantial influence in both depleting and enhancing the environment. This paper will primarily focus on the contributions and extensively illustrate the utilization of the environment within a tribal community or village, where life revolves more around 'human' elements than the lifestyle in the West.

2. The Environmental Wisdom of Tribal Life

Pascal Khoo Thwe's *From the Land of Green Ghosts*, published in 2002, is an autobiographical narrative. With the subtitle "A Burmese Odyssey," the book redefines the concept of a Burmese journey, portraying it as an adventurous pursuit during his time in Burma (Myanmar).

Pascal, hailing from a Padaung ethnic group in Burma (Myanmar), consistently underscores the crucial role of forests and the survival of the animals within them in every facet of life. In his autobiography, he emphasizes the significance of nature by stating:

When I was young I used to watch the rising sun with amazement. There is a long lake on the east side of my home town which cuts through the blue range of mountains that skirts the lake, and seems to disappear over the south-east horizon (Thwe, 2004, p. 3).

The aforementioned quotation vividly encapsulates the author's intimate and awe-inspiring connection with the natural world. His journey begins amid the stunning landscapes of Burma, an

experience that leaves an indelible mark despite the challenges and trials he encounters thereafter. This expedition spans the entirety of his life, encompassing hazards, hardships, and moments of detachment. Within his community, people traditionally engaged in hunting wild animals in the forests, viewing high-quality meat as a significant source of protein and nutrition, "My father simply did not like ordinary meat" (Thwe, 2004, p. 22). This study explored various subjects, subtly emphasizing the crucial influence of the environment in the depicted scenarios. Within the narrative's framework, one can observe variations in the traditions of diverse tribes and the specific roles designated to each family member, all geared towards maintaining the effective operation of the household. (Thwe, 2004, p. 5)

Discovering the day's adventure captivates individuals drawn to unconventional paths or absorbed in their devices, often unintentionally overlooking the inherent connection to the surrounding natural world—a blessing already bestowed upon everyone, "Humans have emerged as ecosystem engineers on a global scale" (Chu & Karr, 2017, p. 2). Numerous authors and poets have praised the magnificence of nature in their literary creations. A notable theorist, William Cronon, has underscored the global significance of preserving wilderness. Furthermore, he has advocated for establishing a profound connection between individuals and the natural environment. In his essay titled "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," the author cites eminent intellectuals like Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, William Gilpin, and others who previously explored the notion of "sublime landscapes." These scholars argued that such landscapes offered an elevated opportunity to glimpse the profound and divine aspects of nature (Cronon, 1996, p. 10). The deep expression suggests that the beauty of nature reflects the very essence of the divine. The portrayals of nature by Romantic poets draw readers into its embrace. Although we may perceive this as a routine undertaking over time, it is crucial to recognize that the environment is not a mere duty but a valuable gift from the omnipresent forces. As inhabitants, we should celebrate and safeguard it with the utmost care, "The lake dominated the town like a big plastic sheet, sometimes silvery, sometimes golden, and sometimes shimmeringly blue" (Thwe, 2004, p. 48). Pascal's childhood is deeply influenced by the environment, possibly leading to his lack of awareness regarding the degradation suffered by humanity due to the depletion of forests or the future consequences it may bring.

The writer has presented numerous instances and vividly depicted the ambience and surroundings of their life before embarking on a Western journey. Through these portrayals, readers can discern that dwelling in nature was routine for the author, yet these encounters emerge as a wellspring of significant fortune and inspiration for those who peruse them:

A great variety of trees grew around our house – jack fruits, cotton trees, flames-of-the-forest, paw paws, oranges, Asian pears, peaches, pomegranates. Vegetables – chillies, lettuce, pumpkins, mustards, red and white maize – and herbs such as turmeric, basil, lemongrass, onions and garlic, and shrubs of jasmine bordered the house and invaded the hedges. (Thwe, 2004, pp. 20-21)

Pascal depicts the surroundings of his residence, providing readers with a vivid glimpse of the profusion of fruit trees—pomegranates, oranges, and peaches—and an array of vegetables, including chillies, lettuce, pumpkins, and more, "ensuring future food security, minimising the environmental cost and maximising nutritional quality of the diet" (Macdiarmid, 2013, p. 2). This

showcases their enthusiasm for nurturing fruit-bearing trees, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between nature and humanity, where both flourish in harmony. Additionally, he discussed the cultivation of rice, wheat, maize, and various other crops that are not directly consumable from the forest, unlike other plants and animals that form part of their diet, "most important crop was rice, which was not only a staple food, but was used to make the rice-wine that we drank every day of our lives" (Thwe, 2004, p. 55). The residents of their village were also provided with an additional energy boost, including the players, "The players were mostly fuelled by Padaung whisky and rice –wine" (Thwe, 2004, p. 69). Some specific wild plants and insects possess medicinal properties too, "Yellow ants, which are sour in flavour, are eaten as medicinal food" (Thwe, 2004, p. 81). The Padaung community's innate understanding of the human relationship with the environment is so organic and natural that readers or outsiders from a different culture may feel fascinated and amazed after reading the memoir. The authentic way of life of this ethnic group is highlighted without explicitly drawing the readers' attention to it. He discussed living with his grandfathers, joining them on hunts that not only contributed to his survival but also enhanced his comprehension of diverse aspects. This acquired knowledge became crucial during their resistance against the military dictatorship in the latter phases of their journey, "I was entirely cut off from family, friends, everything I had known, surrounded only by mountains, trees and wild animals" (Thwe, 2004, p. 202). Following the British restructuring of Burma's infrastructure, which involved the implementation of railways and various transportation systems, the nation rose to become the foremost global rice exporter (Thwe, 2004, p. 13). This paper underscores the importance of residing in an environment where individuals possess a genuine understanding of nature and its benefits for humanity. This evolution seamlessly highlighted their resilient agricultural practices, covering cultivation, growth, planting, and even the pursuit of wild game. Pascal explores the theme of hunting wild animals and allocates a chapter to a subsection titled "Genesis According to my Grandmothers." Within this chapter, he delves into the story of human origin and the subsequent erosion of language.

According to his grandmother's rendition of Genesis, humans initially resided in the lower realm of the Earth but grew discontented with their surroundings. Driven by this dissatisfaction, they embarked on a journey towards the middle earth. During this odyssey, both humans and animals lent each other a helping hand, assisting one another in their passage into the middle Earth. Upon reaching Middle Earth, humans became ensnared by their pride, losing their sense of belonging to this newfound realm, "But the humans, overcome with hubris, began to forget the language of the animals who had been their helpers and killed them for food" (Thwe, 2004, p. 8). This arrogance led them to forfeit their understanding of human language, ultimately resorting to hunting wild animals for sustenance, "the multifunctionality of hunting denotes the multiple benefits that hunting and its practices can result to society, serving as food, recreation, income, cultural identity and the desirable ecological results" (Barbosa et al., 2018, p. 40). Consequently, the act of hunting became a way of life for humans, and they gradually forfeited their common language for communication. The linguistic differences among human groups resulted in their dispersion across the globe. It is essential to reconsider human civilization's impact on ecology and embark on a new dimension to address and rectify the deterioration, "human civilization as an integral (not dominant) part of ecological relationships, according to proposals of a harmonic and functional coexistence" (Jantsch et al., 2022, p. 370).

This study delves into gender-specific dietary practices and how certain food items are assigned to specific individuals within the family. Some foods are categorized as masculine and are exclusively consumed by the male head of the household. Pascal also examines the differentiation between regular and special meals within his family. His father has a penchant for exceptional non-vegetarian dishes, which his mother never partakes in. She consistently reassures them that as their children grow, they will develop the ability to tolerate and appreciate such foods (Thwe, 2004, p. 22). In the book *Food and Femininity*, authors Kate Cairns and Josée Johnston explore the differences in food choices between genders. In a personal food prologue, a detailed examination is conducted to delve into this aspect, "Women's food choices continue to be closely examined under the social microscope and are harshly judged when they are deemed inadequate or ill-informed" (Cairns & Johnston, 2015, para. vi). The gender-specific approach to food consumption in the memoir sheds light on gender roles concerning nature. It contributes to our understanding of how individuals relate to their bodies and engage in labor, with each gender playing distinct roles.

They depend on the plentiful resources within the forests and practice agriculture to grow crops that aren't naturally present in their wooded environment, "They had to survive on the roots and vegetables of the jungle, which they used both for food and medicines" (Thwe, 2004, p. 29). The medicinal value of forests is gradually becoming obscured, a somewhat peculiar trend. Urban dwellers often overlook the significance of herbs, even forgetting the names of these essential plants that our ancestors once revered. "Southeast Asia and South Asia are hotspots for medicinal plants used for traditional healthcare practices", they emphasized a greater focus on herbal products readily obtained from their jungle (Rahman et al., 2022, p. 207). The medicinal properties of herbs are diminishing as society prioritizes science over nature. Ancestral herbal remedies, vital knowledge meant to be preserved and shared through generations, are fading into obscurity. However, in Pascal's journey, this botanical wisdom becomes a lifesaving boon during his most trying moments.

This study is evidently to uncover the historical roots of tribal journeys and how they have harmoniously coexisted with nature, seemingly disconnected from the broader world's environmental protection discourse, "The Geba are an artistic and musical people, whereas the Padaung know only war, hunting and football" (Thwe, 2004, p. 32). The tribal communities have refrained from commercializing their products; instead, they have employed them for their sustenance. Additionally, they make use of items discarded or deemed unwanted in the forests for various domestic purposes. ("Tribes and the Forest," 2019)

Individuals who understand the symbiotic connection with nature organically give precedence to its conservation, "consumption behavior uses green consumption-oriented means to protect the environment" (Si et al., 2022, p. 9). However, a paradox emerges when observing individuals reliant on external sources for sustenance, procuring food through financial transactions at stores and malls. These individuals place a premium on the money and the quality of their meals, creating a perplexing dynamic, "each step in the agricultural and food industry system is characterized by by-products, waste, and air emissions with possible impact on the environment" (Kroyer, 1995, p. 547). It may appear confounding to those deeply rooted in agriculture and environmental stewardship, who uphold traditional practices, as they find it challenging to grasp the ongoing debate in the outside world, "Food was abundant, the weather

was predictable and harvests were good" (Thwe, 2004, p. 37). Pascal's memoir never seeks to justify his way of life. Instead, it delves into his experiences within his community and the transformative journey beyond his familiar surroundings. Through his narrative, Pascal vividly portrays the life of the Padaung ethnic group, offering readers an opportunity to rediscover the lost traditions and culture of his community. To truly comprehend this matter, one must step down from their elevated vantage point and appreciate the harsh realities of daily toil undertaken to safeguard the environment, which serves as their sole means of livelihood. They recognize that nature is their sole provider, and as a result, they both consume its resources and conscientiously preserve them for future generations, "When the cooking and eating was finished all the scraps of food were swept onto the ground beneath through a square hole in the floor so that the animals could finish them up" (Thwe, 2004, p. 36). These communities exhibit zero-waste practices. The improved utilization of raw materials aids in mitigating the negative impact on the environment (Kroyer, 1995, p. 549). The environment benefits significantly from zero-waste products or when food sourced from the environment is utilized efficiently.

3. Intersections of Culture, Environment, and Gastronomy

Pascal's memoir sheds light on the profound relationship between culture and environment, as well as on the gastronomy of the Padaung ethnic group. Their diet, organic and deeply rooted in their origins, reflects their cultural identity. Despite the challenges they face, Pascal's narrative underscores their efforts to preserve their beliefs and customs. This serves as an educational opportunity for other communities to gain insight into the traditions and values of the Padaung ethnic group. In the book titled, *The Bioregional Imagination*, the author emphasizes the importance of the idea that "how we live is as important as where we live" (Lynch et al., 2012, p. 26). This phrase underscores the significance of living in harmony with nature and appreciating our environment daily, creating a deep connection with it. In today's societal norms, children and their parents often gravitate towards urban areas and cultures in search of better opportunities for themselves and their offspring, "environmental impact of migration, which takes into account the impact of migration in a variety of environmental dimensions" (Majumder & Rahman, 2022, p. 3429). Nonetheless, this migration can result in varied outcomes. Certain individuals successfully sustain a robust connection with their environment, actively contributing to its well-being within their living spaces. Conversely, others experience an increasing detachment from their surroundings, potentially leading to detrimental effects on the environment, "We grew maize, sorghum for the domestic animals, groundnuts for oil, beans, yams potatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins, melons, gourds, watermelons, chillies and other vegetables in the paddy fields" (Thwe, 2004, p. 55). This statement serves as a compelling reinforcement of the significance of fostering a wholesome environment as a fundamental aspect of our everyday existence.

Carlo Petrini is credited with coining the term "eco-gastronomy," giving it a nuanced significance focused on a more precise comprehension. It intends to emphasize the significance of sustaining a healthy lifestyle within the context of food and nutrition. This concept emerged from the slow food movement, which is regarded as an alternative to fast food (Triolo, 2013, para. 2). In recent times, the hotel and tourism sector has notably highlighted the concept of "eco gastronomy" to foster a healthier environment within the tourism industry. In this context, Pascal's

grandmother was astonished by the habits of Englishmen, "The English are a very strange tribe,' said Grandma Mu Tha. 'They paid money just to look at us- they paid us for not working. They are very rich, but they cannot afford to drink rice-wine" (Thwe, 2004, p. 28). Travelers are increasingly attracted to destinations where the dining experience not only prioritizes hygiene but also aligns closely with nature. This underscores the significance of consuming seasonal food, a practice that is currently diminishing over time, "We planted pumpkins, maize, cucumbers, aubergines, beans, yams, sweet potatoes, mustard seeds and lettuce according to the season" (Thwe, 2004, p. 49). Seasonal food consumption not only uplifts the slow food movement but also proves beneficial for the environment, "to understand the real environmental, health, economic and social benefits of eating seasonal produce, and the limitations, the whole food system needs to be considered" (Macdiarmid, 2013, p. 2). The mutual existence facilitates comprehension of the environment and its necessities.

Meanwhile, Pascal's work also emphasizes the celebration of festivities in a suitable atmosphere, where all community members can partake in wholesome meals. These festivals serve as a kind of retreat, during which the doors of villagers' homes open wide to welcome guests with lavish feasts, "I particularly liked Christmas, because every house threw open its doors and entertained guests with rice wine" (Thwe, 2004, p. 43). Each household hosts their visitors with rice wine, a product derived from their agricultural endeavours and meticulously processed to perfection. Within their community, there exists a belief that a woman who lacks the skill to prepare rice will face challenges in fulfilling the role of a good wife to her husband, "In my tribe you choose a wife if she is good at making rice-wine and at other household skills" (Thwe, 2004, p. 133). This principle was applicable even in the case of Pascal's mother, especially during her wedding ceremony, "My grandmother was not pleased with the bride my father had brought home: 'She doesn't know how to make rice-wine, and she is soft-hearted' " (Thwe, 2004, p. 31). They attach significance to food, just as they do to the environment they live in, "I ate and drank like a small monster or ogre that had been released into these festivities from the spirit world" (Thwe, 2004, p. 43). Certainly, the influence of both their diet and environment on their physical appearance becomes notably evident, particularly as they explored the Western world. Even in a setting where Pascal embraced a wholesome lifestyle and had access to quality food, his inclination toward the Western culture remained conspicuous, "bridge was over a river in a place called Cambridge, in England, and I felt a desire to see it" (Thwe, 2004, p. 104). He, too, felt the impact of globalization, prompting him to consider studying abroad. A serendipitous opportunity arose when he encountered John Casey in Mandalay.

4. Navigating Dual Realities and Environmental Resilience

Humans assume dual roles as both environmental adversaries and custodians. Amid Pascal's resistance against the Burmese military, he and his comrades sought sanctuary in the forests, perpetually shifting from one location to another. Within the Kayan ethnic group, a faction was devoted to instructing fellow members in combat techniques against the military. Pascal vividly recounted his experiences in the forests, where he witnessed how these natural environs functioned as both a protective shield against danger and a vital source of sustenance, "We slept in their cultivated strips among the paddy fields and cornfields" (Thwe, 2004, p. 182). The forests

not only served as a protective shield but also offered vital sustenance to them. Dependent on plants and herbs handed down through generations, they turned to this botanical wisdom when hunting proved insufficient for proper nutrition. These ancestral teachings encompassed the understanding of medicinal herbs, contributing to Pascal's profound appreciation for his community and family who imparted such knowledge in his upbringing. Their encounters in the forest and the utilization of medicinal herbs played a pivotal role in their survival. As Pascal mixed rice wine with warm blood, the initial reaction nearly led to vomiting, but soon after, all pains and fatigue vanished, leaving him rejuvenated (Thwe, 2004, p. 181). In the end, Pascal successfully made his way to the University with the assistance of Casey, a foreigner who, during a visit to Mandalay, identified Pascal's enthusiasm for English and literature, "I listed all the plays and novels I had been reading including *Macbeth*, *The Old Man and the Sea* and *Goodbye Mr Chips*, and some of the poems we had studied" (Thwe, 2004, p. 149). Pascal's life was unmistakably influenced by the impact of Western language during these transformative moments.

Pascal's life embodies a worldwide influence, yet what truly distinguishes him is his steadfast connection to the natural surroundings of his existence. While he hasn't explicitly portrayed the environmental impact on his life, which may have been a given circumstance for him, readers find it awe-inspiring to comprehend the traditional and cultural system that he adhered to through his customs and his coexistence with the environment, "the bride would be offered a cup of rice-wine which she shared with the groom" (Thwe, 2004, p. 40). They maintain an ongoing conversation regarding the significance of the environment, acknowledging that at times, they must make modifications to ensure their survival in this world. Nature offers sustenance to humanity in the form of food, clean air, and a serene atmosphere, empowering individuals to flourish and respond with a dedicated effort to intelligently protect and preserve the environment when necessary, "We pick berries, fish in the sea, imagine wild places, listen to birds singing, bury our dead in the earth, and celebrate the harvest with our families and communities" (Russell et al., 2013, p. 476). In the present era, it is increasingly evident that achieving a healthy lifestyle is impossible without fostering a harmonious connection with nature, "coexistence is still often envisioned as the resolution of conflicts that need to be managed through outsider intervention" (Massarella & Fiasco, 2022, p. 173). Consequently, it appears that humans and the environment have reached an implicit agreement to take responsible measures for their mutual longevity on Earth.

5. Conclusion

Pascal's cultural diversity remains evident, serving as a steadfast foundation for their harmonious existence within their ecological habitat. The intimate connection they share with the forests, a central theme in their memoir, has seldom been emphasized to this degree, "We drank rice-wine together and went to bed content" (Thwe, 2004, p. 94). In his writing, he demonstrated such conscientiousness towards the environment that the focus on environmental awareness wasn't overtly accentuated in the book. It seemed as if they seamlessly coexisted, mutually strengthening one another. The greater their utilization of the environment, the more diligently they undertook measures to safeguard and conserve it in their distinctive manner, "The valleys are filled with bamboo groves, fruit-bearing trees, wild banana plants and assorted vines and grass" (Thwe, 2004,

p. 203). It's astonishing to discover that the villagers in those regions can sense the environment around them without being concerned about a shortage of food during times of crisis, "Deforestation is another major cause of human-wildlife conflict" (Mekonen, 2020, p. 4). They refrained from uprooting the forests for sustenance; instead, they harvested fruits and vegetables without causing harm to the trees and land. This approach allows for the reuse of the resources, "The environmental impact of reusing a product or component depends not only on the processes used to return a good to a useful state or location, but also the impacts of using the item for a second time" (Cooper & Gutowski, 2015, p. 8). The manner the product is recycled holds importance as well.

Upon his return to Thailand, with aspirations of reconnecting with his family along the Burma-Thai border following his stint in the West, he retained a reservoir of instincts associated with his ethnic heritage:

I had brought whisky, champagne and Earl Grey tea from England. We celebrated our reunion with a bottle of champagne – which my friends insisted tasted like rice-wine. They gave me chilli curry for dinner to test whether I still had my tribal resilience. (Thwe, 2004, p. 285)

Certain Padaung men and women displayed a keen curiosity about the Western concept. They inquired about Western eating habits, survival techniques, traditions, and food (Thwe, 2004, p. 287). They inundated Pascal with numerous questions, revealing a keen curiosity about the West.

Pascal's work offers various perspectives on understanding the ecology of the environment that surrounds us. The accessibility of food is also a crucial factor that must be considered for both environmental preservation and improved health, "Eating seasonal food is being advocated as one element of a sustainable diet, often interpreted as local food, but the true environmental, health, economic and social benefits and limitations need to be compared with providing a year-round supply of fresh produce" (Macdiarmid, 2013, p. 3). It underscores how these aspects help readers grasp Pascal's life within the context of his ancestors' traditions. Living with and following these traditions, Pascal gains insight into the significance of harvesting and consumption. Despite the curiosity some tribes, including Pascal, show towards the West, he articulates, "I had always been painfully sensitive about being regarded as a part of a primitive tribe, and much of my ambition in Taunggyi and Mandalay had been to escape into civilization" (Thwe, 2004, p. 185). Despite this desire to explore Western places, he maintains a connection to his cultural roots. After experiencing life elsewhere, he maintains control over the indigenous traditions that have endured for generations, "I kept up my tradition of drinking half a bottle of wine before each examination" (Thwe, 2004, p. 291). This work enlightens us about the dual role of human beings as both degraders and protectors of the environment. Humans, through their reasoning and power, play a crucial role in keeping the environment alive. Therefore, accepting the notion that humans are solely uprooters of the environment needs to be reconsidered. *The Land of Green Ghosts* serves as a prime example of understanding the ethnic groups that act as defenders of the environment. Despite being influenced by the West, the community strives to preserve its culture and traditions. In a world consumed by unhealthy practices, they adhere to their traditional beliefs and systems, employing agriculture, cultivation, and the responsible utilization and protection of wildlife to sustain both themselves and the environment.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

The author declares no potential conflict of interest regarding the research, authorship, and publication of this work.

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