



## **Thesis Abstract**

### **Plant Diversity, Food Availability, and Resilience in the Indigenous Agroforestry System of the Erumanen ne Menuvu of Cotabato, Philippines**

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The general aim of the study was to assess the resilience of the indigenous agroforestry system of the Erumanen ne Menuvu in Barangay Palacat, Aleosan, Cotabato. Resilience refers to the ability of the system to adjust to changing socio-environmental conditions. Employing qualitative research methods, the study: 1) reconstructed the Menuvu's local socio-environmental history; 2) described the indigenous agroforestry system in terms of its stages, temporal and spatial cropping patterns, and plant diversity; 3) analyzed plant diversity and food availability shifts; and 4) assessed the resilience of the indigenous agroforestry system. The study employed qualitative research methods specifically, interviews, participant observation, and rapid plant appraisal.

The study contended that the effects of socio-environmental changes are most apparent in shifts in plant diversity-food availability relations, and that these dynamics are most noticed by the community experiencing them. Analysis of the Erumanen's accounts revealed that they have been through various social-ecological disruptions that led to changes in their indigenous agroforestry affecting plant diversity-food availability shifts. Results showed that in relation to seasonal changes, increase in plant diversity did not always reflect an increase in food availability (dietary diversity); multiple ecological, biological and social factors came into play. Trends of plant diversity and food availability (cultigen diversity) through time suggested a direct relationship. Thus, as plant diversity increased, options for food likewise increased despite the disruptions encountered. The study revealed that the system possessed buffers, strategies and elements necessary for its continued existence. A lag existed in the response and recovery between social and ecological systems. The study offered recommendations for further studies on capacity building for resilience and the use of qualitative research methods in the investigation of human-environment interactions.