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# ISDAANON BALLAD AS INDIGENOUS PEDAGOGY: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE VERBAL ARTS OF THE RIVER FISHERFOLKS IN CAPIZ, PHILIPPINES

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## ABSTRACT

*The preservation and integration of indigenous verbal arts into formal learning systems have become increasingly significant in the context of culturally responsive and sustainable education. This study utilized a descriptive-qualitative design to explore the Isdaanon ballad as an indigenous verbal art of the river fisherfolk of Capiz, Philippines, by examining its literary aesthetics and educational potential as a cultural learning material. Reader-response criticism approach was also used in analyzing its denotative and connotative meaning, diction, rhetorical and musical devices, tone, and structure. Findings revealed that the Isdaanon ballad embodies the riverine community's socio-cultural life, belief systems, humor, and ecological consciousness, making it a powerful pedagogical text for contextualized learning. The study highlights that integrating this oral tradition in teaching language and literature foster critical thinking, cultural awareness, and environmental consciousness. By, positioning these verbal arts within educational frameworks, the research underscores the value of indigenous knowledge systems in promoting inclusive, heritage-based, and community-rooted education.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Verbal Arts, Riverine Communities, Ballads, Fisherfolk, Traditional Worldviews.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Oral traditions are vital to cultural heritage, providing valuable insights into a community's history, beliefs, and practices (Pacio, 2023). These oral literatures come in the form of stories, songs, riddles, legends, chants, and folktales, among others, which contain their cultural beliefs, indigenous knowledge, and community values that indigenous people have long been struggling to preserve (Paguio & Dela Rosa, 2019). According to Jaro (2021), getting the younger generation to know about the significance of their own culture and tradition through stories told by their ancestors has become imperative. It is through these stories that values were inculcated in the younger ones of the tribes from long ago.

Folkloric traditions, whether in the form of folk songs or ballads, are eminent literary traditions among the people of Capiz, Philippines, and are recognized for their distinctive and astonishing folk literature (Biclar, 2016). Historically, literature, understood as the art of the written language, was largely non-existent among the ethnolinguistic groups or communities in the Philippines prior to colonization, with the existing literary heritage being primarily oral (Macasantos & Macasantos, 2012). The Capisnon (people of Capiz), like many other Filipino communities, possesses rich verbal arts that are primarily preserved in oral tradition (Dayalo, 2018; Clavel, 1972). However, despite this recognized wealth, systematic work still needs to be done to comprehensively document and provide further evidence about these oral narratives and verbal arts in the province, a crucial step in preserving this

intangible cultural heritage (Biclar, 2016).

The Province of Capiz is often recognized as the "Seafood capital of the Philippines" for its abundant and diverse aquamarine products produced by local fish farmers and growers. The riverine communities played an important role as they became a notable destination for ecotourism, contributing significantly to the growth of the tourism industry in the province. (Biclar et al., 2023). Among the Capisnon living in the riverine communities, the occasion where they perform their verbal arts on folksongs or ballads is during the entertainment of their visitors from other places. In this study, the local folksingers identified are members of the riverine communities who usually render their folksongs to their guests during river tourism activities in the province of Capiz, Philippines.

The richness and beauty of the folksongs or ballads produced by the river folks lend themselves to documentation to unveil song meanings to better understand and appreciate them by both the communities and the academe sectors, who are the vehicles of preserving and passing on this rich culture to the next generations. This paper aimed to explore and uncover the wealth of the verbal arts of the river folks in Capiz, Philippines. Specifically, the study aimed to (1) describe the literary aesthetics of verbal arts in terms of their denotation, connotation, diction, rhetorical devices, metrical devices, musical devices, tone, and structure; and (2) unearth the Filipino worldviews reflected in the narratives of the ballad and (3) Identify the pedagogical implications of incorporating the *Isdaanon* in teaching literature, language, and values education.



Figure 1: Map of the Province of Capiz.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ph\\_Locator\\_Capiz\\_Roxas.Png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ph_Locator_Capiz_Roxas.Png)

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive-qualitative

research design to explore the *Isdaanon* ballad. While various labels have been used to describe this approach in the literature, such as generic, general, or

interpretive (Cresswell, 2014), the label descriptive-qualitative is preferred for this study. This label accurately encapsulates the research's purposes: to describe the literary characteristics of the *Isdaanon* ballad (descriptive) while also interpreting their meanings, themes, and cultural significance (qualitative). This design is best suited to provide a rich, detailed understanding of the ballads as a form of verbal art, rather than simply quantifying their occurrence.

The core of this research is a descriptive-qualitative analysis of the *Isdaanon* ballad, which provides a detailed examination of the ballad's components, including literary devices, thematic content, and sociopolitical commentary. Likewise, the content analysis is made by employing the close reading approach, wherein the text speaks to the reader, and the latter understands its contexts based on the signification of his/her experiences and understanding of the cultural milieu (Biclar, 2016). This helps reveal and draw meanings embedded within the ballads.

The primary material for this study is the *Isdaanon*, a local folksong or ballad from the riverine communities of Capiz, Philippines. The term *Isdaanon* is derived from the Hiligaynon (a local dialect spoken in the Western Visayas, Philippines) word "isda", which means "fish," and the prefix *-anon*, which means attributes; thus, when combined, it translates to "of the fish". The researcher gathered (recorded and transcribed) the ballads from the six (6) folksingers or informants, who were identified as community elders within the riverine community who were purposely chosen based on their knowledge of the *Isdaanon* ballad using the three-generation test of Manuel (1965) to triangulate the data gathered from the riverine communities where river tourism has emerged.

The study also incorporates the reader-response criticism approach, which argues that meaning is created through the interaction between the reader and the text (Willis, 2025). In this way, the researcher's examination of the *Isdaanon* ballad offers knowledge that may be incorporated into education curricula and community-based cultural preservation efforts.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 3.1. *Isdaanon* Ballads and Its Origin

Oral literature is the oldest form of literature, playing a significant role in the development of classical literature that helps to reveal the culture and traditions of a people (Nabil et al., 2023). The Cadimahan riverine community in Roxas City,

Capiz, Philippines, has a rich tradition of oral literature, including songs, legends, and personal narratives; however, there is also considerable variation in how these forms are expressed within the community. This implies that the oral tradition in this community grows over time.

*Isdaanon* is one of the verbal arts of the riverine community of Cadimahan, Roxas City, Capiz. It encompasses all forms of river communication through a ballad. The term *Isdaanon* derives from the Hiligaynon language (a local language used in Capiz, Philippines), "isda", as its root word, meaning "a fish." The suffix *-anon* means "traits." It is added to the word *isda* to form a single compound word, *Isdaanon*, which becomes an adjective. Thus, *Isdaanon* means "one that has the traits or characteristics of a fish." Therefore, *Isdaanon* may refer to a person or an object (when used as a metaphor) possessing the characteristics of a fish or any marine species.

*Isdaanon* ballad is a form of oral narrative delivered artistically to narrate the very tales of the river folks. As a verbal art, it delivers a communication that uses music to convey a message. The message is usually about the culture, values of the community, and the views that they have with regard to society. It is also used to communicate through various presentations of different types of fish.

The informants from the riverine community explained that the *Isdaanon* is usually performed for tourists during the river tour. It is the verbal art of the river folks that is passed on orally through different generations. One of the messages that can be conveyed through *Isdaanon* is how metaphorical language has been used between the types of fish and human traits. This ballad shows how human emotions and characteristics can be seen in marine species, and how we can learn from them.

One example is when the informant uttered the Hiligaynon words "*pugita*," an octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*), and "*lokus* (*Sepioteuthis lessoniana*)," which both refer to a squid in English. Both octopus and squid are known for being very intelligent, witty, and capable of holding tight to the smaller fish they catch. This trait is possessed by all humans. The informant uses this to show how the octopus can use its intelligence to escape and protect itself from danger. This animal trait can be positively learned by anyone who listens to the ballad.

Other messages are the importance of taking care of the environment. This is because the river is the community's source of life and is where they get their food. A river is also a place where the community can relax and enjoy the scenery. It is usually accompanied by music and singing. The music is

usually provided by a singer. The *Isdaanon* can be performed by both men and women. It is usually performed by either a single person or a group of people.

### 3.2. Aesthetics and Poetics of the *Isdaanon* Ballad

Aesthetic in literature according to Paramalingam (2023), refers to the artistic qualities of language that enable a literary work to captivate, evoke emotions, and create vivid imagery. It defines the beauty and

literariness of the piece, which will lead to the unveiling of its literary substance and functions. *Isdaanon*, as the material used in this study, is too limited to be definitive concerning the aesthetics and/or poetics, but some features have appeared regularly enough to be regarded as elements of *Isdaanon* poetics. It is these regularities that this analysis describes, except for the notation of the music, for which the researcher has limitations. However, the notation was made through the use of musicology software, which was then validated by a music expert.

Figure 2: Notation of the *Isdaanon* Ballad.

According to Jared (2023), the successful use of satire depends on the effective use of humor to relay issues of concern in a way that audiences can receive comfortably and will not get offended, even when the issues being conveyed touch on their personal lives. In the *Isdaanon* ballad of the river folks, the aesthetic function of satire can be seen as a critical portrayal of people and events within the community. It often humorously depicts individuals and their actions, using ridicule and wit as a subtle yet effective form of social commentary, as it highlights the problems and issues in the riverine community. This can be seen as a form of satire, as the ballads point out the flaws in the riverine community. The ballads can also be seen as a form of entertainment, as they often

provide a way for the people in the community to laugh at the events and people in the riverine community.

A ballad in this literary study meant the modern use of words to signify a simple narrative poem whose mode of delivery is through singing (this is the original feature of the ancient ballad). Poetics, on the other hand, refers to the principles and factors that guided and shaped the composition and delivery of the ballad. As stated by Hornedo (2006), "it consists of principles that appear to govern the verbal composition as indicated by their observable regularity in the textual composition and the circumstantial factors which appear to contribute to the actualization of the poem as a performed art."

The *Isdaanon* ballad tradition is a pre-literate culture, and therefore, the ballad is not conceived or composed as written verses in stanzaic form. They are transmitted orally and closely associated with the daily activities, experiences, and traditions of the communities that originally carried them (Alam et al., 2023). The present researcher introduces the conventions of literacy so that both the orthography of recording and its punctuation and related factors are not regarded as part of the poetics of the *Isdaanon* as an oral narrative. For this analysis, the literary features considered include denotation, connotation, diction, rhetorical devices, metrical devices, musical devices, tone, and structure.

### 3.3. Denotation

Denotation is defined as the primary meaning of a word (Gee et al., 2023) (e.g., the denotation of the word "rose" is a type of flower). Thus, the denotation of "fish" is a creature that lives in water and has gills. The informant used different types of fish to represent the denotation of the Hiligaynon word "*isda*" in which a word conveys its primary meaning while also communicating another thought.

The informant used the denotation of a word to communicate the theme of the ballad. The ballad theme uses metaphorical language to determine the traits and characteristics of the fish and humans.

One example of the informant using the denotation of a word to communicate the theme is when he utters, "*Bagongon among Obispo, lukos ila maestro*" (telescope snail is our bishop, the squid is their tutor. In this instance, the Hiligaynon word "*lokus*" is denotative and refers to a "squid" living in the sea. However, the informant is using this word to communicate a metaphorical meaning. The marine creature has various characteristics (e.g., fish is wise and cannot be tricked or fooled). This is a metaphor for humans. The informant says that humans should be wise and not be tricked or fooled.

Another example that he was using the denotation of a word to communicate the theme is through "*pawikan*" and "*salmonete*" when he sang the line "*Si pawikan kag si salmonete indi magpaulihi*". The Hiligaynon word "*pawikan*" in this instance is denotative, referring to sea turtles, and the Hiligaynon term "*salmonete*" refers to "striped red mullet", a fish that has a small head. Both *pawikan* and *salmonete* have distinct qualities, such as being slow (for the turtle) and having a smaller brain (for the salmonete). However, the informant narrator is

using these words to communicate a metaphorical language for humans. The informant used denotative words as a satirical representation of the subjects whom he criticizes while singing the ballad.

### 3.4. Connotation

The term connotation refers to the abstract idea or the figurative meaning that is attached to the word. Usually, the connotation of a word is the emotional association that is typically connected with that word (Syaharani et al., 2025) (e.g., the word "rose" might be love, appreciation, or admiration). The informant generally used figurative words based on their connotative possibilities, and metaphorical language was classified as connotation.

**The informant's use of figurative language creates images to present a more vivid picture for the listeners. For example, in the lines:**

**I**

*...Sang tan-tanan nga isda, nagapuyo sa kadagatan  
Ang ila opisyo parehas man sang tawo*

(Translation: All fishes lived in the sea,  
They do what humans do)

The audience can visualize the object of the singer's description and understand his point more clearly. The folksinger's use of the Hiligaynon word "*parehas*" (the same) creates a simile or a comparison between the fish and the human. In this way, the reader can see the similarities between the two, such as their physical traits and their behaviors. "*Parehas*" can also be translated to "alike" or "similar."

**III**

*"...Pasayan ila maestro, hipon<sup>1</sup> ila eskwela..."*

(Translation: Bigger shrimps are their teachers;  
smaller shrimps are their pupils)

The informant used different types of fish from the sea as a metaphor for the riverine community. The different species of fish represented the different roles of people in the community. The informant used the sea to show how the community worked together. The informant's use of Hiligaynon words throughout the ballad creates a sense of authenticity and helps the reader to feel the cultural settings and the traditions of the riverine communities. It also allows the reader to feel as if they are a part of the community and understand the culture, traditions better, and appreciate the beauty of the language, and metaphorically understand the Hiligaynon.

### 3.5. Diction

The diction is the choice of words used to convey

<sup>1</sup> Hipon in Hiligaynon language in the Visayas region of the Philippines is a term used to describe the smaller shrimps,

compared to the pasayan, a shrimp larger in size compared to the hipon.

ideas clearly and effectively (Sardi et al., 2017). In the *Isdaanon* ballad, it is written in a narrative form by using different types of fish to represent a specific role of people in the riverine community. The diction is straightforward, which makes the ballad easy to follow and comprehend. The language effectively communicates the message as it is relatable to the audience.

The ballad is also written directly, which makes it easy to understand. The message is clear and concise, and there is no ambiguity.

The use of different types of fish, which can be seen along the riverine community, is evidenced in the ballad tradition as a typical characteristic of indigenous naming, especially in daily conversation and speech. This can be seen in how different animals are named in the *Isdaanon* verbal arts of the fisher folks. It is compared to different fish types (e.g., octopuses, turtles, etc.). This shows how different types of fish can be used to represent other things, especially humans, in the ballad tradition.

### 3.6. Rhetorical Devices

The rhetorical devices in the ballad are how the words are used to achieve the desired effect (Garcia et al., 2018). It uses many rhetorical devices, including anaphora, personification, and metaphors.

The informant used the simile word "*parehas*" (which means "like") in this ballad to compare the fish characteristics to human traits. The informant is emphasizing how important the story is and how it can give life. It is used to make a description more emphatic or vivid.

*Diri naton usuyon istorya sang Isdaanon  
Senyores pamatii ninyo,ining panalambiton  
Sang tanan tanan nga isda, nagapuyo sa kadagatan  
Ang ila opisyo parehas man sang tauwo*

(Translation: Here, we will listen to the tales of the fishermen,

Honorable, listen to these narratives  
Of all the fishes that live in the seas  
Whose works are like of the men)

Different literary devices are used in the ballad. For example, in stanza II, line 2, personification is used when the informant sings "*Si Kasag ang gin preso, nga gin away ni alimango.*" (Translation: *Kasag* is imprisoned who was quarreled by *Alimango*). This gives the "*Kasag*" and "*Alimango*" human characteristics.

The informant also creatively used symbols in his ballad. For example, regarding economic symbols, *alimango* has a higher cost than crabs. The *alimango* is exported to other national or international markets, whereas the *kasag* is just sold to the local markets. On

the other hand, the *kasag* represents underprivileged individuals (the ruled), while the *alimango* represents those in power – the rulers.

#### II

*Desdi namatay si umang, tenyente mayor si kagang  
Si kasag ang gin preso, nga gin away ni alimango  
Malasugi ang gwardyamante, Sa suba sang San Jose  
Kag didto nausisaan, si parangan naalangan*

(Translation: Umang has died, Kagang becomes the colonel

Kasag was imprisoned, who was quarreled by alimango

Malasugi was the warden in the river of San Jose  
Then it came to knowledge, Parangan also died.)

Another literary device used is the anaphora of the word "*Si*" in stanzas from IV-VII, which is the repetition of the word among the stanzas. The informant used anaphora to emphasize the importance of the story by repeating the word at the beginning of each line. This repetition creates a sense of urgency and importance and draws the readers' attention to the story that is being told.

#### IV

*Si tabagak amo ang superior, kung manuba manami ang sabor*

*Si pawikan kag si salmonete indi magpaulihi  
Si bansa kag si barakuda, sa Guimaras may opisina  
Sigwil ang managgete kay gintuslok niya ang butete*

(Translation: Tabagak was superior; so sweet is his coconut wine

Which Pawikan and Salmonete can never decline

Bansa and Barakuda have their office in Guimaras

Sigwil was a coconut winemaker who pierced the butete in a rush)

#### V

*Si gini ang ginakurugan sang nagapanakayan  
Si ilab ang makatabang sa oras oras nga tanan  
Si kampo ang sa lawayan, si surid sang sakristan  
Si karaho ang hudiyo, kay ginluiban ni bisugo*

(Translation: Gini, whom the seafarers are afraid of

Ilab, the savior of them all

Kampo was the in-charged in the fishing gear, while Surid was the lookout

Karaho is like a Jew whose Bisugo has deceived!

#### VI

*Si gurayon ang ila maninoy, si gurayan ang ila maninay  
Bilong bilong ang ila ihado, ginbunyagan ni pader abo  
Si pakol ang ila orchestra, ginmanduan ni balyena  
Manug abot si lumba lumba kay maturneyo sya kay mamsa*

(Translation: Gurayon was their godfather; gurayan was their godmother

Bilong bilong was the godchild whom the priest Abo baptized

Lumba lumba will be coming to hold a tournament with Mamsa)

### VII

*Si duyong ang ila referee, announcer si gisi  
Pagi ang ila catcher, palad ang ila dasher  
Si payak ang manugtumbol, Si liwit manugsalindron  
Manugbaho si dubla dubla, Si balela ang gitarista*  
(Duyong was the referee, Gisi was the announcer  
Stingray was their catcher, flat fish was the dasher  
Payak was the drummer, belt fish was the whistler  
Dubla dubla plays the banjo, Balela was the guitarist)

The story is rarely told, and it is essential to remember the culture of the riverine community that is being described. The informant could have chosen to use a third-person point of view as effective in delivering the message.

The informant uses descriptive language to set the scene and create a picture in the reader's mind. The informant also used the narrative form to move the story along and the sensory details to create a vivid picture for the reader.

### 3.7. Metrical Devices

Metrical devices in a work of literature refer to the meter, rhymes, and other structures of the literary piece (Zuraikat, 2023). The *Isdaanon* ballad is composed of seven (7) stanzas. Each stanza has four (4) verses. Many verses in the ballads consist of between thirteen and twenty syllables. The syllabic count is more appropriate in literate traditions in the mode of delivery, recitation. The dictate of the rhythm of the *Isdaanon* ballad is the music with which they are sung or chanted.

The number of syllables in every stanza may be changed to suit the music. In *Isdaanon* may be sung, depending on the number of singers. The stanzas are sung alternately in the first stanza, followed by the second stanza, and so on.

### 3.8. Musical Devices

The musical devices, also known as sound devices are patterns of speech sounds used to create a musical effect (Sharma, 2018). The music of the *Isdaanon* ballad is simple and easy to follow. The melody is often repetitive, and the lyrics are simple and direct. The ballad is meant to be sung, not read. It is meant to be heard, not seen. It is a traditional form of verbal art that is typically composed and delivered directly. The informant used slant rhyme to create a discordant and harmonious beat musical effect.

### 3.9. Tone

The tone is an attitude or feelings of the speaker

wants to convey through sound devices, diction and rhythm, shaping how the listener perceives the mood and meaning (Lundin, 2022). *Isdaanon* is a ballad sung by fishermen to express different roles along the riverine communities in a humorous manner. It is a song of the people and for the people. This ballad is a way for the fishermen to communicate and share their culture and traditions. The *Isdaanon* ballad is a part of the riverine community's identity and is a way for them to connect with their cultural heritage.

The *Isdaanon* is sung in an upbeat manner. The mood of the song increases in intensity as the story develops and creates a cheerful mood. The use of repetition throughout the song also creates a sense of rhythm and flow. The instruments used in the ballad include guitars. The guitars create a light and airy sound, while the drums add a sense of rhythm and movement, and add a sense of depth and richness to the overall sound.

The *Isdaanon* ballad is considered satire. It is a type of satire that was popular in the riverine culture. It was a form of social commentary that was used to criticize the government or other influential figures. It was a way for the people to voice their dissatisfaction with the government. The ballads were often critical of the government's treatment of the poor and oppressed. A way for the people to voice their dissatisfaction with the government. The line saying, "*Pugita among putente, Bagis fish ang Presidente*"; is criticizing the government by using the president as an example of someone who is not doing their job. The ballad is saying that the president is like a fish that gets out of the water and is not doing his job well. This type of satire was popular in the riverine culture because it allowed people to voice their opinions about the government without fear of retribution:

### III

*Pugita among putente, Bagis ang Presidente  
Bagongon among Obispo, lukos ila maestro  
Pasayan ila maestra, Hapon ila eskwela  
Sapsap amoy pobre walay tambok maniwang pirmi.*

(Translation: Giant octopus was our leader, Giant whale was our president

Telescope snail was the bishop; small octopus was their teacher?

Small shrimp to whom they learn, tiger shrimps were the learners

Slipmouth fish was the poorest; it always became malnourish).

One way the informant uses satire in the *Isdaanon* ballad is by making the referee a "dugong", or "sea cow". This is a clear reference that referees are often seen as being slow and sluggish, not paying attention

to the game. Another way the informant uses satire is by making the announcer a "gisaw" fish. This signification implicitly states that the announcers are often seen as being annoying and interrupting the game.

The informant uses satire to highlight the various flaws in the sporting world. The players are all different animals, which is a clear reference to the fact that athletes are often seen as animals because of their competitiveness and physicality.

### VII

*Si dugong ang ila referee, announcer si gisaw  
Pagi ang ila catcher, palad ang ila dasher  
Si payak ang manugtumbol, Si liwit manugsalindron  
Manugbaho si dubla dubla, Si balela ang gitarista*

(Translation: The sea cow was their referee, announcer was the mullet fish

Pagi was their catcher, Palad was the dasher

Payak was the drummer, Liwit was the whistler

Dubla dubla plays the banjo, Balela was the guitarist)

### 3.11. Structure

The *Isdaanon* uses a system of organization that relies heavily on logical and psychological sequences. This structure serves as an important role as an organizational framework, allowing the reader to decode the information given and shows the sequence, organization and the flow of the story (Basilan et al, 2024)

The movement of the plot started with the role of the community, and making sure that everyone is accounted for. The community itself is organized into several smaller groups, each with its specific roles and responsibilities.

The rule of the ballad takes place in the characters. This implies that the ballad is structured. For example, the first stanza introduces the introduction of the narration. The second stanza introduces the conflict between the characters. The next stanzas introduce the name of the fish represents the role of people in society. This logical and psychological sequence is repeated throughout the ballad, making it easy for the reader to follow.

Based on stanza II, the informant presents a conflict in the community. It represents a world in a different way, which allows making decisions that are based on reason and not emotion. The community is not afraid to make changes to society and is always looking for ways to improve it.

### II

*Desdi namatay si umang, tenyente mayor si kagang  
Si kasag ang gin preso, nga gin away ni alimango  
Malasugi ang gwardyamante, Sa suba sang San Jose*

*Kag didto nausisaan, si parangan naalangan*  
(Translation: Umang has died, Kagang becomes the colonel

Small crab was imprisoned, who was quarreled by giant crab

Then it came to knowledge, parangan also died.)

In Stanza III, the society represents a meritocracy, which means that people are given positions based on their ability to perform the tasks required of them. There are different levels of ability, and each level is given a different amount of responsibility. The highest level is the most responsible, and the lowest level is the least responsible.

### III

*Pugita among putente, Bagis ang Presidente  
Bagongon among Obispo, lukos ila maestro  
Pasayan ila maestro, Hapon ila eskwela  
Sapsap amoy pobre walay tambok maniwang pirmi*

(Translation: Giant octopus was our leader, Giant whale was our president

Telescope snail was the bishop; small octopus was their teacher.

Small shrimp to whom they learn, tiger shrimps were the learners

Slimmouth fish was the poorest, it always became malnourish)

The *Isdaanon* ballad also uses repetition to create a sense of rhythm and unity in the ballad. This is seen in the way that certain words and phrases are repeated throughout the stanzas. This repetition creates a sense of unity and coherence in the ballad.

The lyrics of the ballad are based on the approach of politics among social classes. In line 4 "Sapsap amoy pobre walay tambok maniwang pirmi", the lyrics state that the rich become richer while the poor are getting poorer. The first line, "Pugita among putente, Bagis ang Presidente", also states that the government is not doing anything to help the poor. The lyrics express the frustration of the poor and their lack of options. In the 3rd line, "Pasayan ila maestro, Hapon ila eskwela", the lyrics also express through education, which is the hope of all the things that will change, and that the poor will one day be able to rise and take what is rightfully theirs.

### III

*Pugita among putente, Bagis ang Presidente  
Bagongon among Obispo, lukos ila maestro  
Pasayan ila maestro, Hapon ila eskwela  
Sapsap amoy pobre walay tambok maniwang pirmi*

(Translation: Giant octopus was our leader, Giant whale was our president

Telescope snail was the bishop; small octopus was their teacher

Small shrimp to whom they learn, tiger shrimps

were the learners

Slipmouth fish was the poorest; it always became malnourished.)

In the 4th stanza, "*Si tabagak amo ang superior, kung manuba manami ang sabor*", the lyrics reveal that the views have been influenced by the personal experiences of a working-class 'superior'. The superiority witnessed firsthand influenced the workers to be amazed by his work. The lyrics also describe his experience working in the field and how others appreciated his work.

#### IV

*Si tabagak amo ang superior, kung manuba manami ang sabor*

*Si pawikan kag si salmonete indi magpaulihi*

*Si bansa kag si barakuda, sa Guimaras may opisina*

*Sigwil ang managgete kay gintuslok nya ang butete*

(Translation: Superior tabagak was; so sweet is his coconut wine

Which Pawikan and Salmonete cannot let go.

Bansa and Barakuda have their office in Guimaras  
Sigwil, a coconut winemaker, pinned the butete)

### 3.12. Filipino Worldviews Reflected in the Ballad

The literary approach to politics draws upon Marxist theory, particularly the concept of class struggle articulated by Marx in 1848. According to Marx, society is viewed ongoing conflict between the ruling class (the bourgeoisie), and the working class (the proletariat). This conflict is rooted in the unequal distribution of power, where those who possess economic resources dominate those who are deprived of them, making money synonymous with power (Sarangi et al., 2020). In the context of the *Isdaanon* ballad, the "river" serves as a metaphor for society, while the diverse types of fish within it symbolize various societal roles and statuses. The larger fish represent the affluent individuals who possess greater resources and opportunities, thereby enhancing their chances of survival. Thus, the ballad reflects the enduring class conflict that defines societal relations, as envisioned in Marxist political and literary theory.

This hierarchical dynamic, as depicted in the ballad, reflects the persistent class struggle between the wealthy and the impoverished, along with the inclination of the affluent to disregard the needs and concerns of the less fortunate. The ocean, akin to society, is portrayed as a realm imbued with mystery and peril, in which those possessing greater power exploit the vulnerable. Furthermore, the ballad positions humans as integral components of the ocean's natural order, which serves as a metaphor for

community.

Moreover, the ballad emphasizes the ocean's inherent beauty, suggesting that those fortunate enough to experience it are truly privileged. This notion aligns with the traditional view of the ocean as a landscape of natural splendor and awe. However, it concurrently underscores the ocean's dangers; much like the societal landscape, individuals who find themselves in precarious situations face the risk of being consumed by more powerful entities, represented by the larger fish. This notion resonates with the conventional perception of the ocean as an environment filled with both peril and mystery, where the dominant entities exert control.

The ballad articulates the traditional view of the ocean, serving as a metaphor for society, as a space where the powerful and affluent maintain dominance over the disenfranchised and marginalized. It also encapsulates the ongoing struggle (symbolized by waves) of the majority to resist exploitation by the ruling elite.

### 3.13. Pedagogical Implications of the *Isdaanon* Ballad

The analysis of the *Isdaanon* ballad has a lot of multiple pedagogical implications when incorporated into teaching literature, language, and values education. First, in literature instruction, the ballad's rich diction, narrative structure, and use of rhetorical and musical devices provide learners with concrete examples for literary analysis. Students can develop critical appreciation and aesthetic sensibilities by examining figurative language, symbolism, tone, and rhythm. This supports Irorita (2025), who emphasizes that the use of culturally relevant materials enhances learners' academic success and promotes cultural awareness. Second, in language learning, the *Isdaanon* provides authentic linguistic material to develop reading, listening, and oral expression skills. It helps improve learners' comprehension and communication skills with the use of contextually grounded language, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and varied sentence structures. This was noted by Chung et al. (2024) that culturally embedded language materials strengthen learners' connection between language acquisition and lived experience, which promotes engagement and motivation. Third, in values education, the ballad embodies the socio-cultural norms, ethical principles, and environmental consciousness of the riverine community. Learners can explore themes of community solidarity, ecological stewardship, and moral decision-making through its narrative. As

such, the *Isdaanon* ballad becomes a vehicle for cultivating ethical reasoning and reflective thinking, aligning with Karim (2025), who highlights the role of indigenous oral traditions as a powerful instrument for reconstructing social identity and transmitting values within an increasingly globalized context. Moreover, the study shows a culturally responsive pedagogy by integrating it into classroom practice. Employing this through performance, dramatization, creative writing, and discussion activities can encourage interactive learning among students. This approach not only gives the students an opportunity to reconnect with their roots while promoting inclusive and transformative learning (Belarde, 2025), but also helps them to develop their literary and linguistic competencies. In sum, it shows that the *Isdaanon* ballad is a multifunctional pedagogical tool that can be used to strengthen literary analysis, enhance language proficiency, and nurture value formation. Its integration into curricula exemplifies a holistic and heritage-based approach to education, making learning more meaningful, culturally grounded, and socially relevant.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The riverine community, particularly the

individuals known as the river folk, possesses a rich tradition of verbal arts, exemplified by the ballad. This oral composition, which emerged from collective memory and is transmitted across generations, serves as a vital medium for expressing and sharing the community's experiences, beliefs, and values. The findings highlight that the aesthetic qualities of the ballad not only convey these narratives but also reflect the worldviews of the river folk, implicitly revealing their aspirations, philosophies, and idealisms. Consequently, these verbal arts are essential for the cultural continuity of the community, as they encapsulate the story of their identity.

Moreover, the study underscores the pedagogical value of the *Isdaanon* ballad as a culturally grounded resource that can be integrated into teaching literature, language, and values education. Its inclusion in educational contexts can promote cultural awareness, contextualized learning, and respect for indigenous voices. Ultimately, this research supports ongoing efforts in cultural preservation and advocates for the meaningful incorporation of indigenous oral literature into both academic discourse and community-based educational initiatives.

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