

## **Melodies of Memory: Exploring Culture and Tradition Through Local Folksongs**

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### **Abstract**

This study is a descriptive ethno-literary research on the study of folksongs transmitted orally through generations. Ethnographic methods of data collection and Russian formalism informed the structural and textual analysis of these folksongs. The study aims to analyze the various types of existing folksongs of Ligao City, which were initially recited or sung in Bicol and performed by key informants. Specifically, it attempts to examine form and content; to deduce themes, beliefs, traits, values, cultural practices, and traditions; and to determine which folkways are still practiced, on the verge of extinction, or discarded. Findings reveal that Bicol folksongs have a relatively strong sense of form. However, this sense of creating patterns of sound exhibits an inherent and keen sense for sound rather than a conscious creation of end sounds or rhythmic patterns. Most often, the result is a loose rhyme structure and a unique rhythmic pattern that does not conform to traditional metered poetry, or if it does, only very rarely. Folksongs are also rich in images from the use of figures of speech like metaphor, apostrophe, and the like. Utilizing comparisons also leads to symbols and images from an observant use of sights and sounds from everyday life. These folksongs reveal both literary and cultural artifacts—from the use of poetic devices in both their form and content, as well as Bikol beliefs, values, and traits. Some are still strongly adhered to, but with a few, slowly slipping away with the passage of time.

*Keywords:* cultural, indigenous, folklore, literature, traditions

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## Introduction

Memories are not held by things but carried by people. This is a powerful truth in folklore when, in the olden days, people communicated their thoughts, expressed their feelings, and shared their experiences through oral or verbal means to make sense of the world around them.

Folklore pertains to customs, beliefs, stories, sayings, and the like handed down from generation to generation. Anthropologists defined folklore as literature while scholars of literature considered it as culture (Ben-Amos, 1971).

Folklore as literature refers to traditional beliefs and stories originally preserved through the act of storytelling and subsequently recorded in writing. Folk literature can be in the form of documented stories, poems, songs, and other artful forms of knowledge passed down from generation to generation (Thompson, 2024).

As culture, folklore serves as a storehouse of the folk's manifold experiences. It is everything they learned out of their significant personal encounters and daily occurrences in their seemingly mundane life.

One of the many categories of folklore is verbal art or verbal lore. Verbal lore consists of any kind of folklore involving sung traditions, or spoken words, whether set to music, organized in chronological, story form, or simply labeling an activity or expressing a belief in a word or phrase (Thompson, 2024). This type can be in any of the common forms of legends, myths, folk tales, proverbs, riddles, and folk songs.

As a verbal lore, folksongs originate among the people of a country or area, passed by oral tradition from one singer or generation to the next, often existing in several versions, and marked generally by simple, modal melody and stanzaic, narrative verse. (Dictionary.com, 2012). Folksongs serve as the record of humanity's thoughts and feelings since the dawn of time. From this perspective, Bikol folksongs like *Sarung Banggi*, *Kulasising Berde (Green Parrot)* and *Salampating Guminaro (Tamed Dove)* are repositories of literary and cultural artifacts that reflect the desires, needs, and even aspirations of early Bicolanos.

So, what literary artifacts can be uncovered from Bikol folksongs? Firstly, the task is to determine our ancestors' creative use of language through their songs by identifying the figures of speech used as well as other poetic devices such as rhyme, rhythm, and meter, including imagery and symbols.

Were they skillful in using repetition of sounds particularly at the end of a verse? Can we note the occurrence of a pattern of sound in regular intervals? In other words, are rhyme and rhythm typical features of these folksongs? Additionally, to enrich their songs, did they use figures in their surroundings to obliquely refer to someone or something. And in reading or singing their songs, are there pictures that appeal to the senses of hearing, seeing and touch among others? How adept were they in using symbols and imagery?

Secondly, often a folksong tells a story—no matter how short or how flimsy. This corpus study, therefore, will also examine what people of yore in Ligao City considered were important enough to think, talk and feel about in their songs. What was the subject and themes of their narratives?

Thirdly, it is generally recognized that literature reflects the way of life of a people. How did they worship God or their gods? Why must a woman hide her face behind a fan? Did they find time for leisure? How was work assigned to family members? The corpus of the folksongs in study should be rich with cultural artifacts that describe the beliefs, the values, traits, and practices of our Bicolano ancestors.

This ethno-literary research, therefore, justifies a literary analysis approach that is informed by the mechanics of both form and content of each poem. Furthermore, it attempts to examine the cultural and traditional features embedded in local folksongs to draw out significant themes, values, and practices transmitted across generations.

The corpus of the analysis is the Bikol folksongs indigenous to, or in the case of some, loosely associated with the people of Ligao City, Albay, Philippines. Classified among the growing cities of Albay Province, Ligao shares its history with the towns of Polangui and Oas as a sitio of Cavasi, before it became an independent municipality in the year 1666. Three hundred thirty-five years later, on March 24, 2001, Ligao was converted into a component city by virtue of Republic Act No. 9008. To the South of this city is the Municipality of Guinobatan; to the East, the City of Tabaco; to the North is the Municipality of Oas; and to the West the Municipality of Pio Duran and Panganiran Bay. The City's remarkable topography offers varied landscape, from vast agricultural lands and a few fascinating beaches to a dynamic business and commercial hub at the heart of the city, revealing the urban-rural character of the locale that makes it an ideal venue to study the dynamic properties of folklore, which do not, in its totality, belong to an ancient, bygone era; but constantly grow and evolve as man and his environment does (Imran, 2021).

To realize the objectives of this study, the researcher has looked into the folksongs in terms of their poetic devices to reveal form and content, identified recurring motifs which formulate the themes of the poems; drew out beliefs, traits, values, cultural practices, and traditions in said folksongs; and find out if said folkways are: a) still practiced, b) at the verge of extinction, c) no longer in existence, and revealed from said folklore texts which influences are relatively modern or contemporary and which are basically old and traditional.

While it is true that there are various literature that probes into folksongs and their structural and textual analysis, they differ in focus or emphasis. For instance, Alan Lomax in his *The Folk Song Style and Culture* (1968) provides a framework for analyzing song structure, thematic content, and their connection to cultural practices. The book gives a detailed discussion on how folksongs reflect cultural patterns. It provides valuable insights into analyzing the thematic content of folksongs. *Narratology and Folk Narrative* by the folklorist Alessandro Falassi (2008) investigates the narrative structure of folksongs. He analyzes how narrative elements like character development, plot structure, and point of view contribute to the meaning and function of folksongs within a cultural context. While Falassi looks into the narrative elements to make meaning, the current study analyzes the folksongs in terms of narrative and poetic elements. Folklorist Roger D. Abrahams in his book *Performance, Text, and Audience* (2016) focuses on the importance of performance context in analyzing folksongs. He argues that textual analysis alone is insufficient, and that understanding the performance context, audience interaction, and social function of folksongs is crucial to a complete understanding of their meaning. The book offers a deeper and more specific approach in analyzing folksongs. Sociologist Timothy D. Evans in *Folk Music and Modern Society* (2017) examines the role of folksongs in contemporary society. He utilizes textual analysis alongside social and historical context to explore how folksongs evolve and adapt to reflect changing social realities. This

work highlights the dynamic nature of folksong tradition. Finnegan (1977), in *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context* asserts that meaning in oral poetry arises not only from textual structure but also from its cultural and situational use. Her approach is essential in examining folksongs, as it integrates the analysis of poetic devices, thematic content, and cultural context within a single interpretive model that respects both artistry and communal tradition. This literature is very akin to the current undertaking as its approach allows for an integrated reading of poetic structure, thematic content, and cultural context within the region's living oral tradition.

Moreover, Imran et al. (2014) have undertaken a Research Project entitled "Barangay Arimbay Verbal Lore: An Anthology of Myths, Legends, Folktales, Anecdotes, Indigenous Healing Practices, Folk Songs, Poetry, Riddles and Proverbs." The research project yielded a large collection of various types of indigenous Arimbay verbal lore, textual analysis of the genres, and instructional materials for the K-12 program. A cultural profile of the community was made in terms of beliefs, traits, values, customary practices, and traditions, yet they differ from the current study in the locale and local cultural nuances. In addition, the current undertaking builds upon the existing body of research by offering a focused analysis of Ligao City's folksongs, uncovering local cultural traces, identifying the interplay of traditional and modern influences, and potentially revealing new motifs or themes specific to the region.

Without doubt, the study of folksong or oral poetry as a literary form—particularly of the old folks of the City of Ligao—is long overdue, but hopefully, not too late, for it is a fact that folksong is a vanishing literary and cultural tradition, which even more stresses the need to sustain its preservation and transmission. Romualdo emphasizes this truth and avers that "there's nothing more culturally devastating than having traditions slowly fade from practice into the dark corners of memory. Music, especially its forms deeply rooted in specific events and experiences, belongs to those traditions" (Romualdo, 2018). Our collective memory as Bicolanos is endangered by the rapid spread of technology as well as dominant languages, both driven by globalization. This is explicitly expressed in The Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. While globalization and social transformation promote renewed dialogue among communities, they also pose significant risks to intangible cultural heritage, which may deteriorate or disappear—particularly when there are insufficient resources for its safeguarding (UNESCO, 2003). In passing down oral literature from one generation to the next lies the heart of culture and memory. Hence, this study is an effort to raise awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of folksongs through an analysis of its literary form and content, and as a repository of cultural traditions and artifacts, particularly of the early inhabitants of what is now the City of Ligao.

### **Methodology**

*Melodies of Memory: Exploring Culture and Tradition Through Local Folksongs* is a descriptive ethno-literary research that fuses ethnography and literature in the study of a body of folklore material transmitted orally through generations, known as Verbal Lore. It involves the collection, validation, recording/documentation, and translation of existing folksongs of Ligao City from various clustered barangays that encompass four ecosystems—coastal, upland, urban, and lowland. The study aims to analyze the various types of existing folksongs of Ligao City. In the conduct of data collection, formal consent was obtained from the Local Government Unit (LGU) Mayor and barangay captains to ensure that it aligns with local regulations and community interests. The approval obtained led the researcher to conduct the collection of data. Hence, ethical guidelines such as consent from the key informants for the

conduct of data gathering were observed. During this stage of the study, the folksongs were initially recited or sung in the Bicol dialect and performed by a number of key informants who were at least 50 years old, could sing, and provide information on how and from whom they learned the song. The researcher employed methods of immersion, participant-observation, and unstructured interviews to collect the data needed for the study. A total of eight (8) folk songs were collected from the many key informants. These folksongs were later written down and translated into English. Moreover, to ensure the veracity and validity of the translation from the vernacular into English, a set of jurors representing varied sectors in the field of education such as Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, and the like, and who were proficient in the vernacular and in the English language, were chosen to ensure that meanings of the folksongs were not altered during the translation phase. Their suggestions were also considered in the revision of the folklore material. Specifically, the study focuses on the structural (form) and textual (content) analysis of the existing folksongs of Ligao City. To examine thoroughly the form and content of these early forms of literature and be able to draw out significant themes, beliefs, traits, values, cultural practices, and traditions discernible from the texts, specific methodologies have to be applied in order to glean desired results. The study uses a formalistic perspective in the analysis of the folksongs. It is said that indigenous poetry is a league of its own. Its literary merits can be best understood and appreciated by using a perspective that is unique to its nature as well. Given this context, among the literary theories, Formalism sits well as an analytical framework for indigenous poetry. Formalism is one of the earliest forms of criticism, dating as far back as Aristotle. It gained ascendancy in the early 1900s when the Russians elevated it to the realm of literary criticism. Briefly, formalism is an objective approach to literary criticism. It isolates the literary piece from the extrinsic environment, such as history, politics, religion, among others, and judges the work strictly on its intrinsic merits: language and structure, or form and style (Formalism, 2021). The study, therefore, justifies a literary analysis approach that is informed by the mechanics of the form and content of each folk song, which allows expression or suggestion of cultural insights through the text and structure of the poem to understand how they contribute to the text's meaning and effect, even without the use of outside context. The rhyme, rhythm and meter, figures of speech, imagery and symbol, subject matter, and theme of the folksongs were identified and analyzed to create a clear picture of the distinguishing characteristics of Bicolano folk songs. The study analyzed the structure of these Bicolano folk songs in terms of these poetic devices. Poetic devices such as figures of speech, rhythmic repetition, symbols, and imagery unveil subject matter, themes, and cultural meanings such as beliefs, values, and traditional practices necessary to the culture from which the folksongs belong. The textual analysis of the songs enabled the study to reveal the culture and traditions of the Bicolano people.

## **Results and Discussion**

This is a corpus analysis of Bicol folksongs indigenous to or in the case of some, loosely associated with the peoples of Ligao City. The perspective is that folksongs, in their written form, is a literary genre—that is, poetry. This, therefore, justifies a literary analysis approach that is informed by the mechanics of the form and the content of each song.

Bicol folksongs reveal a relatively strong sense of rhyme, rhythm, and meter. However, this sense of creating patterns of sound is highly expected due to an inherent and keen sense for sound rather than a studied or conscious creation of end sounds or rhythmic patterns. Most often, the result is a loose rhyme structure and a unique rhythmic pattern that does not conform

with traditional metered poetry, or if it does, only very rarely. Tables 1 and 2 reveal these findings on the poetic devices of the existing folksongs analyzed.

**Table 1**

*Structural and Textual Analysis: Poetic Devices*

Folksongs	Rhyme Scheme	Rhythm	Meter
1. Kulasising Berde ( <i>Green Parrot</i> )	irregular/ sustained/ deliberate	strong, loose	loose iambic meter, sound pattern creates a playfully harmonious mood
2. Salampating Guminaro ( <i>Tamed Dove</i> )	irregular end rhyme	strong	Irregular
3. Sarong Banggi ( <i>One Night</i> )	loose, irregular, free verse	does not have poetic rhythm	no meter
4. Dandansoy ( <i>Person's Name</i> )	irregular end rhyme	loose	regular
5. Kaka ( <i>Elder Sibling</i> )	end rhyme, regular	strong sense of rhythm, irregular, loose rhythm	irregular
6. Si Haring Solomon ( <i>King Solomon</i> )	loose, there is a pattern of rhymes or rhyme structure that creates a certain repetition that attracts and engages our sense of sound	loose, irregular	irregular
7. O, Maliwanag na Buwan ( <i>Oh, Bright Moon</i> )	irregular end rhyme	varying syllables, irregular, loose	irregular
8. Lawiswis Kawayan ( <i>Whispering Bamboo</i> )	close to an end rhyme scheme but not a perfect pattern, loose	loose	loose

Bicol folksongs are rich in images largely from the use of figures of speech such as metaphor, the extended metaphor, apostrophe, allusions to name some. Utilizing comparisons also lead to symbols and images that stems from an observant use of sights and sounds from everyday life. The folksong *Kulasising Berde*, for instance, exemplifies these features in the 1<sup>st</sup> stanza. *Kulasising Berde* is obviously not about a green parrot or kulasisi but the bird is used as a direct comparison or a metaphor for a flirtatious woman or a girl—kulasisi being a kind of bird that is almost a universal symbol for flirty women in Philippine culture. The words “nagtogdon”

(perched) “naghuning malumbay” (melancholic call) and “makawiliwili” (endearing) are attributes of the bird that are meant to describe coquettish/coy women who put themselves on display and make themselves desirable with their gentle words or gestures. Additionally, these words create imagery that appeal to sight—“nagtogdon” (perched); and sound—“naghuning malumbay (melancholic call) and kawiliwili” (endearing) which further enriches the poem.

The song started with the green parrot as a metaphor for a young woman and halfway through shifts to directly addressing the woman but there is a residual feeling generated in the use of the green parrot as a symbolism. It is an effective device hiding the narrator’s feelings about the situation—that is, probably one of a jilted lover who hides his hostility over a lost love or as symbolisms go can be a piqued father who hides his disappointment over a daughter’s mistake in marrying practically a stranger from another place.

Lilia F. Realubit, in her *Bicol Literature in the Philippines*, affirms that Bicolanos have a writing tradition with roots in its ancient folkways. She further asserts that “Bicol region is home to ancient oral traditions, including folk charm verses that exploit alliterative rhyme, imagery, and metaphor—evidence of a long-standing instinctive relationship with poetic craft.”

This suggests that our Bicolano ancestors possessed an innate sense of rhyme and rhythm. More than that, they skillfully used poetic devices—such as figures of speech, symbols, and imagery—to enrich and elevate their compositions.

**Table 2**

*Structural and Textual Analysis: Poetic Devices*

Folksongs	Figures of Speech	Imagery and Symbol
1. Kulasising Berde ( <i>Green Parrot</i> )	metaphor, apostrophe	symbol: bird suggests mood or attitude of flirty woman imagery: sight, sound
2. Salampating Guminaro ( <i>Tamed Dove</i> )	extended metaphor	symbol: dove – loved one imagery: sight, movement
3. Sarong Banggi ( <i>One Night</i> )	simile, metaphor	symbol: moon - woman dark night – lonely existence magayon, maliwanag - woman as a source of joy imagery: sight, hearing, movement
4. Dandansoy ( <i>Person’s Name</i> )	apostrophe	symbol: woman – gender role of women as nurturers imagery: movement, sight
5. Kaka ( <i>Elder Sibling</i> )	allusion	symbol: frog - female genital imagery: visual, motion/ movement

6. Si Haring Solomon ( <i>King Solomon</i> )	allusion	symbols: turtle – female genital  Haring Solomon – male genital  banana – male genital  king – male superiority  imagery: visual, sound
7. O, Maliwanag na Buwan ( <i>Oh, Bright Moon</i> )	apostrophe	symbol: moon - fiancé  moon - witness to the girl  verbalizing her love for him  imagery: sound, sight
8. Lawiswis Kawayan ( <i>Whispering Bamboo</i> )	metaphor, personification	symbol: bamboo - symbol for rural life  bamboo - backdrop for the love story of the young lovers  bamboo - innocent flirtations of the young lovers  bamboo - simple, uncomplicated life of people in the rural area during the time of yore  imagery: visual, sound, movement

The subject-matter, motifs, and themes discerned in most of the folksongs are about love and love-related topics such as the joys of romantic love, the pain of losing a beloved or love lost, and sacrifice for the sake of a beloved. This choice of subject matter and theme bridges the huge gap between an interest in the heavenly and spiritual—that is, parental and romantic love to the earthly and bawdy celebration of sex. Table 3 shows the subject-matter, motifs, and themes apparent in the folksongs.

**Table 3***Structural and Textual Analysis: Subject-Matter/ Motifs/ Themes*

Folksongs	Subject Matter/ Motifs/ Themes
1. Kulaising Berde ( <i>Green Parrot</i> )	paternal love, romantic love
2. Salampating Guminaro ( <i>Tamed Dove</i> )	love lost
3. Sarong Banggi ( <i>One Night</i> )	love song, celebration of romantic love as a bittersweet emotion
4. Dandansoy ( <i>Person's Name</i> )	The need of a woman for assurance that she is loved.
5. Kaka ( <i>Elder Sibling</i> )	- humorously indecent although indirectly - Obviously a male folk song which reveals a healthy although taboo interest in the male libido and the female anatomy.
6. Si Haring Solomon ( <i>King Solomon</i> )	- comical - humorous - sexually comical song - objectionable to people who does not have the courage to mention the male and female genitals - taboo/forbidden/sex related topic
7. O, Maliwanag na Buwan ( <i>Oh, Bright Moon</i> )	- loss and despair - man's love and affection for his girl
8. Lawiswis Kawayan ( <i>Whispering Bamboo</i> )	- love song - celebrating the joys of romantic love - simplicity of young love

Several literary sources support the preceding findings on love and related themes. Realubit (1994), in her analysis of Bicol folk literature, affirms that “themes of affection, familial love, and emotional expression are strong in songs and oral traditions.” Moreover, the themes drawn from the text reflects the culture of Bicolanos. In addition, Dr. Lily Rose Tope (2025) in her lecture “*Literature Is Culture*” at the 57th ACELT International Conference, pointed out that literature is culture; it reveals the history, values, and beliefs of their origin. She further explained that literature provides an insight into the culture of the author or storyteller. Thus, the Bicolanos’ affectionate, caring, and hospitable nature are deeply embedded in the region’s cultural values and are reflected in their everyday interactions, oral traditions, and communal life. Montales (2021) also explains how Bicolanos’ sense of identity is associated with their

affectionate relationships with family, tradition, and local culture. This implies that their affectionate and caring nature are mirrored in their oral tradition such as folk songs.

In addition, the analysis reveals that love is a universal feeling, as found in the songs, and our ancestors have given us a glimpse into the Bicolanos' psyche in love—from the spiritual to the mundane through their oral tradition.

There were nine (9) beliefs that were discernible in the folksongs. Table 4 shows these beliefs which were further classified into the following types:

**Table 4**  
*Structural and Textual Analysis: Beliefs*

	TYPES OF BELIEFS	NO.	RANK
1	Gender Stereotyping / Sexism	5	1
2	Objectification of women	3	2
3	Patriotism	1	3
4	Respect for Elders	1	
5	Simplicity of Living	1	
6	Religiosity	1	
7	Courtship	1	
8	(Close) Family Ties	1	
9	Survival	1	

Beliefs are assumptions about how life should be lived. From these beliefs, values, or standards of what are the right and correct way of doing things are formed. Consequently, our values evolve into certain practices and traits.

Traces of specific beliefs, values, traits, and practices can be mined from this form of indigenous literature which are helpful in understanding the psyche of the people of Ligao City. Some are still strongly adhered to, but with a few slowly slipping away with the passage of time.

Table 5 reveals the ten (10) positive and two (2) negative traits that are discernible from the folksongs.

**Table 5**  
*Structural and Textual Analysis: Traits*

TRAITS		
No.	Positive Traits	Negative Traits
1	Persevering Resolute, Determined, Tenacious, Insistent, Aggressive Patient	Sexist Prejudiced, Biased, Dominant
2	Generous Kind, Helpful	Passive tolerant, fatalistic, timid
3	Manly Virile	
4	Loving Romantic, Affectionate, Caring Amorous, Nurturing	
5	Respectful Courteous, Polite, Obedient	
6	Family Oriented family ties, love of native land	
7	Faithful Sincere, Serious, Trusting	
8	Simple Living Preference for the rural scenery	
9	Sense of Humor Witty, ingenious, creative, skillful	
10	Self-sacrificing Patient	

The following values, classified into types on Table 6, were uncovered based on the beliefs and traits deduced from the folksongs. A total of seven (7) types of values were drawn out of the eight (8) folksongs collected from the city of Ligao.

**Table 6**  
*Structural and Textual Analysis: Values (Content)*

RANK	VALUES
1	Love and romance
2	Perseverance Determination, Tenacity, Patience, Persistence, Willpower
3	Sense of Humor bawdy, humorously indecent, ingenuity
4	Contentment in Simplicity of living Simplicity, Love of nature, Preference to be with nature
4	Close Family Ties Love for one's family and Love of one's native land
4	Generosity Kindness, Community Cohesiveness/Cohesive Communal Relations
4	Respect Respect for parents, elders, and following traditions, Courtesy, Obedience, Good manners, and right conduct (what is right and correct)

*Love and romance* is the topmost value as it occurred in almost all of the folksongs analyzed. Second in rank is *patience and perseverance*. Third in rank is *Sense of Humor*. Other values that tie in the fourth rank are: *Contentment in simplicity of living*, *Close family ties*, *Generosity and Respect*.

Table 7 unveiled nine (9) cultural practices and traditions from a number of folk songs collected. These were further classified into the following types:

**Table 7**  
*Structural and Textual Analysis: Cultural Practices and Traditions (Content)*

	TYPES OF CULTURAL PRACTICES AND TRADITION
1	Courtship & Marriage
2	Festivals, Celebrations
3	Family Ties
4	Gender Relations
5	Perseverance
6	Respect for Elders
7	Simplicity of Living
8	Voyeurism
9	Domestic

The songs are rich sources of cultural artifacts from beliefs, values, traits, and practices. The family and the community, or the tribe and most importantly, the church, shape beliefs that create standards of behavior, characteristics and ultimately traditions or ways of how to do things. Hence, specific cultural practices and traditions are considered below:

A significant cultural practice of yore that is reflected in the song is the “*ponsyon*” or “social gatherings”. *Weddings, baptisms, and fiestas* are an occasion for renewing ties that bind among family, relatives, neighbors, and the community as well. These major *celebrations* chiefly focused on the sharing of food or partaking of a banquet.

Other cultural practices uncovered include *Family Ties*, *Gender Relations*, *Respect for Elders*, *Perseverance*, *Simplicity of Living*, *Voyeurism*, and *Domestic Duties/ Practices*.

To sum up, beliefs are assumptions about how life should be lived. From these beliefs, values, or standards of what are the right and correct way of doing things are formed. Consequently, our values evolve into certain practices and traits. While a few have been seldom practiced or have been lost and forgotten as shown on Table 9, many others are kept alive and is handed down to the next generation, as shown in the following old and traditional influences on Table 8. In its generation transmission lies the heart of culture and memory.

**Table 8**

*Structural and Textual Analysis: Influences Which Are Old and Traditional*

Old/ Traditional/ Continuing Cultural Practices and Traditions
1. Fiestas and other celebrations
2. Festivals
3. Love for music
4. Simplicity of life
5. Hard work and sacrifice for the sake of a beloved
6. Deep faith in God
7. Weddings
8. Wine drinking during fiestas and other celebrations
9. Respect for elders especially the parents of the woman a man wishes to pursue
10. Gender Relations / Sexism
11. Sharing selflessly what one has with others no matter how little it is
12. Sense of humor to manage or to buffer stress
13. Planting root crops, rice, and vegetables in farms, and fishing to earn a living

**Table 9**

*Seldom Practiced/ Lost and Forgotten Cultural Practices and Traditions*

Seldom Practiced or Discarded Cultural Practices and Traditions
1. Visiting every night showering a woman and her family with gifts or “panliligaw”, and “harana” to tame an unwilling object of love and to earn the affection of the woman and her family is a courtship practice that is slowly, if not already, lost to present day westernized lifestyle.
2. “Paninilbihan” or doing menial jobs to please both the woman and her parents is no longer practiced nowadays. The value of investing time on a romantic relationship is no longer the convention at present.
3. Major celebrations chiefly focused on the sharing of food and reunion among family, relatives, neighbors, and the community is also slowly fading away due to adoption of westernized lifestyle.

It is interesting to note that despite the fast technological advancement and innovation, only a handful of modernism can be unearthed from the folk songs. Table 10 reveals these modern or contemporary influences:

**Table 10***Structural and Textual Analysis: Influences Which Are Modern or Contemporary*

MODERN/ CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCES
Presence of house implement or tool (axe)
Presence of cleansing and emulsifying agent (soap) for sanitation and hygiene
Existence of infrastructure: Country road (a usually unpaved rural road off the main highway) (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

## Conclusions

From the foregoing findings, the following Conclusions and Recommendations are given:

1. Our Bicolano ancestors are born poets not only because they have an inborn grasp for poetic rhyme and rhythm, but additionally, because they can work with poetic tools such as figures of speech, symbols, and imagery to enrich their poetry.
2. The corpus analyzed reveal a focus on love. Love is a universal feeling, and our ancestors have given us a glimpse into the Bicolanos in love—from the spiritual to the mundane.
3. Folksongs are rich sources of cultural artifacts from beliefs, values, traits, and practices. The family and the community, or the tribe and most importantly, the church, shape beliefs that create standards of behavior, characteristics and ultimately traditions or ways of doing things. There is no doubt that folksongs help us to a close encounter with the way of life of our ancestors. They serve as a strong context on how we can understand the Bicolano soul—that is, our current belief and value systems as well as our strengths and weaknesses as a people.
4. The collection of only eight folksongs from a large city with numerous barangays suggests both the rarity and fragility of oral traditions in contemporary times. While these songs provide valuable insight into the cultural and literary heritage of Ligao City, the limited number also indicates that much of the traditional repertoire may have been lost, forgotten, or overshadowed by modern influences. This highlights the urgency of documentation and preservation efforts to safeguard the remaining verbal lore for future generations.

## Recommendations

1. More studies should be conducted on Bicol folksongs, particularly critical analyses on the rhyme structure and the rhythmic pattern and meter, and their content integrating elements of other literary theories such as New Historicism or Cultural Studies to contextualize the folksongs within their historical, social, and political setting.
2. A comprehensive study on the subject matter of folksongs is needed to serve as a broader context for interpreting the Bicolano persona.
3. The family, church, school, and government are the social institutions that shape our way of life. Studies of folk songs should reveal how these social institutions shaped our belief systems, our values as well as traits and practices. It is listening to distant voices from the past to help us understand the present.
4. Future studies should expand documentation efforts to more barangays across different ecosystems (upland, lowland, coastal, and urban), by collaborating with local elders, cultural bearers, and community organizations to recover songs that may no longer be widely sung but still remembered, to capture a wider range of folksongs.

5. Conduct comparative research with neighboring towns or provinces to situate Ligao's folksongs within the broader Bicol and Filipino folk tradition.

### **Acknowledgment**

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