

Social Realities Embodied in Folk Songs of Southern Leyteños

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Abstract

This study analyzed the social realities embodied in five selected folk songs of Southern Leyte. Through mimetic literary analysis, the results proved that the selected folk songs of Southern Leyte represent the following social realities: “U, Putli nga Bulak” (Oh, Flower Chaste) - infidelity, “Batasan nga Bag-u” (New Custom) - biases for men, “Panimalay” (Household) - family solidarity, “Bulak nga Lasangnun” (Forest Flower) - narcissism, “Ang Nasud Tang Pilipinas” (Our Country, Philippines) - patriotism.

Keywords: *social realities, infidelity, biases for men, family solidarity, narcissism, patriotism, folk song*

1.0 Introduction

This study claims that the selected folk songs of Southern Leyte embody social realities.

Folk songs are considered the most important index of sociocultural life and the surest criterion of the music life of a nation. They are windows into any culture’s history and perceived realities (Lomax & Halifax, as cited in Arnold, 2001, p. 471; Parker et al., 1915; Skopal, 2013).

Folk songs are regarded as an intergenerational and an intercultural form of communication.

They provide people the

chances to reassess the eventualities of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Also, as an overwhelming means of participation, folk songs can be elements of unity, communication, opportunity, etc. (Lisesi & Selsmoseskolen, 2014). Folk songs are some means of expression for the Filipinos. With their strong sense of musicality, Filipinos pour out their hopes and longings, frustrations and fulfillment, and failures and triumphs. Folk songs suffered modifications and rudiments as a native art. However, they are preserved through the patriotism and zeal of some Filipinos (Yamio, 2011). Moreover, folk songs “evoke

long-lost social movements” (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998) and “elucidate the complexity of the culture of the society” (Arnold *et al.*, 2001).

Sociologists concentrate on songs, not on singers and audiences. They study them with content analysis, which is a familiar cultural research method. They measure trends by reference to music because they lack the ability to distinguish songs in musical terms. The words of the sociologists pave the way for the hit records to make their social mark (Frith, 2014, p.77). In the past, folklore scholars focus their studies on genesis and development, interpretations of solar phenomena, primordial and historical facts and survival of ancient rituals. Twentieth-century folklore research concentrates on geographical, cultural, psychoanalytical, historical, and structural aspects. (Lopez, 2006, p.56).

There are several attempts to collect and to preserve traditional Philippine music but most of them focus only on the vocal forms (“Music and Arts of the Philippines,” 2011, para. 29). Furthermore, there are only a handful of studies concerning the

social realities embodied in folk songs.

The potential of folk songs for literary discovery (Bell, 2004) can provide pedagogical materials in the academe. In consequence, this literary discourse is done. This study uses the mimetic approach to identify social realities embodied in five selected folk songs of Southern Leyte.

2.0 Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

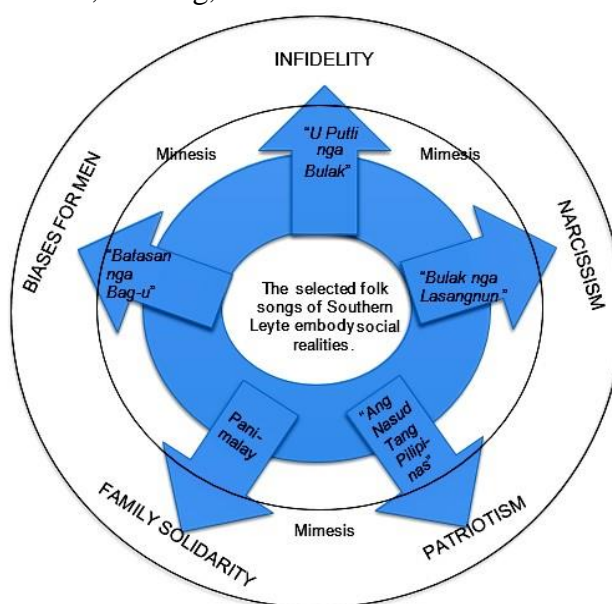
“*Mimesis* is greatly influenced by Plato who claims that literary texts represent a particular view of the world and endorse a specific set of values” (Waugh, 2006). The mimetic theory was used to judge work of arts in relation to reality until it became the theory utilized by the great Renaissance and some modern theorists. According to Adams (1971) “Aristotle views mimesis as a basic human faculty in which the imitator produces a copy or mirrors reflection of some things but involves a complex mediation of reality”. Moreover, Fenner (2008) observes that “in Plato’s time, the Athenians consider that the essential quality of art is to imitate nature. In simple sensory terms, art works look like the objects in nature.”

“The aim of mimetic criticism is to establish the degree to which literature connects with the real world and to emphasize that art conveys universal truths” (Cotejo, 2013). Folk culture in a society is seen in four different forms: oral tradition, material culture, social folk customs, and performing arts. **Oral tradition** includes mostly verbal arts or expressive literature consisting of spoken, sung and voiced forms of traditional utterances like songs, tales, poetry, ballads, anecdotes, rhymes, proverbs and elaborate epics. **Material culture** are the visible aspects of folk behavior such as skills, recipes and formula as displayed in rural arts and crafts, traditional motifs, architectural design, clothes, fashion, farming,

fishing and various other types of tools and machinery.

Social folk customs are the areas of traditional life, which emphasize the group rather than the individual skills and performances. They include large family and community observances and relate to rites of passages such as birth, initiation, marriage and death or annual celebrations, festivals, fairs, ritual and ceremonial gatherings, market occasions and rural meets. **Performing arts** consist of traditional music, masquerades, dance, and drama (Sreekumar par.3-4)

Burke (cited in Anders para. 1) situates the work of art as a response to a situation that is essentially social; literature serves a therapeutic role insofar as it



diagnoses and dissolves maladaptive social categories and orientations. In this study, mimesis is used to determine the social realities

Flower Chaste), “*Batasan nga Bagu*” (New Custom), “*Panimalay*” (Household), “*Bulak nga Lasangnun*” (Forest Flower),

Table 1. Social realities embodied in the selected folk songs.

Title of the Folk Song	Social Realities
• “ <i>U, Putli nga Bulak</i> ” (Oh, Flower Chaste)	• infidelity
• “ <i>Batasan nga Bag-u</i> ” (New Custom)	• biases for men
• “ <i>Panimalay</i> ” (Household)	• family solidarity
• “ <i>Bulak nga Lasangnun</i> ” (Forest Flower)	• narcissism
• “ <i>Ang Nasud Tang Pilipinas</i> ” (Our Country, Philippines)	• patriotism

embodied in the five selected folk songs of Southern Leyte. The social realities specifically refer to the attitudes, traditions, beliefs, and other social conventions that

Filipinos use to sustain good-natured relationships and decorum in the society.

3.0 Research Design and Methods

This study utilized mimetic discourse analyses to establish the social realities embodied in the five selected folk songs of Southern Leyte: *U, Putli nga Bulak*” (Oh,

“*Ang Nasud Tang Pilipinas*” (Our Country, Philippines). The folk songs were adapted from the compilation of Saga (2010). Pesirla’s (2012) criterion in

Phonology - Correspondence: Sound -Letter System on pedagogic grammar for Cebuano Visayan was followed in the textual translation of the lyrics.

Codes on attitudes, traditions, beliefs and other social conventions were generated. Analysis of each folk song focused on the social reality it presented. The data gathered were carefully analyzed, defined, and reviewed. Data source triangulation was done using the works of Sentillas

(2011), Lauro (2011), Moral (2013), Cotejo (2013). Other books and articles related to the study were used to cross verify the data gathered.

4.0 Results and Discussions

Table 1 presents the results of the mimetic analyses of the five folk songs of Southern Leyte selected for the study. Each folk song embodies a social reality: *U, Putli nga Bulak*” (Oh, Flower Chaste) - infidelity, *“Batasan nga Bag-u”* (New Custom) - biases for men, *“Panimalay”* (Household) - family solidarity, *“Bulak nga Lasangnun”* (Forest Flower) - narcissism, *“Ang Nasud Tang Pilipinas”* (Our Country, Philippines) - patriotism.

“U Putli nga Bulak” (Oh, Flower Chaste)

Social realities vary from good to worst if one engages in a romantic relationship. At certain points, it results in *infidelity* as projected in *“U, Putli nga Bulak”* (Oh, Flower Chaste). The folk song reflects Jeremiah’s (2013) view that so many individuals and families have lamented the agony they go through daily as a result of divorce and broken relationships. Moreover, divorce and broken relationships have had adverse effects on society.

Lovers enjoy a certain degree of **togetherness** in places where they get to enjoy, share, and uphold what it takes to be personally connected with one’s *kapwa* (fellow human being). Some men go through certain lavishness in adoring their ladylove. This high regard for women is still practiced until the present times. There are situations in the society when a man does heroic measures to provide everything for the woman he loves:

Sa atung kagahapun
(In our past)
Gimahal ku ikaw giludhan, ay
(I loved you, adored you, ay).

However, the ways of the society are not always in accordance to what one prefers them to be. Just like in business and other enterprise, there is some kind of a **competition** in love. This competition transforms one’s way of **individualism** and produces positive or negative results. In this folk song, it resulted in a **broken relationship**:

Tapus na ang kalipay
(Happiness has ended)
Ang imu kanakung pagbiya,
(You have left me)
Ginabiyaan, ginabiyaan mu man aku.
(Deserted, deserted me already).

The “American Dream” was introduced to the Philippines during the American colonization. At that time, Filipinos were taught that they could succeed if they attained a degree of higher education. This dream brought the values of individualism and competition. The Filipinos were taught (either directly or indirectly) that to succeed they needed to become self-sufficient and independent from their families. Likewise, they were taught that to succeed, they needed to compete with others. This attribute is not fundamentally Filipino (Nadal, 2009, pp. 53-54):

Gipapas mu aku
(You obliterated me)
Sa imung kasingkasing,
(From your heart,)
Kay nagpakadani ka na man
(For you are won)
Sa laing palad
(To another fortune).

In some ways, these American values have influenced the Filipino social communities and have affected the ways people think, behave, and make decisions. Specifically, in matters of infidelity, many factors are involved. There had been varied cases about it since early times. However, one’s personal conviction on infidelity plays a great role regardless of time and influences. Illustrado Life (2010) agrees to this by emphasizing that a

person’s intentions and attitude, fundamental values, outlooks about sex, sense of entitlement driven by his or her upbringing are the root causes of infidelity.

“After the devastating disclosure of *infidelity*, intense emotions and recurrent crisis are the norms” (Glass, 1998). In worst cases, some people make nasty and unworthy decisions and end up miserable and hopeless. This holds true with the man in *U, Putli nga Bulak (Oh, Flower Chaste)*. His very desolate state incites him to surrender everything to God. This folk song depicts a social characteristic of surrendering things to the care of the Bathala (God) when options and alternatives have been tried to no avail. This is related to one’s spiritual wellness:

Si Bathala ra kanatung maghusay
(Only God will settle us).

Carr and Steele (2012, p.83) point out that to resort to *Bathala* (God) identifies the *bahala na* attitude (fatalism) of some Filipinos. **Fatalism** is anchored on the perspective that events are predetermined. Moreover it specifies that human beings are unable to change their outcomes. This has something to do with one’s faith in God. The believers tend to

believe that God has control over every detail of life. Nonreligious fatalism may be expressed in the belief that things happen by chance or luck.

From the explanation of Carr and Steele (2012), it can be inferred that the man in “*U, Putli nga Bulak*” (Oh, Flower Chaste) is a believer in God. He relies on God’s power to settle things between him and the woman who jilted him.

“*Batasan ng Bag-u*” (New Custom)

“Modesty is essential to the behavior of Filipino women, especially in the provinces” (“Culture and Etiquette,” 2014). However, “*Batasan nga Bagu*” (New Custom) presents a social reality about a “new” custom happening even in the rural areas. This custom is the *bias treatment for men*.

In “*Batasan nga Bagu*” (New Custom), a woman’s new custom is shown through her deportment between a man who is poor and a man who has an admirable physique:

Aku ang naniid sa batasan nga bag-u
(The new custom I’m observing)
Ang dalaga muyam-id sa kabus nga ulitawu,
(A lady will spurn a new bachelor)
Labun ug makalantaw sa lalaking gwapu
(Yet when she sees a handsome fellow,)
Sa bintana mudung-aw, mupahiyum siya ‘g mutan-aw,
(She looks down, smiles, and glances from the window).

The woman favors the man who is good-looking. As such, the degree of **hospitality** extended to both men differs. The poor man is treated with contempt while utter geniality is shown to the handsome fellow:

Ang kabus kun mamisita likaylikayan lang intawun,
(The poor when visiting is pitifully avoided)
Ug dili makig-istorya kay kulang sa paghigugma.
(Is not talked to for lack of love.)
Labun ug makalantaw sa lalaking gwapu,
(Yet when she sees a handsome fellow,)
Sa bintana mudung-aw, mupahiyum siya ‘g mutan-aw,
(She looks down, smiles, and glances from the window,)
Dayun iyang pasudlun, sa hagdanan pagatabuun,
(Then she invites him in; on the stairway she meets him,)
Hatagan sa lingkuranan, sa sigarilyu pagadalitan.
(Gives him a seat, and offers cigarette).

A woman has her own reasons in the way she reacts to men. Somehow, her show of character is a result of some factors. “**Scientists find that most people, most of the time, are biased in favor of the good-looking.** Today, scientists have come to a fuller understanding of just how, where, when, and why physical appearance is important. They discover that most people choose those who are attractive” (Weiner and Craighead, 2010). However, in “*Batasan nga Bag-u*” (New Custom), there is an

imbalanced pairing of the two men. One is poor and the other is handsome; not a parallel match.

In an experiment, social psychologists selected college students who were made to make some impressions of the appearance of men and women in a yearbook. The respondents assumed that handsome men and women had nearly all the virtues. To them, those who look good are more sociable, outgoing, poised, interesting, exciting, sexually responsive, nurturing, warm, modest, strong, and sensitive than their homely peers. Moreover, the respondents expect them to have happier and more fulfilling lives (Weiner and Craighead, 2010). **“Batasan nga Bag-u” (New Custom)** exemplifies this revelation.

Marananzan (1987, p. 8) accounts that “research on the status of the indigenous Filipino women before the Spanish colonization reveals that they enjoy a high status in the society.” After the coming of the Spaniards, the “new” Filipina (or female Indio) had new dimensions. This includes “being her father’s meek daughter and her husband’s faithful subject” (Maranan, 1987 p.10). From the research insights shared by Weiner and Craighead (2010) and by Marananzan (1987), it can be inferred that the attitude of the

woman towards the men featured in **“Batasan nga Bag-u” (New Custom)** accentuates an inner desire to be in a certain level of the society. This is the reason why she shows congeniality towards the handsome man. The pre-Spanish colonization practice must have been carried in the hearts and minds of Filipino women as manifested by the character of the woman in the folk song. However, Flores (2011) reveals a Social Weather Stations survey emphasizing that 51% of the Filipino would not mind marrying a rich but ugly man. This information is different from the research findings of Weiner and Craighead (2010).

“Panimalay” (Household)

The folk song **“Panimalay” (Household)** echoes **family solidarity** and features the young pride of children for being a part of a happy family. Many children are overcome with joy when talking about their parents, their siblings, and their usual activities at home. Southern Leyte families still uphold **close family ties, togetherness, commitment** and **pakikisama** (social acceptance). These Filipino social values are not only practiced by the Southern Leyte families but by other Filipino families as well:

Usa kami ka pamilya
(We are one household)
Malipayun kami kanunay
(Happy are we always)
Kaming mga anak
(We the children)
Nagtinabangay kanunay
(Help one another always).

Si Tatay ang punuan sa sanga,
(Tatay is the trunk of the branch,)
Si Nanay ang dahon sa sanga,
(Nanay is the leaf of the branch,)
Kaming mga anak mauy bunga
(We the children are the fruits)
Sa paghigugma
(Of love).

Every Filipino is propelled by the favorable merit of *familism*. He takes every effort to provide his kin of their daily needs even if he undergoes some difficulties (Andres, 1998). “*Pamilya*” (**Household**) echoes Dizard and Gadlin’s (as cited in Connor, 2007, p. 58) definition of *familism* as a shared sense of obligation. It is where cooperation is shared. At the same time, the bonds of the family members define intimacy. These bonds represent the more or less acknowledgment of both materials and emotional dependency and obligation. They put legitimate claims on one’s own material and emotional resources and establish a set of loving obligations that entitles members of the family to expect warmth and support from fellow family members. Familism embraces solicitude, unconditional love, personal loyalty, and willingness to sacrifice for others:

The family featured in “*Pamilya*” (**Household**) bears the same characteristics of the family in the rural areas in the early times. Ordoñez et al. (1997) elucidates that the typical PreSpanish Filipino family is similar to those in the present times. Emphasis is on the respect shown by children to their parents.

With the recent developments in the Philippines, the Filipino family continues to uphold the positive social values instilled through times. Even if there are foreign influences in living conditions and relationship status, some Filipino families still maintain the value of **close family ties as shown in** “*Pamilya*” (**Household**).

During the early times, historical facts prove that a strong relationship

qualms in being straightforward and resorts to the social value of **open**

were protected and held in high esteem. **thoughts are purely in admiration of herself:**

This view is illustrated in everything that revolves in the Filipino

family. **Togetherness, pakikisama** (social acceptance), and **commitment** take several forms to achieve specific goals of the family members (Perdon, 2010,

p.17) just like the **helping**

of the chores

specified

among the inhabitants in **“Panimalay” (Household).**

However, some Filipinos have complained about the contrary effects of close family ties. There are those who follow modern influences of family relationships. Nevertheless, the rural family featured in **“Panimalay” (Household)** is an example of what Mead (2011) believes that even if there are a lot of proposals for modifications, the family of father, mother, and children is still a unit through which human societies depend upon.

“Bulak nga Lasangnun” (Forest Flower)

The woman in **“Bulak nga Lasangnun” (Forest Flower)** who prides herself of being a forest flower projects **narcissism**. She has no

communication as she discloses who she really

is. **Her**

Aku ang bulak nga lasangnun

(I am a forest flower)

Anak sa yuta nga tabumun

(Child of the land of the brown)

Lahi sa mga lungsuranun

(Unlike the folks downtown)

Kay bisan sa kahayag sa adlaw manggiulawun

(For even with the sun's rays I'm shy)

Ang kahimiang kung kabus nga walay sama

(My poor state which is without compare)

Nga nagatagu sa landing sa kamingaw,

(That hides in the shades of loneliness)

Ang akung kadunganan

(My honor)

Kanunay'ng giamuma,

(Is always cared for).

DuBrin (2012) defines narcissism suggesting its positive and negative qualities. The narcissism that the woman portrays in this folk song exemplifies DuBrin's (2012, p.4) definition of narcissism on “self-love and egotism, and excessive love or admiration of oneself”. There are several reasons why the woman in

“Bulak nga Lasangnun” (Forest Flower) has narcissistic attributes. Some psychologists explicate that “narcissism, as well as other personality differences, can result from gender-related expectations and stereotypes that have become deep-rooted over time” (Logarta, 2015). It implies that some local and foreign influences and the woman’s conviction of herself formed the narcissistic nature of the one featured in this folk song.

In **“Bulak nga Lasangnun” (Forest Flower)** the woman might have acknowledged being shy and lonely but she **demands an untainted feeling from someone who might get interested in her**. This feeling relates to what Evans (2014) discovers in his group research on narcissistic personalities. For Evan’s (2014, p.34) group, it seems apparent that “narcissism and commitmentphobia are often closely linked”:

Aku ang bulak kun daw ugaling pagahalaran man
(I am a flower who if courted)
Ang tim-us mung pagbati
(Your feeling untainted)
Mau day gikinahanglan,
(Is all that is needed
Sa takna unya nga imung limbungan,
(Comes the time when by you deceived,)
Sama da sa yutang inahan gipasipad-an.
(It would be like the motherhood abused).

Although the woman in this folk song conveys aspects of narcissism,

she conveys her thoughts and feelings with a certain degree of *delicadeza* (finesse). Likewise, even being narcissistic, she gets into a little touch of *marianismo* (female **submissiveness**). This is shown when she expresses resigned acceptance that she is like a betrayed country when she is deceived.

“Ang Nasud Tang Pilipinas” (Our Country, Philippines)

With self-esteem, the speaker in **“Ang Nasud Tang Pilipinas” (Our Country, Philippines)** expresses his/her *patriotism* for his/her country, the Philippines:

Ang nasud tang Pilipinas
(Our country, the Philippines)
Yuta ka sa bulak matahum
(Land of beautiful flowers)
U kung sa gugmang putling hinalaran
(Oh, it is with love adored)
Wa’y katapusang pagmahal.
(Never ending love).

Many people pursue **freedom in all its forms**. A very **communal desire** for freedom is the need to be free from slavery and tyranny as marked in **“Ang Nasud Tang Pilipinas” (Our Country, Philippines)**:

Ang langgam sa halwang bulawan
(The bird inside the golden cage)
Buut mulupad sa kahanginan
(Wants to fly in the air)
Nasud bay dili maghilak
(Will a country not cry)
Kun ang kagawasan ihikaw?
(If freedom is denied?).

The Filipinos' desires to attain freedom, their maximum contribution to have it, and their dedication to uphold it have added color to the Philippines' history. On top of that is the Filipinos' strong sense of **patriotism**. Social events that promote patriotism and intensify one's **commitment to freedom** had happened and will continue to happen in the Philippines.

Every twelfth of June, the Philippines celebrates that day in 1898 when its independence was proclaimed by Emilio Aguinaldo in Cavite. It was a drive for freedom – freedom from dictatorship and persecution. It was a call for independence and nobility. It terminates the country's claim for liberty that was wholeheartedly fought by Rizal; Mabini; Gomez, Burgos, and Zamora; del Pilar; Tandang Sora and the other Patriots (De la Cruz, 1999). Likewise, Southern Leyteños are aware of how Gen. Ruperto K. Kangleon helped fought for freedom for the Philippines. He was a Southern Leyteño who was the secretary of

National Defense. He was a senator in the Third Congress of the Republic of the Philippines. As the leader of the guerrilla forces in Leyte, he made an alliance with General Douglas MacArthur when the latter decided to return to the Philippines (“Ruperto K. Kangleon,” 2013).

“*Ang Nasud Tang Pilipinas*” (Our Country, Philippines) supports *patriotism* that echoes in the hearts and minds of not only Southern Leyteños but also of Filipinos who uphold freedom for the Philippines.

5.0 Conclusion

The mimetic discourse analysis proved that the selected folk songs of Southern Leyte embody social realities.

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