The Social Life of the Itawes as Reflected in the Major themes of their Literature

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Abstract

The study collected and translated to the suitable English language the existing folk literature of the Itawes particularly those from the municipalities of Penablanca, Tuao, Enrile and Iguig. The values and qualities found in each literary material were determined. Specially, textual analysis of each proverb, riddle, folktale and poem were traced. This study made use the descriptive research design using the qualitative technique to determine the different literary types of the Itawes and how they reflect their way of life. The studies found that folk literature reflect the social life of the Itawes. They are instrumental in the formation of their moral and social values, sense of industry, sense of humility, family customs and traditions and beliefs and practices. In the educational sector, the Itawes folk literature provides as a basis for educational planners in enriching the school's prospectus through the integration of Cagayan folk literature especially those which are unrecorded. From the various literary types, the Itawes is not distinctly different from the rest of his countrymen. He is very Filipino in his social life. As a Christian, he regards life as a God-given gift and strongly believes in the power of prayer. As a neighbor, he is truthful, compassionate, considerate, and sociable. As a son or daughter, he is obedient, respectful, disciplined and honest.

Keywords: Social Life, Itawes, Literature.

Introduction

To appreciate a people, one must be able to understand his way of life. By knowing the way of life of the greater number of people in Cagayan, leaders, students and the townspeople themselves will be able to realize that despite the presence of diverse culture, there will still be unity because they are Filipino who has common sentiments and aspirations.

Literature plays an important role in the life of people. It is considered an art. It is a bridge of understanding that brings people closer together. Educators claim that literature is a mine through which people express their inner quality and strength of culture and which arouse faith among people and create lasting friendship and goodwill.

On the other hand, folk literature has everything about human being himself and his existence. It is a manifestation of the culture of a group of people, a popular and traditional culture that changes in the course of a group's history. It changes by the group remains strongly attached because it is the source of its community life.

On the other hand, the recording and writing down of oral and written literature is of great help in the history of the people. The most important is the fact that literature is a reproduction of life executed...
in an artistic pattern. It is through literature where in line with the preservation of Filipino culture for ethnic identity, this study was conducted not only to put in shape the literary pieces of the Itawes that are about to be lost but also to provide teaching more effective through understanding of one’s literature.

There have been studies and researches made on folklore in different provinces in the country. In the province, recording of folklore has yet to be given priority since the collection is still very limited. Apparently, this study takes concern of documenting reading materials of the Itawes folklore to provide students as well as teachers background on their way of life.

In the Itawes community, particularly Iguig and Penablanca, it is imperative that folk literature should be recorded before it shall be forgotten and affected by cultural diffusion and intermarriages with other tribes. Hence, it is important that collection of the folk literature shall be made in order that this folk literature can be used by the teachers as their instructional materials.

The results of the study could contribute to the enrichment of regional and national culture. With the fast development in the society, it is very important to look into cultural practices of the people to their needs and not hindrances to their development as a people.

Likewise, to make educational structure reactive to the needs of a vibrant and rapidly changing Filipino society for the promotion of patriotism, harmony, and cultural folk literature is a basic element of human culture. Thus, it reflects the human spirit. Educators should acquire a basic knowledge of the people’s folk literature, folkways and practices, beliefs, customs and traditions. The insights gathered in this study will serve as groundwork for educational planners to be serious in including folk literature in the instructional program.

Through folk literature such as poems, riddles, folksongs, folktales, and proverbs, when properly collected, analyzed and synthesized, the traditions, customs, beliefs and practices of the Itawes will be treasured as they are being handed down from one generation to another.

The study of the way of life of the Itawes is believed to be springboard for future studies about other ethnic groups so that Filipino culture will be developed and preserved.

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**Statement of the Problem**

This study gathered and recorded various literary types of the Itawes and how the major themes of these pieces reflects the customs, beliefs, traditions, values, attitudes and practices of the Itawes. Specifically, it answered him following questions:

- What are the various representative literary types of the Itawes?
- What are the major themes of these literary?
- What are the implications of Itawes folk literature collection to educational development?

**Scope and Delimitation**

This study was limited to Itawes literature with emphasis on the collection and translation of different literary types. The collection delved mostly on actual interviews through oral and written forms. Each literary type is limited to the translation from Itawes to English. However, the nursery rhymes were not translated into English because its meaning and form are distorted.

The study was concerned with how the themes of various literary types reflect the customs, beliefs, traditions, values, adolescence, marriage, pregnancy, giving birth and death. On the other hand, this study looked into major themes of various literary types that reflect the customs, beliefs, traditions, values, attitudes and practices of the Itawes.
Review of Related Literature and Studies

This chapter presents citations and excerpts taken from literature and studies that helped develop the framework of the study.

Local Literature

Different scholars specially the literature lovers have enlightened various people without their writings regarding folklore. In the following paragraphs, the various thoughts on folk literature are reviewed. These insights have directed and inspired the researchers in the conceptualization of this study.

It is very apparent that the people learn to respond to their different persuasion and achievements through various types of literary works. Literature comes in any forms. Thus, it affects people in various ways. It also depicts the way of life, the work, the achievements, the hopes, and the frustration of the people.

Folk literature is the oral and written literature of a group that is handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Generally, folk literature consists of riddles, proverbs, sayings, songs, myths, legends and tales.

This was substantiated in the study of the way of life of the Gaddangs as reflected in their literature which is a study conducted by Lora [1] wherein she pictured that the Gaddang a as typical Filipino in his total way of life. She collected, translated and analyzed five representative literary types of he Gaddangs- proverbs, riddles, poems, songs, and epic. Some of which are unrecorded and that these literary types reflect the values, attitudes, customs, and traditions that contribute to the typical picture of the Gaddangs.

On the other hand, Asis [2] stressed that Maranao proverbs are full of archaism in language that contributes to the appreciation of the folks. She even stressed that Maranao proverbs must be spoken and heard and understood in their original form in order to be fully appreciated.

Furthermore, the study of Lora proved that the Gaddangs have rich collection of literary types. According to her, these literary types serve to preserve and transmit the Gaddang customs and traditions. In addition, her study provides further evidence to support the role of the literature as a preserver and that the Gaddang despite his belonging to an ethnic minority group is still a typical Filipino is his way of life.

She recommended the following points in order to strengthen the collection of the folk literature of the indigenous people:

- That more studies should be encouraged to preserve the Itawes’ culture, custom and traditions.
- That the Itawes literature be made a part of the Philippines literature for reading of Filipino students to transmit and preserve customs and traditions.

Some aspects of Apayao folk literature in the district of Kabugao, Kalinga Apayao. She concluded that the Isnegs have rich culture that needs to be preserved. These literary types are full of moral lessons. Thus, she recommended that these have to be preserved as part of our national heritage.

Dorson [3] emphasized in his book, Folklore and Folk Life; An Introduction 1 that proverbs serve to settle legal decisions, riddles sharpen wits, myths validate conduct, folksongs release pent-up emotions. He explained further that a tale is not dedicated text, but a living reaction delivered to a responsive audience for such cultural purposes as reinforcement of custom and taboo, release of aggression through fantasy, pedagogical explanation of the natural world and application of pressures for conventional behavior.

The culture of Ibanag emphasized that there is a need for education as an ingredient for cultural preservation and continuity. She even stressed that the culture of he people is a basis for educational planners in laying attainable objectives of education. She also pointed out that there is a need of the people's folk literature to be integrated in the schools curricula to serve as a tool in enriching the teaching and learning content in Literature of the Philippines, as a subject in the undergraduate course.
Research Design
This study made use the descriptive research design using the qualitative technique to determine the different literary types of tee Itawes and how they reflect their way of life. For the study to be carried out, the researcher along with his assistants, observed and jotted down the various types and took notes of their customs, traditions, and beliefs through interviews. The qualitative descriptive research design was used since this study involves collection of literary from the respondents, classification of materials according to literary types and identification of virtues learned from each literary type.

Locale of the Study
The knowledge folk specially ten elders from the towns- Iguig and Penablanca comprise the population of the study. Iguig and Penablanca, both Itawes speaking towns, were selected because they have almost the same Itawes terms.

Penablanca is nine kilometers from Tuguegarao City, the capital town of the province. It became a town on November 27, 1896 by virtue of a decree of a Spanish Royalty King. It is bounded on the North by the municipality of Baggao, on the East by the Pacific Coast, on the South by the province of Isabela and on the West by the municipalities of Tuguegarao, Iguig and Amulung. At present, it has 24 official barrios, a land area of 118,060 hectares and total population of more than 35,000.

Iguig is seven kilometers from Tuguegarao City, the capital town of the province. It became a town on 1607 by virtue of a decree of a Spanish Royalty King. It is bounded on the North by the municipality of Amulung, on the East by the municipality of Penablanca, on the South by Tuguegarao City and the West by the municipality of Solana.

Respondents and Sampling Procedure
The respondents of the study were the Itawes living in the municipalities of Penablanca and Iguig, Cagayan. The informants were those who are knowledgeable in writing but could not recite literary pieces were included as respondents.

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Respondents from the two municipalities showed importance in sharing their expertise and in giving their folk literature right from their shelves and minds through word of mouth. The proverbs commonly called “Onon” were recited by the elders during some occasions. The riddles were commonly recited by mothers as brain twisters while the mother taught her child the basic skills. The parodies, on the hand, were commonly recited by the farmers and children during their leisure time. The songs were sung during occasions as a sort of entertainment.

Research Instrument
The researcher conducted both structured and unstructured interview as instruments to substantiate more the details given by the folks. Interview was used as one of the means in gathering data because of the unavailability of some printed materials on Itawes literature, customs, traditions, beliefs and practices. In addition, the researcher used structured observation by attending occasions like wedding, christening, burial and interment,, giving birth and during courtship period to observe the common practices, customs and traditions.

Data Gathering Procedure
The researcher used the fieldwork approach in gathering the data for the study. The researcher made an in depth observation and interview and took down notes while the literary pieces were dictated or recited by the folk. Likewise, the thematic approach as a method of studying literature according to subject matter and theme was also used.

A request for the conduct of the study was written to the municipal mayors of Iguig and Penablanca. Through this, the municipal mayors helped the researcher by referring
him to the barangay captains to identify the possible respondents. The barangay captains approval gave the researcher the signal conduct the study. The listings of key informants were provided in Appendix F.

The researcher requested and oriented the Itawes for the conduct of the interview. This was done as the respondents would present during the first visitation of the researcher. The researcher conducted an unstructured interview to the respondents and took down notes while the respondents recited various literary types. These were recorded through a tape recorder to complete the data needed in this study. On the other hand, structured interview was given to the respondents to give them time to recite the literary pieces.

The researcher classified the materials according to literary types and translated from Itawes to English language. In the process of translation of the materials, the researcher asked the help of some of his co-teachers to assist him in the translation. Textual analysis was used to reveal the customs and traditions, attitudes and beliefs, practices, and values reflected in these literary types. The virtues that were learned from the proverbs were identified and the answers for the riddles were given. After the researcher gathered all the materials, he classified them according to its type, occasion when used, setting, and plot. Then he determined the recurrent and predominant themes of these various literary types and classified also those that need to be preserved and to be discarded.

**Summary**

Folk literature reflects the human spirit and considered as a basis element of human culture. Thus, educators should acquire a basic knowledge of the people’s folk literature, folkways and practices, beliefs, customs and traditions. It is in this view that this study was ventured on to investigate the “The Social Life of the Itawes as Reflected in the Major Themes of Their Literature”.

The various literary types of the Itawes are proverbs, riddles, poems and folksongs. Having collected and translated to the English language, the themes were also drawn. The Itawes proverbs are distilled wisdom of people express in the brief but fitting expression. These proverbs reveal great value and serve as guidelines for acceptable social behavior. The Itawes proverbs are replica of inspiring statements. They serve as rules of moral and prudent conduct intended to teach the young. These proverbs are maximized in the teaching the young people desirable attitudes and values that they should possess.

The predominant themes reflected in the Itawes proverbs are industry, humility, patience, perseverance, endurance, self-confidence and cheerfulness, abhorrence to boastfulness, respect for others, friendliness and unselfishness.

The Itawesriddles play significant role in the life of the Itawes. They usually call this as “Palavvan or Pakatta” These are used to break boredom of daily routine, serve as intellectual twisters to entertain the young and the old as well. Riddles are description of objects to suggest something different, or a question stated so as to exercise one’s ingenuity in answering or discovering its meaning.

The predominant themes reflected in the Itawes riddles are faith to the Divine Providence and sense of unity. They usually appear in verse forms and are replete with moral values that serve as guide for the people.

The Itawespoems are used by the Itawes to express their sentiments and feelings. There are no written records of these poems. The respondents recalled them from memory.

The Itawesfolksongs are expressions of the deepest feeling of an individual. The songs are written in Itawes and are sung by the folk to help them to release their worries, to express their love, frustrations, ill feelings and hostilities towards others. The predominant themes of the Itawes folksongs are faith to the Divine Providence and high regard to women.

The recurrent themes of the different literary types of the Itawes are industry, humility, patience, perseverance, endurance,
honesty, abhorrence to idleness, respect to parents, high regard to the Divine Providence and cleanliness.

At present, it is very imperative to collect and compile the different literary types of the Itawes. Thus, in the education sector, folk literature collected works provides as a basis for educational planners in enriching the schools prospectus through the integration of Cagayan folk literature especially those which are unrecorded in the courses such as Humanities, ethics, Physical Education, Social Sciences, Sociology, Filipino, and other subjects in the elementary and secondary, tertiary and even graduate levels.

At present, there is really a need to conduct further studies on folk literature collection to preserve the bits of culture of the different ethnic group like the Itawes. It is likewise necessary to include these literary types in the curriculum for readings of Filipino students so as to preserve and transmits the values and practices, customs and traditions, attitudes and beliefs embodied in these literary types.

Folk literature collection is also a bridge for the adaptation of the different literary types and the realization and admiration for the creativity and ingenuity of the forefathers of the populace and to build up the cultural pride and identity of the Cagayanos. It will also orient the Filipinos with the literary types of the Itawes and this would provide them avenues to rediscover the glorious past of the Itawes and other ethnic groups.

Furthermore, folk literature collection enriches the teaching-learning content of Literature of the Philippines. Hence, the folk literature instills in the youth the necessity of preserving their most valuable customs and traditions that transform their virtues, beliefs and practices towards a better and meaningful living.

**Implications of Folk Itawes Literature Collection to Educational Development**

One of the mandates of Republic Act (RA) No. 7722, otherwise known as the “Higher Education Act of 1994,” adopted and promulgated by the Commission of Higher Education is the offering of a six-unit Literature subjects among all private and public colleges and universities. These six units’ literature subjects are Literature of the Philippines and Literature of the World which are covered under the General Education Curriculum. Literature 1 covers the “Literature of the Philippines” focuses on the literature of all the regions of the Philippines, whether written in native or foreign languages from the beginning of the Philippine history to the present.

Thus in the education sector, folk literature collected works provides as a basis for educational planners in enriching the schools prospectus through the integration of Cagayan folk literature especially those which are unrecorded in the courses such as Humanities, Ethics, Physical Education, Social Sciences, Sociology, Filipino, and other subjects in the elementary and secondary, tertiary and even graduate levels.

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Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

The study found very rich cultural values in the folk literature of the Itawes. The four literary types such as proverbs, riddles, poems and songs reflect the social life of the Itawes. These literary types very instrumental in the formation of the moral and social values, sense of humility, industry, family customs and traditions, and beliefs and practices of the Itawes.

The Itawes recognizes brotherhood, faith understanding, and perseverance, treasure their unique practices, characteristics and the right attitudes in dealing with other people through his literature.

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