Structural and Functional Analysis of *Bansag* Narratives in Barangay Maslog, Legazpi City, Albay Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This paper collected, transcribed, translated, and analyzed the folk narratives on bansag in Barangay Maslog, Legazpi City. It employed the Labovian method to examine the narratives' structures and Bascom's functionalism approach to determine the functions of the narratives. This paper concludes that the narrator's storytelling technique greatly affects the structural pattern of the folk narratives. The completeness or incompleteness of the structure of the narratives will never diminish the essential nature and functions of folk narratives. Folk narratives through the passing of time will always be an important oral tradition. They still served their purpose in the community. However, folk narratives as a form of oral literature are under threat since many details of the narratives diminished or were lost through oral transmission from generation to generation. Since oral narratives are on the verge of extinction, this paper recommends to incorporate these narratives in the curriculum to safeguard and preserve the oral narratives.

Keywords: *culture, functional analysis, oral narratives, structural analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Culture refers to the values and beliefs shared by a specific group of people. It is a complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Culture influences how people learn and behave in a certain society (Tylor, 1984).

Every society has its belief system, cultural practices, and folklore that reflect people's culture. Folklore is considered as old as history, and it has many things to offer. Folklore had been part of the lives of our ancestors. Our old folks perpetuated their own popular beliefs and practices discernible in the folklore. Folklore is a general term for any culture's verbal, spiritual, and material aspects transmitted orally, by observation, or by imitation. People sharing culture may have commonalities in occupation, language, ethnicity, or geographical location. The said traditional materials are preserved and passed on from generation to generation, with some variations shaped by memory (Eslit, 2017). Folklore ensures the longevity and immortality of

cultural heritage (Velez, 2021). There is a need to appreciate and understand people's unique beliefs and practices to accept other people's cultural differences.

Jocano (1969) believed that society produced its literature because it preserves its legacy and gives shape and meaning to its values and aspirations through this medium. Oral and written literature representing people's lifestyles fosters knowledge and understanding among members of any particular culture. It helps civilization to document and save its priceless legacy for consideration, research, and advancement in the future.

Studying the existing oral tradition of *bansag* in Barangay Maslog, Legazpi City, was a worthy undertaking for people to appreciate the oral traditions that existed up to this time. The advent of modernization made people less interested in beliefs and traditions but the culture and indigenous practice of giving *bansag* continued to thrive despite the passing of time. Through this study, the education curriculum committee may be guided in updating the instructional materials being used by harnessing the local literature. They may include stories that adhere to localization and indigenization so that the students of today will value the literary pieces in the locality and not just those written by other Filipinos and foreign writers. This is also a way of developing a sense of nationalism among the younger generation.

Meanwhile, in Philippine society, certain beliefs and oral traditions exist. One of the many Filipino oral

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traditions includes giving *bansag* or moniker to a person. It is from this context that Philippine literature has produced fictional characters such as "Juan Tamad", "Juan Osong", and "Pedro Penduko" among others. These names were coined because of these characters' characteristics and traits which became their *bansag* or moniker.

In the Bicol region, an oral tradition existed locally known as *bansag* which was given to a specific person or clan. The said tradition was a common practice in one of the barangays in Legazpi City which is Barangay Maslog. These traditions had become helpful when looking for a specific person by just mentioning the *bansag*. Barangay Maslog is located at the western rim of the Albay Gulf, a few kilometers south of Legazpi Port. It was said to be triangular. This community could be reached by land and by sea.

Barangay Maslog as a community had a population of 4,350 and a land area of approximately 667 hectares. It is composed of 10 *puroks* or *sitios* namely; Centro, Pangulo, Polique, Gumihan, East San Jose, West San Jose, West Pigbidayan, East Pigbidayan, Oraroy, and Macaradat. The people of Barangay Maslog, Legazpi City believed that there were significant meanings attached to their moniker and each *bansag* had an interesting origin that had been passed on to the next generation.

A culture's folklore plays a significant role in defining its values, attitudes, and beliefs. It is often shared between a group of people who have things in common, such as language, ethnicity, geography, age, or occupation. Folklore is a collaborative process that combines creation, communication, and performance. It is a significant means through which people can connect with and impart their cultural legacy to others. It is from this context that this research was conducted to collect and translate the narratives on *bansag* in Barangay Maslog, Legazpi City, and analyze their narratives' structures in terms of abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, and resolution and determine the function of the said narratives in the community.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative design of research. It is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data that seeks to interpret meaning from the available data to help understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places (Crossman, 2020).

The collection of the narratives on *bansag* from Barangay Maslog, Legazpi City employed community immersion through *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* of Enriquez (Marcelino & Pua, 2000). During the mapping or collection of the folk narratives, the *bansag* narratives were subjected to horizontal and vertical tests developed

by Arsenio Manuel, (1967) to validate their folkloricity and authenticity. The vertical test required three generations of narrators or storytellers who could narrate the narratives while the horizontal test required at least five adaptations of the narratives within the locale of the study.

Further, the narratives that passed either the vertical or horizontal test of Manuel (1967) were subjected to triangulation. This was the process of presenting the recorded data to the informants of the community for validation and further checking and reviewing. Focus-group discussion was also implemented during the validation. The narratives underwent structural analysis employing the methods of William Labov to examine the narratives' structures in terms of abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, and resolution and for the content analysis. Also, the study employed William Bascom's (1965) functional analysis to determine the function of the said narratives in the community.

Treatment of data

The collected narratives on *bansag* should have passed either or both of Manuel's vertical and horizontal tests and community validation to ensure their authenticity. Only those authentic folkloric materials underwent translation and analysis. The narratives collected from the vernacular were transcribed and translated into the English language as faithfully as possible to the text and content. A set of jurors who are native speakers of the Bicol dialect and proficient in the English language reviewed and ensured that the English translation was acceptable.

Moreover, it employed edited transcription as a method in narrative transcription in which the narratives were edited to increase readability. Likewise, grammar editing such as removing run-on sentences and summarizing some parts of the narratives was done to achieve clarity of the narratives (Baum,1977). During transcription, titles were also assigned for easy identification. After the translation, the collected narratives were subjected to Labovian structural analysis and Bascom's functional analysis.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher purposely looked for residents of Barangay Maslog, Legazpi City who are 50 years old and above and have resided in the community for a minimum of 15 years regardless of their sex, gender orientation, civil status, and position in the community (Imran, 2017). Thirty-three key informants were given the *bansag* or moniker and participated in this research.

Further, ethnography through community immersion employing the *Sikolohiyang Filipino* or Filipino Psychology (Marcelino & Pua, 2000) that includes "*pagtatanong-tanong*" (improvised, informal,

unstructured interview), "*pagdalaw-dalaw*" (visiting), "*pakikisama*" (getting along with), "*pakikiramdam*" (sensitivity) and "*pakikipagkwentuhan*" (informal conversation) was the primary method in data collection. The main source of primary data were 33 narratives on *bansag* obtained from key informants in Barangay Maslog, Legazpi City.

At the onset of data collection, ethical guidelines were observed. First, informed consent was asked from the key informants. The researcher asked permission from the participants to record and take some photos for documentation. Moreover, respect for the participants, local values, and language was also observed. The researcher maintained proper behavior at all times. During the narration, the researcher recorded the narratives through paper and pen and a video recording machine.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative Structure and Functions

After the validation of folkloricity and authenticity of folk narratives through community validation and vertical and horizontal tests of Arsenio Manuel (1976), each narrative was subjected to structural narrative analysis applying the narrative elements proposed by William Labov (1972). These narrative elements included abstract or summary, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda.

The abstract included a summary of the narrative. The orientation described the setting, time, place, characters, and situations. The complicating action is the section of the narrative informing the audience about what happened. Evaluation was part of the narrative that explained why the narrative was worth telling. The result or resolution contained the section informing the audience about how the action was resolved.

Findings revealed that all 33 collected narratives on "*bansag*" or monikers had the abstract, 27 narratives reflected evaluation, 25 narratives revealed complication and the resolution while 18 narratives described the orientation. These findings suggested the style of the narrator telling the story. The narrator would start the narration of the tales by giving a summary or abstract of the story. The narrator vividly remembered the main events of their experiences which is why all narrators or storytellers would give a summary of their experiences at the onset of the narratives. This idea was supported by Labov (1972) that narrative was recapitulating past experiences that matched the sequence of events that occurred. Table 1 shows the combinations of the structural elements of the narratives.

Further, 27 narratives revealed the evaluation of the narratives. Narrators would expound in this part the significance of their experience. Based on the findings,

Table 1. Structural patterns of the *bansag* narratives

Combination of Elements	Total
abstract-orientation-complicating action-evaluation and resolution	7
abstract-complicating action-evaluation and resolution	4
abstract-complicating action-resolution	4
abstract-orientation-complicating action-evaluation	3
abstract- orientation-evaluation and resolution	3
abstract -complicating action-evaluation and resolution	3
abstract-orientation-complicating action-resolution	2
abstract- complicating action-evaluation	2
abstract- orientation- evaluation	2
abstract-orientation- resolution	2
abstract-evaluation-resolution	1

the narrators would immediately proceed to explain the significance of the experience after giving a summary of their experience.

Moreover, 25 narratives explained the complication of their experience and in return, detailed how the narrators were able to solve the complication in the evaluation part of the narrative. This could mean that some narrators would elaborate on their experiences by presenting the conflicts or complications and explaining how they solved the complications.

Lastly, 18 narratives detailed the setting, the time, place characters, and situations. This could mean that there are storytellers who cannot remember the details of the narratives. This was because since folk narratives were transmitted orally, many details in terms of the time, place, and situation diminished through the oral transmission of the narratives.

Findings also revealed that among the 33 narratives collected from Barangay Maslog, Legazpi City, seven narratives were fully formed narratives that followed the abstract-orientation-complicating action-evaluation and resolution pattern, while four narratives followed the abstract-complicating action-evaluation and resolution pattern. In addition, four narratives followed the abstract-complicating action-resolution pattern, then three narratives followed the abstract-orientation-complicating action-evaluation pattern.

On the other hand, three narratives followed the abstract-orientation-evaluation and resolution pattern, while three narratives followed the abstract-complicating action-evaluation and resolution pattern, also two narratives followed the abstract-orientation-complicating action and resolution pattern. Similarly,

two narratives followed the abstract-orientation-resolution pattern, two narratives followed the abstract-complicating action-evaluation pattern, then two narratives followed the abstract-orientation-evaluation pattern and one narrative followed the abstract-evaluation-resolution pattern.

Based on the structural pattern, it was evident that seven narratives followed the abstract-orientation-complicating action-evaluation and resolution pattern. Four narratives followed the abstract-complicating action-evaluation and resolution pattern. Three narratives followed the abstract-orientation-complicating action-evaluation pattern these were the narratives. Three narratives followed the abstract-orientation-evaluation and resolution pattern.

Additionally, three narratives followed the abstract-complicating action-evaluation and resolution pattern. Two narratives followed the abstract-complicating action-evaluation pattern. Also, two narratives followed the abstract-orientation-evaluation patterns. Two narratives followed the abstract-orientation-resolution pattern Lastly, one narrative followed the narrative abstract-evaluation-resolution pattern. Based on the findings, only seven narratives contained the complete structure and had all the elements. On the other hand, 26 out of 33 narratives were not fully formed narratives which means one or more narrative structures were missing.

The findings implied that the majority of the collected narratives did not possess complete structure. This could be attributed to the narrator's manner of telling the story. Some narrators were careful in narrating all the information in the story while some only highlighted what they remembered. These findings have corroborated the findings of Imran (2017) stating that narrative structure was fully dependent upon the storyteller. The storytellers who were the carriers of the oral tradition were responsible for the transmission of the oral narratives to the next generation. However, this study suggested that the completeness or incompleteness of the structures of the folk narratives will never diminish the essential nature of folk narratives. Folk narratives over time will always be an important component of the oral literature of every community.

However, folk narratives such as the narratives on *bansag* may diminish in due time. Besmonte (2022) noted that the declining number and death of practitioners were seen as threats to preserving intangible heritage such as folk literature. Moreover, Imran (2017) believed that if many storytellers were forgetful, hurried, and careless, large parts of the oral records could be lost in generational transmission.

Functions of the Bansag Narratives

Based on the analysis of the collected data, the following were revealed:

As a Pedagogic Device. In the olden times, folk narratives have been used as pedagogic devices to convey significant lessons that helped people understand their environment. The collected narratives on *bansag* are used to teach children important life lessons, such as the importance of hard work which was evident in the narratives titled "*Kambing*" wherein the main characters were known to be industrious and hardworking as they work untiringly on the farm that they forgot their hygiene.

Similarly, some narratives can be used to reinforce cultural values such as the importance of hospitality which is evident in the narrative titled, "*Pasiguro*" which talks about a man who always wanted to secure food and things because he never wanted to go empty-handed. This narrative taught people to always save and ensure money and things for the future. Moreover, the narrative titled, "*Amatyur*" talks about a man who persevered in joining an amateur singing contest. This narrative taught the value of perseverance and self-confidence. Further, some narratives emphasized the importance of working together and helping one another as a family. This was evident in the narratives titled "*Kambing*" and "*Baranggot*" where the main characters worked together as one.

The findings implied that the collected narratives on *bansag* were used as a tool in conveying important lessons, values, and cultural beliefs since they were an integral part of a community's oral tradition.

Escape from Repression. Folk narratives as a form of oral literature could also serve as an avenue for enjoyment, entertainment, and a means of escape from the routine of everyday life. Many oral narratives featured magical creatures with supernatural powers that can transport readers to a different form of reality. Through these make-believe characters, readers can experience a sense of freedom from the ordinary aspects of their lives. Oral narratives dealt with themes of social inequality. Exploring this issue allowed the readers to become critical thinkers and determine the power struggle that existed in society. This was evident in the narrative titled "*Bulod*" wherein the grandfather loved climbing the hill and often narrated his adventures and experiences on the hill which made the people around him look forward to more of his adventures.

Similarly, oral narratives dealt with themes of social inequality. The narrative titled "*Udo*" revealed the scenario that due to poverty, the main character could not provide himself with a decent toilet so he would just take a bath and defecate in the river. Unfortunately, the feces floated were seen by the people who were near the

river. Though the narrative was quite funny because it could make the readers smile as they read the narrative, it also caused embarrassment on the part of the main character. This illustrates how the main character's social standing played a role in causing this unfortunate incident.

Lastly, the narrative titled "*Uraro*" reflected a reality that people as rational beings were not allowed to have their public display of affection so they would rather look for unfamiliar places to be able to release their suppressed emotions. This narrative provided comic relief to the readers, knowing that the person involved was seen making love in an arrowroot or *uraro* plantation.

Means of Applying Social Pressure. *Bansag* narratives could serve as a means of applying social pressure in several ways. These narratives could create social expectations and norms that individuals were expected to follow. The narrative titled, "*Piskal*" demonstrated how a family's reputation and social status were closely tied to their behavior and actions. With family members who were lawyers and court fiscals, the community had high expectations of them in terms of intelligence and assertiveness. Moreover, the family's affluent lifestyle had been noticed by the people around them. This means that they must be careful about their behavior and maintain a good image to match the level of their financial status. The family members were expected to live up to the standards set by society since the community expects them to be well-educated and well-mannered. Thus, the family members had to be careful about their actions and behavior to maintain their social status and reputation in the community.

Meanwhile, the narratives titled, "*Ambog*" and "*Dubla*" showed how negative reputations could lead to alienation and shame, putting pressure on the family members to exhibit appropriate behavior to refute the negative reputation. Further, the *bansag* narratives could also create a sense of shame or pride in individuals based on their family's reputation. For example, in the narrative titled, "*Ambog*" the family members were ashamed of their reputation for being boastful and narrating stories that were full of lies. Because of this, they would rather stay at home. This created pressure on them to prove that their reputation was not justified by exhibiting appropriate behavior, such as controlling their temper and avoiding arguments. Similarly, in the narrative "*Piskal*," the family members felt proud of their affluent lifestyle and high social status, creating pressure on them and trying to maintain their image in the community.

Based on the analysis, it could be inferred that the narratives could create social expectations and norms that individuals were expected to follow. In general, *bansag* narratives were used to socialize individuals into a particular cultural group by promoting shared values, norms, and beliefs. Through these narratives, individuals learned how to behave in various social situations and how to interact with others in the community.

Validating Culture

Culture pertains to the customs, traditions, and practices that are observed by the people in the community. The practice of *baransagan* or *bansag* (moniker) was reflected in all the collected narratives. The practice of *baransagan,* wherein a person, family, or clan was given monikers based on appearance and behavior, existed several years ago but still, it was being observed by the Albayanos, especially in Barangay Maslog, Legazpi City. All of the gathered narratives clearly showed how a person or clan earned the moniker. Monikers were formed based on the physical appearance or special skills, abilities, or peculiarities of people.

Culturally speaking, the use of monikers had both positive and negative connotations. These monikers could either be complimentary or derogatory, depending on the context and the person's perception of them. On the positive side, these monikers could be used as a form of identity or easy recognition within the community. They could also serve as a source of pride for individuals who had unique physical traits or special skills. In some cases, these monikers could even become a source of respect for the families they represent. On the negative side, these monikers could also be a form of discrimination especially if they were based on physical appearance. They could reinforce biases towards certain groups of people, leading to social exclusion. In addition, these monikers could be hurtful or offensive to the individual or clan who had the moniker, so the people in the community should be sensitive enough to call the person with the moniker.

Additionally, the practice of using *bansag* served as a guide for the members of a community on how to interact with individuals from different clans. This moniker anticipated a person's behavior towards others (Balin, 2017). In other words, it sets a precedent for how they should interact with people from different backgrounds.

Lastly, folk narratives provided an avenue for the transmission of values and validation of culture. They served as a tool for teaching children and young people about societal norms, expectations, and values. These narratives could help ensure that the younger generation will be raised with a strong sense of cultural identity and values, which they could adapt as they grow older. Furthermore, folklore served as a vessel for carrying the values, practices, beliefs, morals, behavioral codes, and other unique aspects of society across countless generations (Paderan, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the narrator's storytelling technique greatly affects the structural pattern of the folk narratives. The completeness or incompleteness of the structure of the narratives will never diminish the essential nature and functions of folk narratives. Folk narratives, over time, will always be an important oral tradition. They still served their purpose in the community. However, folk narratives as a form of oral literature are under threat since many details of the narratives diminished or were lost through oral transmission from generation to generation. Since oral narratives are on the verge of extinction, this paper recommends incorporating these narratives into the curriculum to safeguard and preserve oral narratives.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the data gathering, manuscript writing, and analysis. Also, all authors checked and approved the final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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