



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Folk Poems of Butuan: A Mirror for the Preservation of Peace

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Sep 28, 2024	<p>This study explores the cultural significance of peace as reflected in the folk poetry of Butuan, with a focus on nine selected poems written by Edel A. Amante. Using a descriptive methodology and content analysis, the research examines the themes of peace embedded in the poems, which mirror the experiences, history, and cultural identity of the Butuanon people. The analysis reveals that the poems emphasize unity, trust, cooperation, and the harmonious relationship between humans and nature as vital components of peace. Words and phrases from the poems encapsulate deep cultural values, such as hospitality, resilience, and inclusivity, which promote peace and social cohesion within the community. The study highlights the role of folk poetry in preserving Butuan's cultural heritage and inspiring the people to strive for peace amidst life's challenges. The insights gained from this research contribute to a broader understanding of peacebuilding initiatives rooted in local cultural expressions, offering valuable lessons for community engagement and cultural preservation.</p>
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### INTRODUCTION

*"Peace is a bird that sings in the meadows of our hearts. Its melody is a symphony that can heal all our scars." (Jones, 2019)*

Poetry is a form of literature commonly used to express emotions, thoughts, and social issues. In the context of a community, poetry serves as the voice of the people, allowing them to express their needs and give a voice to those who are otherwise unheard in society. Through songs, poems, and prose, writers express their love for their country and openness to social challenges. According to Villa (2010), a renowned Filipino poet, poetry can give a voice to the voiceless in society. He stated, "Poetry" is important because it provides a voice to those who are not given a voice in society. It highlights the importance of expressing the emotions, needs, and thoughts of the people."

In contemporary times, poetry continues to be a medium through which societal problems and issues are expressed, as well as the experiences, emotions, values, and sentiments of the community and its people. Through poetry, the unity of diverse cultures and the unique identity shaped by history are showcased. The folk poetry of Butuan is a significant example of the culture and traditions of the people of Butuan in the Philippines. This type of poetry is used to reflect their history, experiences, and life lessons. The creation of Butuan folk poetry demonstrates the preservation of peace and the unity and harmony of the community.

The folk poetry of Butuan is an important part of the culture and traditions of the people of Butuan. The researcher believes that this literature reflects the unity and solidarity of the Butuanon people

and helps maintain peace in the area. By valuing regional literature, the awareness of peace, identity, and history is expressed, thus it is timely to research the relationship between folk literature and peace, which can serve as a reference for systematic peace education.

In 2008, Executive Order 570 was issued, institutionalizing peace education in basic and teacher education. Therefore, teaching literature to children, such as poetry, should not be confined to traditional literary studies. It should go beyond the elements and forms of poetry, addressing its content in current discourse and extending to various humanities disciplines. Poetry serves as a comprehensive medium not only for its aesthetic qualities but also for its representation related to issues of peace, history, national reflection, and community behavior.

The challenge remains for both the government and academia to strengthen the campaign for a safe and peaceful society. This current research aims to contribute to the awareness of a culture of peace through poetry that embodies perspectives and discourse on this matter. The country, especially the youth, needs a safe and peaceful world, making this research a reality to provide information on how the culture of peace is promoted and strengthened through the folk poetry of Edel Amante.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The folk poetry of Butuan is an essential part of the culture and history of the Butuan people. It portrays their experiences, thoughts about life, events, and perspectives. In the present time, it is regarded as a reflection of peace amidst social unrest and problems. According to Lakambini A. Sitoy, the folk poetry of the Visayan people, demonstrates their appreciation of their culture and identity (2001). Through the creation of poetry, they express their views and experiences in their homes and society. It also reflects their struggle for equality and justice.

Danilo T. Maramba states that folk poetry illustrates the Visayan people's confidence in their abilities and excellence (2002). It inspires the Butuan people to remain resilient and pursue their dreams despite life's challenges.

Lourdes R. Montinola's study indicates that folk poetry allows for a deeper understanding of the history and culture (2012). It provides information and insights about their ancestors and their life experiences. Through this, folk poetry reveals the history of Butuan and significant events that occurred in the area.

To document and analyze Butuanon poetry that embodies peace by reflecting customs, emotions, and historical stages within the poetry, and to understand its embedded meanings, the following theories are utilized:

#### **New Historicism Theory**

This study employs the New Historicism theory. This theory is used to analyze literary works with significant events or happenings of a particular place at a specific time. New Historicism is a theoretical movement that aims to examine texts and other cultural works within the context of history, power, and society. This theory is appropriate for the current research as it uses poetry to extract the discourse of Butuan's history and society.

Key contributors and proponents of New Historicism include Stephen Greenblatt, Michel Foucault, and Louis Montrose. Stephen Greenblatt, a prominent professor, and literary critic is considered one of the leading founders of New Historicism. In his book "Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare" (1980), he introduced the concepts of self-fashioning and cultural poetics, emphasizing the relationship between literature, society, and power.

Michel Foucault, a French philosopher, and theorist significantly influenced the development of New Historicism. His concepts of power, discourse, and panoptic surveillance contribute to the analysis of cultural texts within the context of power and control. Louis Montrose, a professor of English and

Comparative Literature, is known for his studies and contributions to New Historicism. In works such as "Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture" (1989), he focuses on the study of Renaissance texts and the processes of power and social identity associated with them.

It's important to note that New Historicism is a collective movement of theorists and critics and not a single individual can be identified as its exclusive proponent. This theory is highly useful in understanding and analyzing the folk poetry of Butuan to uncover their history and develop explanations that illuminate the beliefs and principles held by the Butuanon people. It can be used to analyze the words, phrases, and stanzas of Butuan's folk poetry to express their content and connect it to their history and sentiments of peace. Firstly, terms used in poetry can be studied to see how they reflect the thoughts, emotions, and daily needs of the Butuan people throughout history. For example, if the poetry contains terms related to farming, fishing, or crafting, it may indicate the daily life and livelihood of the people in this area. Secondly, the historical and social context at the time the poetry was written can be emphasized. For example, if folk poetry was written during times of conflict or war, it may express the need for peace and unity. Thirdly, symbols and images used in the poetry can be examined to understand the thoughts and emotions of the Butuan people. For instance, if there are images of nature such as plants, trees, and animals, it may indicate the importance of nature and the people's relationship with it to meet their needs.

An example is the analysis of Jose Corazon de Jesus' poem "Sa Loob at Labas ng Bayan Kong Sawi" under the New Historicism theory. Critics place historical events in the Philippines to understand the meanings and strengths of the poem. According to Villegas (2018), by identifying the social and political contexts of the Spanish era in the Philippines, such as Spanish abuses and the Filipinos' struggle for freedom, readers can understand why the poem contains expressions of anger and resistance. New Historicism provides a critical perspective on works to see their relationship with history and the needs of the time they were written.

### **Humanism Theory**

Humanism theory is a philosophy that values human dignity and worth, requiring an understanding of the human condition and personality. In studying human culture and traditions, the concept of humanism is evident. According to Maslow (1970), humanism refers to the fulfillment of human needs and goals.

In analyzing the folk poetry of Butuan, it's essential to consider the humanism theory as it forms the basis for understanding the emotions, aspirations, and needs of the people in that area. By using this theory, which emphasizes the importance of human beings, their capacity, and their right to self-determination, the researcher aims to highlight the dignity, significance, and freedom of individuals. In the context of literature such as poetry and culture, humanism advances concepts like human dignity, individualism, reason, and rationality, raising awareness of everyone's importance and contribution to society.

In examining the folk poetry of Butuan, it is important to note that the significance of peace aligns with the concept of humanism. According to Carl Rogers (1961), humanism serves as the foundation for valuing each person and fostering openness in friendships. Peace is one of humanism's goals because it provides freedom for individuals to live happily and harmoniously, which is the primary focus of this research.

### **Philology Theory**

Philology theory is related to the study of language and culture, providing a deeper understanding of texts and literature such as the folk poetry of Butuan. Through the study of language, the context of the time it was written, the meanings of words and expressions, and how they reflect societal concepts and thoughts can be understood.

According to Dr. Andrew Ollett, a professor in the Department of South Asian Studies at Harvard University, philology helps understand historical texts by studying their grammar, structure, and words. In his article "Philology as a Way of Knowing in South Asia," he mentions that philology "can provide a deeper understanding of texts that cannot be achieved through other discourses or social science disciplines."

In the case of Butuan's folk poetry, philology can offer a deeper understanding of the words used in the poetry and how they provide context to the time of their writing. For example, studying Visayan words in poetry can help us understand how concepts of peace are intertwined and how they helped shape societal values in Butuan during their creation.

This theory aims to provide a deeper understanding of philosophical questions and promotes critical thinking, systematic analysis, and discussion as essential skills in examining truth and reality. It provides a deeper understanding of texts such as the folk poetry of Butuan. Through the study of the words and structure of poetry, we can understand the concepts and thoughts of people in the past and how these helps shape our current society.

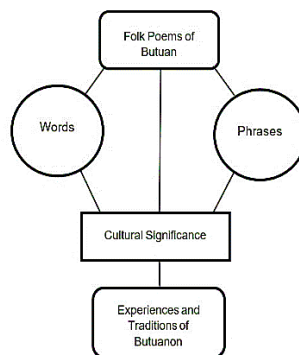
**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Literature serves as a conduit for experiences, emotions, and consciousness. This belief underpins the research on the folk poetry of Butuan. These poems reflect the experiences, history, concepts, and ideas that shape the culture of peace in Butuan. They highlight the importance of culture, tradition, and history for the Butuanon, encompassing feelings of peace and goodwill.

The poems act as lenses and showcases, providing context for the thoughts and behaviors of the people in a society. Therefore, it can be said that folk poetry mirrors the memories and experiences of the Butuanon from ancient times to the present. Through these poems, significant events in Butuan's history are illustrated, demonstrating their influence on the culture and traditions of the Butuanon people.

The social customs and experiences of the Butuanon are also encapsulated in these poems. They portray the practices and identities of the people of Butuan, highlighting their creativity and patriotism, including their interactions with others and nature. The theme of peace is another crucial element embedded in the poems. These works emphasize the importance of peace in people's lives and how it strengthens community bonds and relationships across different sectors of society. The poems inspire the people of Butuan to unite and cooperate in achieving peace.

The nine folk poems reflect peace and depict the history, culture, and peaceful sentiments of the Butuanon. They showcase an appreciation for the traditions, experiences, and social customs of the Butuanon, inspiring them to continue fighting for peace and displaying goodwill within their community, as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of the Study**

## METHODOLOGY

The research utilized a descriptive methodology combined with content analysis to examine the stanzas and messages of the folk poems. The analysis emphasized the description and dissection of words and phrases in the poems to reveal the embedded themes of peace derived from experiences, emotions of peace, and various historical stages. The content analysis illustrated the cultural significance of indigenous expressions within the poems to highlight Butuanon's consciousness.

Most of the data analyzed in this study were from poems written by Edel A. Amante in his book "Eighty Poems in English and Visayan." This collection contains 80 poems covering various themes relevant to the study's objectives and including Butuanon concepts and issues. Nine (9) folk poems were selected for this study based on the following criteria: (1) They contain lessons, experiences, and everyday life in Butuan, reflecting the culture and lifestyle of the Butuanon people. This is crucial to depict the Butuanon identity. (2) They were written by a Butuanon or someone from Butuan. Edel A. Amante, who grew up and spent his life in Butuan, was chosen for his intimate knowledge of his hometown and its people. (3) They demonstrate the peace consciousness of the Butuanon people, which is a primary focus of the study.

The nine folk poems used as data were read multiple times. After comprehending each word and phrase in every stanza, these were categorized based on terms/phrases indicating peace related to experiences/behavior, emotional peace, and peace in various historical contexts. The researcher created three tables based on the sequence of the study's objectives. The researcher maintained the original Butuanon titles of the folk poems in the discussion to preserve the cultural concepts embedded in them. This approach ensures that the reasons for selecting these specific folk poems are clear, as their titles reflect the peace consciousness of the city.

The study utilized nine poems composed in the local Butuanon language. To improve accessibility for non-Butuanon or non-Visayan speakers, these poems underwent translation into Filipino. Expert validators, Ms. Margeline C. Cabonce and Ms. Marietta F. Requilme, both seasoned educators with over twenty years of teaching experience in Butuan, were engaged to ensure the accuracy of the translations. They were chosen according to criteria set by the researcher, who is a native of Butuan, proficient in both Butuanon and Filipino languages, over 50 years old, knowledgeable about Butuanon culture and history, and a professional educator.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The words and phrases in the folk poems of Butuan play a significant role in promoting peace and unity in the culture of the people there. Through the study and appreciation of folk poems, people will gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the importance of peace in their community. Witness the twenty-five folk poems used as data to illustrate the authentic experiences, culture, peaceful sentiments, and history of the Butuanon. From these poems, cultural meanings of the Butuanon are drawn from words and phrases that reveal their Butuanon identity.

Table 1 presents a collection of folk poems from Butuan that delve into the theme of peace, reflecting the lived experiences and cultural ethos of the community. Each title within the table hints at a unique perspective on peace, ranging from the tranquility of nature to the resilience of community bonds. The variety of titles indicates a rich tapestry of themes and narratives within Butuan's poetic tradition, offering insights into how peace is perceived and valued within the local context.

**Table 1: Folk Poems of Butuan Reflecting Peace Based on Experience**

Pamagat ng mga Tulang - Butuanong Pangkapayapaan	Poems Reflecting Butuanon Peace
<b>Batay sa Karanasan</b>	<b>Based on Experience</b>

Dalag na Langgam Akong Barrio Butuanon Kami nga mga Butuanon Yani Kami, Yani Kamo Sa Sibsibanan Tabanog Balasi – an Bisan sa Pagsulay	Yellow Bird My Barangay Butuanon We, the People of Butuan We are here, you are here In the Pasture Kite Boat Even in trials
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One notable aspect of the poems is their emphasis on local identity. Titles such as "Butuanon" and "Kami nga mga Butuanon" underscore a strong connection between peace and the cultural heritage of Butuan. These poems likely serve as a means of cultural preservation, transmitting Butuan's values and traditions to future generations while fostering a sense of pride and belonging among Butuanons.

Moreover, the inclusion of titles like "Dalag na Langgam" and "Sa Sibsibanan" suggests a close relationship between peace and the natural environment. These poems may explore how the beauty and serenity of Butuan's landscapes contribute to a sense of harmony and well-being among its inhabitants. By celebrating the interconnectedness between humans and nature, these poems offer a holistic perspective on peace that extends beyond human interactions.

Additionally, the table hints at the historical and cultural context in which these poems emerge. "Tabanog" likely draws on historical events or cultural practices unique to Butuan, providing insights into how the region's past shapes its present notions of peace. Understanding these historical and cultural nuances is crucial for appreciating the depth and complexity of Butuan's poetic tradition.

This table serves as a window into Butuan's cultural landscape, offering glimpses of the diverse perspectives and experiences that inform its understanding of peace. By exploring themes of identity, nature, and history, these folk poems not only enrich Butuan's cultural heritage but also offer valuable insights for promoting peace and harmony within the community and beyond.

Table 2 offers a fascinating exploration of the linguistic and cultural expressions of peace within the Butuan community. Each word and phrase not only serves as a linguistic unit but also encapsulates deeply rooted cultural values and experiences. Through these expressions, we gain insights into the ethos of Butuan, reflecting their perspectives on peace and harmony.

**Table 2: Words and Phrases Reflecting Peace Based on Experience**

<b>Tulang Butuanong Pangkapayapaan</b>	<b>Poems Reflecting Butuanon Peace</b>	<b>Salita at Parirala</b>	<b>Words and Phrases</b>	<b>Experience</b>
<b>Batay sa Karanasan</b>	<b>Based on Experience</b>			
1. Dalag na Langgam	1. Yellow Bird	1. "Higala,ayaw ang bato ipahaguros"	1. Friend, do not throw stones to be thrown back at you.	1. The Butuanons are known for their hospitality, always keeping their doors open to guests with humility.

2. Akong Barrio	2. My Barangay	2. “Diin abunda ang pakigdait”	2. Where abundance is found in peace.	2. It is a natural trait of the people of Butuan to be friendly and welcoming.
3. Butuanon	3. Butuanon	3. “Gumikan hong pagkamalinawon”	3. Because of being peaceful.	3. Butuanons are peace-loving individuals, always seeking tranquility in life.
4. Kami nga mga Butuanon	4. We, the People of Butuan	4. “Perme lang gamalipayon”	4. Always be joyful.	4. The residents of Butuan are inherently cheerful.
5. Yani Kami, Yani Kamo	5. We are here, You are here	5. “Pagkalami kong tanan ini magpadayon”	5. All these pleasures will continue.	5. The Butuanons have a positive outlook in life.
6. Sa Sibsibanan	6. In the Pasture	6. “Kini talagsaon, busa puti man o itom sila imong atimanon kay ang matag usa bililhon.”	6. This is rare, so whether they are white or black, they should be valued because everyone is precious.	6. Fair and equal treatment among the people of Butuan is innate.
7. Tabanog	7. Kite	7. “Hingpit nga kagawasan”	7. Complete freedom.	7. Freedom of expression, living quietly and peacefully.
8. Balasi – an	8. Boat	8. “Ang balasi – an dili ko ibaylo, Hong bisan ngan nga haylo, Kay ini tabang kang Tatay”	8. I won't trade the boat for anything at all, because it's a help to my father.	8. The Butuanons are content with life.
9. Bisán sa Pagsulay	9. Even in trials	9. “Ang kasingkasing nga kanunay may pagsalig bisan sa pagsulay”	9. The heart that always has trust even in trials.	9. The Butuanons possess deep faith and hope.

Embedded within the language are profound messages of friendship, non-violence, and hospitality. The phrase "Higala, ayaw ang bato ipahaguros" exemplifies this, emphasizing the importance of friendship and the avoidance of actions that may lead to conflict. Such expressions underscore the Butuanons' commitment to peaceful interactions and the fostering of community bonds.

Moreover, the words and phrases in Table 2 convey a sense of community well-being and contentment. "Diin abunda ang pakigdait" suggests that peace is not merely the absence of conflict but rather a state where abundance thrives through peaceful coexistence. Similarly, "Perme lang gamalipayon" reflects the Butuanons' inclination towards joyfulness, indicating a collective pursuit of emotional well-being within the community.

The linguistic expressions also reveal the Butuanons' resilience and optimism in the face of challenges. Phrases like "Pagkalami kong tanan ini magpadayon" and "Ang kasingkasing nga kanunay may pagsalig bisan sa pagsulay" reflect a steadfast belief in the continuity of pleasure and the enduring trust within their hearts, even amidst trials. This resilience underscores their ability to maintain peace and overcome adversities collectively.

Furthermore, inclusivity, equality, and simplicity emerge as core values within Butuan's cultural fabric. The phrase "Kini talagsaon, busa puti man o itom sila imong atimanon kay ang matag usa bililhon" highlights the Butuanons' commitment to valuing every individual regardless of differences. This emphasis on inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging and promotes social cohesion within the community.

In essence, Table 2 not only provides linguistic insights but also offers a rich tapestry of cultural values and experiences related to peace within the Butuan community. Understanding and promoting these expressions can serve as a foundation for peacebuilding initiatives rooted in local wisdom and experiences. By embracing these linguistic and cultural nuances, stakeholders can foster intercultural understanding, strengthen community bonds, and promote peace and harmony within Butuan and beyond.

## CONCLUSIONS

Nine folk poems of Butuan signify peace and contain messages of unity, trust in others, love for nature, and determination to achieve peace in their community. Generally, the poems advocate the importance of unity and understanding to overcome life's challenges and achieve peace. In the poem "Dalag na Langgam," unity and trust among people in their collective efforts to achieve peace are highlighted. In "Akong Barrio," portrays the unity and determination of people to achieve peace in their community.

In "Butuanon," the writer aims to express the significance of trust in others and unity for a broader goal of bringing peace to the world. In "Kami nga mga Butuanon," it embodies the spirit of peace and unity among Butuanons. "Yani kami, Yani kamo" demonstrates people's unity for the cause of peace and against societal divisions for the greater good of all.

In "Sa Sibsibanan," it presents ideas promoting peace by showing love and care for nature, valuing each other, and trusting each other in our community. The desire of the bee to achieve "complete freedom" also underscores the importance of freedom and valuing it.

In the poem "Balasi-an," emphasizes the importance of unity and cooperation to overcome life's challenges. In "Bisan sa Pagsulay," it also stresses the importance of unity and cooperation to overcome life's challenges and achieve peace. The poems of Butuan demonstrate the significance of unity and trust in others to achieve peace in their community. Through cooperation and effort, the desired peace can be attained. The poems also show love and care for nature and the need for freedom and its value. Overall, the message of the poems can be related to the need for peace in the community where citizens should unite and collaborate to overcome life's challenges and achieve peace.



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