

## ***“Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bagan at Gonbadan”*** **(Oral Literature of Ifugao Culture)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In 2001, UNESCO proclaimed the Ifugao epic *hudhud* as one of the 19 masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity. This study aims to promote greater understanding and of appreciation, and interest in the epics, highest form of oral literature. The analysis is anchored on E. Arsenio Manuel’s theory of the Philippine ethno-epic. A descriptive-qualitative method was used in this study. Immersion, observation and random informal interviews in Ifugao (Kiangnan, Asipulo and Lagawe) were employed in gathering and validating data. The narrative structure and characterization of the epic heroes were determined through textual analysis. A contextualist approach in the analysis of the text was utilized to validate the identified Ifugao culture that is still practiced today. The epic reveals the beauty and legacy of the great ancestors of the highland that need to be protected and preserved. This study helps in the preservation of the sacredness of the tradition. Likewise, it also proves that the *hudhud* is not just used as mere tourist attraction of the local government units and Department of Tourism for economic growth in the *hudhud* areas. It will also attract more scholars, local and international, to understand and preserve the rich and dying tradition.

**Keywords** – Literature, *hudhud*, Ifugao socio-political culture, descriptive-qualitative method/textual analysis, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

All cultures, great and small, began with folklore and then developed not apart but coexisting with it, sometimes fusing in parts with it, but never without it (Hornedo, 2000:51). The culture and history of a particular group of people in the ancient times were recorded and passed on by word of mouth through folklore. The *hudhud* (chant) is folklore that records the great history and culture provides an explanation on their practices and beliefs observed up to this period. Respect for the customary laws is still observed, although these have already been modified by Christianization and modernization. The Ifugao *uyauy* (traditional prestigious marriage rite) and the *hagabi* (lounging wooden bench) that symbolizes the *kadangyan's* (wealthy Ifugao people) self-actualization depicted in the Ifugao folklore manifest the unique culture of the indigenous people in the highlands.

The UNESCO world heritage Banawe rice terraces are now eroding and under rehabilitation. The culture of planting *tinawon* (traditional rice) that is harvested once a year is also dying and has been replaced the cultivation of modern rice crops that can be planted and harvested twice a year. Harvesting the traditional rice was done leisurely, and to break the monotony, the Ifugao women chanted the different variants of *hudhud*. But now, the *hudhud* is almost extinct as an effect of the change in rice production in the terraces.

In 2001, UNESCO proclaimed the Ifugao epic *hudhud* one of the 19 masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity. The award was intended to raise awareness about the importance of safeguarding an intangible heritage, which is an essential element of cultural diversity. The objectives of the proclamation of the award were: 1) to raise awareness among the public and to recognize the importance of oral and intangible heritage and the need to safeguard and revitalize it; 2) to evaluate and take stock of the world's oral and intangible heritage; 3) to encourage countries to establish national inventories of the intangible heritage and provide legal and administrative measures for its protection; and 4) to promote the participation of traditional artists and local creators in identifying and revitalizing the intangible heritage (ACCU, 2002:25).

The *hudhud* was recognized as a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity based on: 1) its outstanding value; 2) its roots in the cultural

tradition or cultural history of the community concerned; 3) its role as a means of affirming the cultural identity of the peoples and communities concerned; 4) its proof of excellence in the application of the skill and technical qualities displayed; 5) its value as a unique testimony of a living cultural tradition; and 6) its risk of disappearing (ACCU, 2002:25-26).

Although the Local Government Unit (LGU) and National Commission on Culture and Arts (NCCA) have started organizing the Hudhud School of Living Tradition (HSLT) in response to the call for preservation of the almost extinct culture for the next generations, these programs seem to be superficial. The annual *gotad* (festival) in Kiangán and in Lagawe showcasing the cultural dance, traditional games, *hudhud* chanting competition and the merrymaking with dancing and drinking the *baya* (native rice wine) as means of sustaining the tradition is not enough. The current municipal mayor of Kiangán, Joselito Gano Guyguyon, stressed during the *Gotad* Festival 2014 the importance and value of preserving the culture and the role of all Ifugao people in establishing global connection to keep the tradition known and alive, but there is no guarantee that the people will respond seriously to the call of the mayor.

The study aims to determine: 1) the narrative structure of the epic *Hudhud of Bugan and Dinulawan at Gonhadan*; 2) the theme/s and cultural character traits that are revealed through the narrative structure of the epic; 3) the socio-political symbols that are reflected in the narrative structure and characterization of the epic; and 4) how traditional marriage of the wealthy Ifugao people (*uyauy*) define the socio-political strata of the Ifugao people.

## FRAMEWORK

Demetrio (1996) considers the epic as the unconscious record of the cultural and historical background of a social group. Likewise, the epic is the highest of all genres (Abrams, 1999:77). The Ifugao epic is a very rich record of history and culture, but its worth has been ignored by many present day scholars. There is a dearth of research done on its content and value, much less on the means of preserving the epic tradition for future generations to take an interest in it. Despite UNESCO's recognition, it is ironic that it has remained unknown and unappreciated by many Filipinos, especially the young people.

Primarily, the previous studies made were concentrated on the anthropological aspect, shamanism, ritual, as an oral tradition, linguistics, musical aspect, and the structure of the epic, without considering the beauty of the work itself as

a creative output of an older generation. Some scholars have considered only the repetitive and monotonous patterns of the narrative, disregarding not only the history but also the cultural values behind the structure of the text. These scholars and researchers analyzed and reviewed only the more popular version – Aliguyon. This explains the claim of Castro (1985: iii) that “there is no thorough study yet on all Philippine epics, the highest form of oral literature. According to Castro, the epic is not only a literature but an important record of the past before the coming of the Muslims and Christians. The Philippine epics may provide awareness and knowledge on the ancient history of the people.” What Castro said in 1985 is still true at present. Despite some studies and publications done by scholars, the richness of Philippine epics in general, and *hudhud* in particular, has remained unexplored and unknown to many Filipinos.

Lambrecht published a critical study on *Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bagan at Gonhadan* in *Saint Louis Quarterly* (1967:359), which is the source of the text in the present study. He focused his study on the linguistic, literary, and musical aspect of the Ifugao *hudhud*. This variant was chosen for this study since there has been no attempt yet to study the form and theme to unfold the truth and beauty (aesthetic value) behind the text. This study is focused on the form, theme, and socio-political symbols of the epic *Hudhud of Bagan and Dinulawan at Gonhadan*. Through this study, the writer can contribute in propagating interest in and appreciation of Philippine folklore.

This study is anchored on E. Arsenio Manuel’s theory on Philippine ethnopedics. Manuel (1963:3) identified the standard criteria of the form and substance that sets the characteristics and definition of ethno-epics. These characteristics are: (a) a narrative of sustained length; (b) based on oral tradition; (c) revolving around supernatural events or heroic deeds; (d) in verse form; (e) either chanted or sung; and, (f) with a certain seriousness of purpose, embodying or validating the beliefs, customs, ideas, or life-values of the people.

There is no written record about its origin, though the *hudhud* can be traced to the past. According to Manuel, the Ifugao people sang *hudhud* during harvest, weeding, washing of the bones of their dead, and funeral wakes, with special reference to long narratives about their culture heroes. The chanting of the epic provides justification on the way of living and values of the Ifugao people. He reinforced the statement of Lambrecht that:

The Ifugao Epic Stories, called *Hudhud*, are remarkable piece of primitive literature, memorials of an ancient culture which has maintained itself for

ages, treasures of linguistic peculiarities. No wonder the people, who love to sing them from morning to evening during harvest season, and from evening to morning during their funeral wakes, attribute to these stories a supernatural origin, not because they believe that the many events narrated by their soloists and commented upon by the whole group of choristers really happened in the distant past, for no one among them admits that, but because they cannot understand how their forebears could ever have invented them. . . (From “Ifugaw *Hu’dhud*, 1960), (Manuel, 1963:53).

Manuel (1963) also posited that the heroes in the *budhud* appear to be more human than superheroes, except for their strength, compared those in other Philippine epics, such as the Sulod and Bagobo epics (50). He likewise said that the *budhud* has a simple plot and achieves the required length of an epic by its repetition of similar incidents of the opposing heroes.

There is a need to give attention to indigenous tradition. As Lucero (2007:7-8) says:

Our indigenous roots are living and dynamic traditions. They are the narratives of our people’s historical experiences. . . (p.7)

A story coming out of another country is not our story; it is theirs. We have our story to tell. (p.8)

Thus, there is a need to elevate and intensify the value of the *budhud* epic as a form of literary production and cultural preservation.

According to Russian scholar Stanyukovich (2013:15), the Philippines, a treasury of oral folk epics, gives us a precious opportunity to research epics in transition. Transition implies documenting epics and introducing them to a wider audience; it also implies numerous losses suffered by a living epic tradition when it attracts national and international attention and becomes a concern of the state and the educational system. At such a time, an oral tradition entrenched in the local culture, beliefs and rituals, inevitably starts being turned into a “piece of ethnic literature.” Lagawe Ifugao Provincial Governor, Benjamin B. Cappleman, issued Executive Order 003, series of 2004, mandating the integration of *budhud* in the elementary school curriculum, as a means of passing on the knowledge in chanting the epic to preserve the culture. But the implementation of the program is slow.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is a response to the urging of Manuel, Demetrio, Lucero, Hornedo, and other Filipino folklorists for scholars to continue discovering Philippine folklore and preserve these rich unwritten records of the past and integrate the study of them in the Philippine school curriculum. Likewise, is intended to prove that the material is an ethno-epic, a masterpiece, and a cultural artifact that sheds light on the people's traditional beliefs and practices, and provides an explanation on the rich and amazing socio-political culture of the Ifugao people.

This study also aims to expose the beauty behind this traditional pagan epic to a greater populace. The Hudhud School of Living Tradition (HSLT) initiated by NCCA in Lagawe, Kiangon and Asipulo is only one of the avenues in promoting this tradition. This study is hoped to enlighten the readers and listeners of *hudhud* chants on the forgotten and neglected record of the people in the *hudhud* areas, especially on the prestigious and traditional marriage rite of the *kadangyan* and the acquisition of the political and social status as a qualified member of the *kadangyan*.

## METHODOLOGY

The descriptive method of research is used extensively in this study. Since this study deals with the elements of the epic, the analytical approach (content analysis) was likewise used. This study also utilized the documentary analysis technique, which involves a scrutiny of the printed materials, both primary and secondary, that have direct relation to the topic under study. The analysis used a contextualist approach based on Manuel's theory on Philippine ethno-epics. Historical and ethnographic materials were used in the textual interpretation that provided answers to the questions on social, political, and cultural aspects of the epic.

The narrative structure of the epic was evaluated through the sequence of events. The episodes were analyzed on how they reveal the themes of the epic. The depiction of each character was evaluated on how it contributed to disclosing the themes. The depiction of events and characters were carefully investigated to determine the historical and cultural practices of the Ifugao people. The epic heroes and narrative structure were analyzed to determine the cultural background, political, and social practices embedded in the action presented in the text.

In the course of the analysis and interpretation, relevant situations, passages, and quotations were provided to support the analysis of the text. Immersion, observation and informal interviews in selected *hudhud* areas were undertaken to validate the findings regarding the culture, beliefs and traditions of the Ifugao people drawn from the text.

The traits and practices of the people extracted from the text were uncovered and validated through immersion and observation in the three *hudhud* areas for this study. There were random interviews and observations made with the people – from the children to the old folks, chanters, direct blood descendants of the *Kadangyan*, heirs of the heirlooms, wealth and high status of their ancestors (as evidence of the social status of their ancestors and artifacts that were passed on and preserved) and the custodians of their dying culture. Obviously, there is lack of local scholars who give attention to literary materials that record ancient unique identity and culture of Filipino people in general and lack of funding to continue and enhance the preservation of the culture, both the tangible and intangible.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Narrative Structure, Characterization and Theme

The epic has a simple plot with episodic narrative structure. It is divided into seven episodes with the classical epic structure – love-separation and adventure-reunion. Each heading is focused on one central character alternating from the two major characters in the title of the epic – Dinulawan and Bugan. As in other *hudhud* variants, the title of the narrative is based on the name of the epic hero and the place where he come from.

From Stanzas 1 to 7 in the first episode, the narrative provides already a clear knowledge on the story line and social rank of the main characters:

*Dinulawan, son of Pangaiwan, at the houseyard  
At the houseyard theirs, lounging-bench theirs at Gonhadan  
(Stanza 1)*

*Lo! Dinulawan, he sits-and sits on the frontyards theirs,  
Stonewalled-yard theirs at the center at Gonhadan  
(Stanza 2)*

*“Ah! Bugan, the elder sister mine, if there-were only a  
Center-corner of one’s-worthy-class from the neighbor-ed  
Of the neighboring villages,  
Of equal-standing, a wealthy youth from the neighbor-ed  
Of the neighboring villages”  
(Stanza 3)*

*“that he may marry Bugan and I may-push then  
The marriage-feast theirs”  
(Stanza 4)*

*“that’s the way-and-way-of-it, Bugan-here  
Do-thou-travel-with the precious scabbard of Dinulawan  
The younger-brother thine”  
(Stanza 6)*

*“and if-there-should-be [a youth] to-whom-might-fit the  
Precious scabbard of Dinulawan-here  
Dwell-and-dwell-thou-there-with-[him]”  
(Stanza 7)*

The “lounging-bench” (Stanza 1), “center of Gonhadan” (Stanza 2), and “precious scabbard” (Stanza 6), are symbols of aristocracy. During the ancient days, only the *kadangyan* (wealthy) have the right to possess a *hagabi* (lounging-bench) as this requires a long process and wealth-draining rituals before one can be enthroned to this social rank. The “precious scabbard” symbolizes the heirlooms of the family, while the “center of Gonhadan” identifies the name of the village where the characters live. Only a *kadangyan* can afford to live at the center-village as a tradition. The topography where the houses were built is an indicator of the social rank in the early times. Like a protractor, if one draws a circle using the protractor, the dot at the center represents the aristocrat and the big circle represents the masses, which form the majority.

Bugan is the elder sister of Dinulawan. As an Ifugao tradition, the elder sibling must get married before the younger ones can. Bugan sets on a journey with the family’s heirlooms from one village to another to look for a *kadangyan* and one of equal rank to marry. In the ancient times, marriage is a sort of alliance, and so they take into consideration the social status of the partner. Likewise,

compatibility in sex is also another factor they consider. This tradition is what was depicted in the narrative of the epic. Although the title bears the names of the two heroes, Dinulawan and Bugan, the very focus of the narrative is the expedition of Bugan in search of a husband, while her brother Dinulawan's adventure and marriage supports and strengthens the alliance tradition where Dinulawan marries the sister of his brother-in-law.

As cited earlier, the first stanza in the first episode provides already a clear reference to the social status of the characters and the cause of the expedition. One may find it odd for a woman to go and search for a husband. Bugan in the epic represents a class – the *kadangyan*. She is not treated as a particular or individual character but a group in society during the ancient days. Her character reveals the importance of keeping the social rank and respect of the people. During the ancient days, the Ifugao people were particular in terms of their social status. A *kadangyan* who lives in the “center village” is a social and political class. Not anybody can address or elevate himself into the aristocracy without undergoing the expensive and wealth-draining process. A *kadangyan* lives in an abode with the same architectural design as the others, but can be distinguished from the commoners through his possessions, such as land, skulls of animals butchered and displayed in his abode, his having been married in a traditional prestigious and expensive *uyauy* rites, and his acquisition of a *hagabi* through a long process of rituals to display his wealth and capacity to feed the community over a period of time. The title of the first episode “fitting of scabbard” shows how hard and how important it is to keep the social rank. Bugan needs to go on a journey and struggle to maintain the high respect for her family's social rank. She meets Aliguyon who is a perfect match for her, who is of equal rank and beauty, but unfortunately Aliguyon is already married to Induduli. As a customary law, a married man cannot take another wife unless he is childless. The precious scabbard is a symbol of *kadangyan's* heirloom and social rank. On the other hand, the society (represented by Aliguyon's men) persuades Aliguyon to take Bugan for a wife and abandon Induduli who is not of equal rank to Aliguyon and Bugan. The society despised Induduli and treated her as inferior to Bugan.

Likewise the “fitting of scabbard” is a taboo, it symbolizes “sex.” In the ancient days, the Ifugao people practiced pre-marital sex. This may be immoral for the Christians, but for the upland kins, this was part of their traditional custom. There is a customary law that if a couple cannot bear a child, this is a legal basis for the man to look for another wife. If the woman gets pregnant, the couple can already proceed to marriage rite. In the epic, although Bugan and Aliguyon are

compatible in sex and in terms of their social rank, Aliguyon cannot take Bugan as a wife since he has a son with his wife.

Episode 1, Stanza 61 to 64, explains the source of the jealousy of Induduli to Bugan and her way of convincing herself that she deserves to be the wife of Aliguyon:

*and she knocks-and-knocks the floor theirs in the / basket-like house theirs at  
the center at Kalbiyan;  
is-excessive, really, the grumbling-grumbling of Induduli, the wife of Aliguyon  
(Stanza 61)*

*“How troublesome the wealthy rich-people / from the neighbour-ed of the  
neighboring villages!  
“As-to-that you are wealthy, you are-rich but act-by-fitting you from the /  
neighbour-ed of the neighboring villages”  
(Stanza 62)*

*“As-to-Induduli-here, I am-white [beautiful], I am-wealthy at the houseyard.”  
/ at the houseyard theirs, lounging-bench theirs at Hanaga,  
“was very-far in-fact the houseyard” / the houseyard at Hanaga  
(Stanza 63)*

*“yet I was wooed-and wooed by Aliguyon  
(Stanza 64)*

Social rank is important in the Ifugao value system. The above stanzas depict the subtle sarcasm to those who pretend to belong to the *kadangyan* class. A *kadangyan* attains the high regard and respect of everyone. Although Induduli is the wife of a well-respected *kadangyan*, Aliguyon, she failed to gain the full respect of the people. However, this tradition is no longer observed these days.

Each episode narrates the struggle and success of the hero and reveals a socio-political status and symbols of wealth that are significant to the Ifugaos during the ancient times and have been carried over to the present era.

Table 1. Parts of the epic *Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bugan at Gonhadan* with the episode title (Lambrecht, 1967)

Parts	Episode
I	The Fitting of the Scabbard Episode
II	Episode of the Marriage Feast
III	Discovery of Bugan, The Girl with the Scabbard
IV	Dinulawan Blocks the Marriage Feast but finds his sister
V	Ratification of Daulayan's Marriage to Bugan
VI	Celebration of the Double Marriage Feast
VII	Climactic Episode: Fight for Aginaya, Aliguyon's sister
	First Incident: Two Lovers of One Girl
	Second Incident: Dinulawan Runs Home with Aginaya
	Third Incident: Guminingin Prepares for a Spear Battle with Dinulawan
	Fourth Incident: The Spear Battle at Gonhadan
	Fifth Incident: The Riffle Incident
	Sixth Incident: Dinulawan's Victory
	Conclusion

According to Quito (1989:3), it is important to establish the structural elements of an epic to understand the meaning of the text. She also said that the initial step in understanding the text is through immersion in the text. Her view was anchored on the dictum "art for art's sake," where the focus of the study is the text. Her method of analyzing an epic is an outward process. Only after the immersion in the text can the reader assign meanings that will be validated. It is only after assigning meanings which must be tested and validated that the text slowly discloses its meaning. The application of the stages in analyzing the epic will illuminate the spirit of the readers as its end goal. This was adopted in the analysis of the text in this study.

A native Ifugao's traits and culture were depicted through the sequence of events of the epic. *Hudhud* is known as a woman's epic. In this variant, the woman is given more emphasis than in the other variants. In this epic though, the plot can be classified as matriarchal and patriarchal since both male and female characters have shown equal skill and beauty. The equality in the role of man and woman is an Ifugao trait that can still be observed today. The Ifugao people do not have gender issues. In fact, the role of a woman was given emphasis as this reflects the great respect given to an Ifugao woman. In the ancient times, when a man had an enemy in another town or village, simply being with a woman would spare him from his enemies. In this epic though, the opponents of Dinulawan fought with Bugan to redeem their honor. It is likewise evident in the narration that men and women have equal strength. Though this may be a secondary theme identified

in the narration, yet it becomes an important symbol that represents the equality and value system among the Ifugao people.

The epic is a serious and complicated narration of struggle, fight, deception, love, pride, alliance and vengeance. It is complicated as it has too many characters compared to the other variants. The characters are intertwined and can draw a realistic Ifugao family genealogy. Despite that, there is no real villain in the epic. There are opponents, yet they respect and admire their opponents and at the end settle their feuds peacefully. The plot seems simple and may be considered as a typical love story that reflects the rich traditions, traits and beliefs of the Ifugao people. This supports and validates the definition of Manuel (1963:3) that an ethno-epic is embodies or validates the beliefs, customs, ideas, or life-values of people. Castro (1984:4) supported the view of Manuel that epics are reflective of the society whence they originated. They reflect a tribal society before the coming of the Muslims and the Spaniards. They are vehicles of transmission of tribal customs and wisdom – the conduct of relationships between classes, between relatives; how courtship is conducted and how marriages are concluded.

From the random interviews during the immersion in Kiangan, it was evident that the innate traits of men were what exactly shown in the epic. Aside from the high respect accorded to women, it is also the nature of the ancient Ifugaos to value one's word of honor and respect, and they settle their feuds and differences in a highly respectable manner that does not result in death, rather through an amicable way such as the *uggub* (dart), *dau* (boiling water/trial-by-ordeal method) and *bultong* (wrestling). In the epic, they settled feud through spear battle, but as all the *hudhud* variants, the enemy recognizes the skill and greatness of the opponent. This trait of the epic heroes reflects the humility and equality among the people. Feuds, fights, disagreements are normal in any society and the Ifugao folks are not exempted to this, yet they make it a point to settle things in a peaceful manner. As Stanyukovich (2004) assessed it, the epic manifested a peacemaking ideology. This makes the Ifugao value system commendable in contrast to the pre-conceived views about them that they are barbaric. This study is an avenue to rectify the wrong notion about the Ifugao people that they remained to be head hunters up to this era. Likewise, this study introduces the peaceful and loving Ifugao people who serve as a role model in settling their differences in an amicable way.

Demetrio (1986) claimed that the *hudhud* characters expressed positive outlook and values despite the feud of the heroic characters of the epic. *Hudhud*

was given emphasis as an example of an ethno-epic that has no negative implication despite the battle between the two opposing clans. Likewise, he posited that the indigenous and traditional epics provide lessons on justice, respect among human relationships and relationship with the Supreme. This implies that *hudhud* does not only depict a biblical allegory, but it is more bounded to the purpose of existence of every human being and the definition of his humanness. This is evident in the characters as they learned to accept their fault and failure, as a sign of humility in their character. Demetrio also expressed his admiration for the richness of the range of the epic and creativity of the indigenous people.

### Socio-political Culture

The *Uyauy* is the prestigious traditional marriage rite in Central Kiangnan and Asipulo, while the marriage rite of the ordinary people is silent. The long and extravagant process of wealthy people's marriage is highlighted in this *hudhud* variant. There are many requirements of the traditional marriage that are too expensive for the people of the present era. They have thus set aside the traditional rite and have resorted to the Christian way that does not require a long period for the process and which is less expensive and less exhausting ceremony. However, for the *kadangyan* and for the children of those who underwent the *uyauy*, it is a must that they keep the tradition as means of preserving the social and political status of their clan. Others modify the tradition (short cut version) while, on rare occasions, the couple would undergo both the traditional *uyauy* and Catholic marriage rite. Photographs and living Kiangnan *kadangyan* shared personally their experiences of the prestigious *uyauy* rite in Kiangnan. The two known old folk, Dr. Pedro Indunan, an *imuyauy* (one who underwent the process of the prestigious traditional marriage rite), and his son, former Mayor Albert Indunan, an *imuyauy* who at the same time had a catholic marriage rite immediately after his *uyauy*, generously shared their wealthy marriage experiences. The marriage in both traditional and Catholic rite becomes more extravagant since there are additional animals butchered and another day of celebration for the catholic rite. The latest *kadangyan* who had a traditional marriage rite in 1999 is Felix Baguilat, the younger brother and staff member of the current Congressman Teddy Baguilat Jr.

According to Albert Indunan, among the Ifugaos, before one can be accepted and call himself *kadangyan*, he must be able to hold a *uyauy* that would last for about five days to one week, with plenty of animals butchered to be fed to the community and people from other villages and towns who may have heard about the betrothal of a *kadangyan*. The celebration is free for all to attend. It is a festive

celebration that would last for days with the best rice wine and pigs, chicken and water buffalos butchered.

The *uyauy* is not a one-time event. There are preliminaries before the *uyauy*. It starts with a *paldang* where the *mumbaki* (native priest) does the first marriage ritual. The bile of the chicken is scrutinized to determine if the gods are in favor of the agreed date of the *uyauy*. If the *paldang* rite is favorable, every night for about two to four weeks, there is beating of gongs in the house of the couple to serve as announcement and invitation to the upcoming event. The nightly announcement ends during the *holyat*. *Holyat* is the last night of merrymaking before the *gotad* or the wedding feast proper the next day. Only the real *kadangyan* can afford to undergo this process as it is indeed a wealth-draining occasion.

The *uyauy* cycle starts with the *imbango*, which seemingly like a dowry for the lowlanders. In the ancient times, before betrothal, a man would dry a slice of meat and place it inside a *bango* (hunter backpack) together with the dowry; he would bring it to the family of the woman he would marry. The acceptance of the meat and dowry signals that the two families could already plan for the date of marriage and the number of animals to be butchered. However, in Kiangan, three different sizes of pigs are required for the blessing invocation to the spirit. These are the *tukop* (large) for the departed relatives, *imbango* (larger) for the spiritual protectors and the *hingngot* (largest) for Liddum, the god of skyworld. The smallest size of animal must be at least 100 kilos. Aside from the pigs, there are other things needed to be brought to the house of the bride. This explains why this tradition is almost extinct.

After the *imbango* is the *bubon* (engagement), after the performance of which, the bride and groom could legally live as husband and wife. In this ritual, another pig must be butchered. This process can be compared to the engagement rite of the Christians of the modern times. Next to *bubon* is *angal* (negotiation), where the two families produce an equal number of animals, and each would try to produce one pig or carabao more than the other. Normally there is a go-between or mediator who represents both families. The go-between is usually respected, witty and good in negotiation, an old folk who knows very well the capacity of the family being represented. The next phase to *angal* is the *holyat*, a public festival the night before the wedding day. After the *holyat* is the *gotad* (marriage), which is a whole day dancing and drinking rice wine, where people would wear their best attire and ornaments.

The other socio-political symbol is the *hagabi* (wooden bench). This serves as a testimony of the wealth, prestige and respect of people to the owner. It

is not everyone's privilege to install a *hagabi* in one's house, for only the elite who have performed at least two *uyauys* are vested this privilege. According to Juan Dait, former executive director of Ifugao Terraces Commission (ITC) the performance of the *uyauy* is the penultimate stage in an Ifugao's climb for highest tribal recognition.

The couple who aspires to have a *hagabi* selects a team of experts on the kinds of wood and had previous experience in making a *hagabi*. The team would go the farthest forest to look for the best wood. Rituals are performed before the expedition, before cutting the wood until the time the bench is brought to the house of the *humagabi* or *himagabi* (the one who undergoes the *hagabi* process and ritual). The process and ritual make the *hagabia* symbol of self-actualization and aristocracy. Through the *hagabi*, every village gets to recognize the greatness of the rich owner of the bench.

## CONCLUSIONS

The interpretation and analysis of the epic prove that the plot and characters depict the traditions and practices of Ifugao people in the ancient times. The findings support as well the claim of Castro (1985) that epics may provide awareness and knowledge on the ancient history of the people. The *hudhud* epic in this study is not far from reality. The showcasing of heirlooms, beauty and skill are Ifugao traits that can still be traced in the present era.

This study is a response to the urging of Manuel, Demetrio, Lucero, Hornedo, and other Filipino folklorists for scholars to continue discovering Philippine folklore and to preserve these rich unwritten records of the past and integrate the study of them in the Philippine school curriculum. The epic was already recognized by UNESCO as a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage of humanity, and the challenge now is in the hands of every individual. One does not need to be an Ifugao to care for the *hudhud*. Local or international individual needs to know the culture of others in order to understand humanity and humanness in each being.

The study focused on the positive outlook of people in life. Feuds, disagreements, jealousy, failures, will always be a part of one's existence, yet the characters in the epic remind everyone to settle feuds in an amicable manner. War is everywhere, but if only people will learn to deal with life's struggles like the Ifugao people do, then most probably there will be no more killings and crime rates will be reduced.

The epic belongs to the pagan period, and the characters are not educated people but the behavior and practices of the people depicted in the narration are more civilized than those of the people of the present era. The *hudhud* is a regional artifact mirroring not only the cultural beliefs and traditions of the Ifugao people, but also of the Filipino in general.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the initial findings and analysis of the epic, both local and international scholars, graduate school students and teachers are encouraged to make a more thorough analysis of the epic to continue the call for the preservation of the masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity.

Future researchers and scholars are encouraged to dissect the philosophical aspect and implication of the epic for greater understanding and appreciation by this precious record of the past. More scholars, sociologists, anthropologist and literary enthusiasts are likewise encouraged to examine more closely the different traditions and practices that are imbedded in the text.

There should be a serious preservation of the sacredness of the tradition the Ifugao people should take pride in the richness of their culture and not use their heritage as just a mere tourist attraction for economic growth in the *hudhud* areas. The Local Government Unit (LGU) and the Department of Education must design a serious scheme to monitor the integration of the *hudhud* in the elementary school curriculum.

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