

OPEN RATIONALITY: EMERGING DISCOURSE OF SELF/OTHERDouglas Angel A. Aragon II, *Central Bicol State University of Agriculture*

Abstract

Homi Bhabha's notion of "Third Space" defines an in-between space where cultural meanings are negotiated and disrupted fixed binary oppositions thereby creating a hybrid Self/Other. The *tigsik* (banquet toast or folk speech) by the *Bikolanos* posit these possibilities for the subalterns to speak and be heard in the attempt to maintain the indigenous sensibilities as well as illustrate the emerging identity brought by modernism that reconstruct the disavowed sensibilities, memory and consciousness, and create a negotiation between the indigenous and modern Self/Other. Each time this encounter between Self and Other occurs at the point at which something exceeds the frame of the image, it evacuates the Self as the site of identity and autonomy and leaves a mark of the subject, the perception of open rationality. This becomes the moment in which the demand for identification takes the form of a response to other questions of signification and desire, culture, and politics. In doing so, this paper interrogates the selected texts from a grounded-ethnographic postcolonial perspectives using text analysis, personal interviews and observation to poets' performances, which liberate the indigenous philosophy of *orag* (wit and creativity) and *dunong* (wisdom) vis-a-vis articulates the open rationality in *tigsik* making. Moreover, this banquet toast or folk speech in vernacular paves the way to transformation; seems to be preoccupied with different realities such as the loss of traditional values, modernist over conservative familial ties, hybrid education, multicultural language, health scare, political dynasties, divergent economy and the like are just some of the few postcolonial configurations that emerged from these millennial texts. Nevertheless, with these transformations and realities, *tigsik* remains a convivial expression voiced as a drinking salutation, and a mirror of folk oral traditions and practices.

Keywords: Open Rationality, Self/Other, *Tigsik (Banquet Toast/Folk Speech)*

Introduction

Oral poetry like *tigsik* is a treasure of the *Bikolanos* for its reference of cultural practices and sensibilities. It is a form of *rawitdawit*, general local term for a *Bikol* lyric poem that pays tribute or criticize people, animals, things or ways of life. It is associated to *dalit*, a poem having four verse lines of eight syllables and one rhyme per stanza, uttered extemporaneously during wedding reception, in a drinking spree or a simple gathering (Balde, 2021; Dimalanta & Mata, 2004 p. 7). This also became a subtle and artistic way of expressing a suitor's feelings towards his object of love. And, this might have been used by the *Bikolnons* to send coded messages during World War II (Banzuela, 2023 p. 93). The ritual of *tigsik* is rooted in ancient traditions when men are gathered for a celebration, a commemoration or any event that was significant in their lives as a community. During a celebration, men are gathered in a circle to honor a wedding, the birth of a child or a chieftain's elevation to power, and they drink wine made of fermented coconut water or nipa fruit extract called *tuba*. The drink is poured in cups made of wood or coconut shell and is passed around. One who holds the cup is obliged to recite a *tigsik* before drinking the wine. The toast poem may be sincere, humorous, or acerbic, but in all cases witty or satirical. Sometimes the *tigsik* is in

answer to or in affirmation of the *tigsik* recited by the previous drinker (Balde, 2024). In this context, noted *Bikolano* poets and critics posit the emerging transformation of *tigsik*, its literary form, aesthetics and poetics. This involves what Chancoco (2008) posited in reclaiming the *Bikolnons* indigenous *birtud* (power and poetics) and the nuances of *orag* (wit and creativity) and *dunong* (wisdom). Almario (2006) also argued that there is a need to interrogate Philippine literature as literature of the Filipinos; discover its roots and origin based from the creative union of the colonized and colonizer (p. 18). Since *tigsik* has evolved from its oral tradition to secondary orality, its literary qualities and characteristics have been placed to question whether the poet (*paratigsik*) still follow the tradition and its aesthetics. Thus, this study attempts to resolve the phenomenon of open rationality in *tigsik* in determining the currency of Self/Other.

Theoretical Framework and Consideration

This study follows a grounded-ethnographic reading developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Wolcott (1998). The Constant Comparative Method of Data Analysis (CCMDA) and Ethnographic Data Analysis (EDA) map out the comparisons between the sociocultural patterns and postcolonial configurations in *tigsik*. This involves relating concept from concept and concept to nuances in establishing the Self-Other negotiation. This particular reading/interrogation is what Glaser (1967) recognized it as an analytic induction in Znaniecki (1934). Moreover, ethnography complements grounded research by playing the structure of the interview in a more open but systematic way, how a particular issue or problem would shape the conversation in which may unfold specific experiences of the participants. Ethnography narrates the nuances and stories by the *tigsik* masters and *tigsik* enthusiasts in order to illustrate the cultural phenomenon of orality and poetics in *tigsik*. Meanwhile, Homi Bhabha's (1994) Third Space articulates the postcolonial symptoms based on the notion of hybridity and ambivalence of emergent culture in which Bhabha appropriates Michel Foucault (1964) and Jacques Derrida's (1967) discourse as a site of struggle; and Jacques Lacan's (1970) notion of subjectivity. Moreover, Virgilio Almario's *Bagong Pormalismong Filipino* (2001) interrogates the colonized metamorphosis in the modern-emerging platforms of the nativist culture of hybridized tradition in a national-structuralist perspective. And, Ong's orality and literacy (1989) posits on the psychodynamics of primary and secondary orality (p. 10) while Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism and heteroglossia interpellate the oral performance of *tigsik* in various platforms and indigenous language variations.

Homi Bhabha (1994) interrogates experiences by the colonized subject framed in the West. And since Western theories use certain criteria that are incongruous to the complexities and cultural provenance of postcolonial writings and therefore cannot adequately evaluate and give legitimacy to these literatures produced out of colonization, postcolonial theory may address. This theory attempts to identify the general characteristics of writings born out of colonization and to present a different set of criteria or literary norms by which postcolonial writing ought to be evaluated. Bhabha noted it is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of the beyond. He stressed however, that... the 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past... the emergent culture carries within it the dominant culture that it opposes, resulting into a hybrid of culture - a fusion of the dominant trends of the past and a new cultural emergence. The emergent culture never succeeds

in creating a new culture which is pure and free from the influence of the dominant culture, for ... the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different - a mutation, a hybrid (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995, p. 34). In his discussion on hybridity and multiplicity of emergent cultures, he concludes that the multiplicity of emergent culture as revealed through language shows that an emergent culture is a hybrid opposition and adherence to dominant culture. Bhabha further articulates that the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. Hence, understanding the nuances of orality and poetics of the poet (*paratigsik*) in their performance as a form of an emerging negotiation traces back realm of the beyond, and an on-going negotiation between sensibility and ambivalent signification of mainstream and marginal.

Engaging with postcolonial theories is essential for an analysis of these *tigsiks*, as these theories provide valuable insights for understanding and potentially re-evaluating contemporary Filipino art and literary theories within this multifaceted context. Virgilio Almario (2001) argues that there is a need to awaken nationalism among Filipinos, and at least redeem themselves from the Western's influence and subjectification. It is then the duty of the poet to find alternative reading and appreciation to assert his indigenous consciousness and nativist conservatism foregrounded by modernism. Almario noted that there is a need to encourage the people to help in reclaiming its position and identity from the Western's subjectification and join in relocating the new nation (p. 6). Almario encourages the once colonized poet to liberate emerging poetics in appropriating back his national consciousness and prevent himself from being a stranger in his own culture and poetics. In his book, *Balagtismo versus Modernismo*, Almario blames the old, colonial minded criticism that evaluates Filipino literature according to Western standards. He asserts that even as it recognizes the admixture of indigenous and foreign elements in the chosen text, such criticism almost always overlooks the former's successful attempts to appropriate the latter (Garcia, 2004 p. 15). Moreover, Almario's publications *Ang Hudhud ni Rio Alma* (2009) and *Bagong Pormalismong Filipino* (2006) posit into themes of nationalism and suggest a shift in how Filipino literature is taught and interpreted, advocating for an approach less influenced by Western frameworks. These works aim to free the indigenous metaphor, *katutubong talinghaga*, from the complexities of pre-colonial and post-colonial influences. Garcia suggests that the distinct blend of cultural influences in the Philippines, including its colonial legacy and the evident fragmentation of its identity, is a critical aspect that must be considered in any contemporary Filipino study (p.15).

Methodology

Guided with a grounded-ethnographic postcolonial framework, this paper determines the postcolonial constructs of orality and poetics through in-depth text analysis, interviews and poet's performance observations. The various *tigsik* were collected from the digital platform, publication and recorded performances, which are performed by *tigsik masters* (local and national acclaimed *Bikol* poets) and *tigsik* enthusiasts (students, teachers, and other groups of *paratigsik*). The *tigsiks'* collection are submitted to functional translation in English for universal understanding particularly for non-*Bikol* language speakers. The translation is guided with Eugene Nida's principles of correspondence that in translating poetry in the target language, form is usually sacrificed for the sake of the content. After translation, the selected texts

proceed to coding protocols and category labeling, in order to generate the various postcolonial configurations and constructs of orality, metaphor, poetics and conservatism. The noted *Bikol* poets like Abdon Balde, National Artist for Literature and Aida Cirujales, *Tigsik* Queen, and other *Bikol* literary poet/artist: Jerome Hipolito, Elbert Baeta, Eillen Nidea, and other *tigsik* practitioners such as the DepEd teachers and students *tigsik* enthusiasts served as the interviewee-respondents, and the questions were semi-structured to provide an open and diverse conversation. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and if physical presence was not applicable, the interview goes through fb Messenger. The sampling decision is based on the inference for the perception of modern orality, millennial metaphor, performance poetics and structured conservatism from the *tigsik* collection. The selected *tigsiks* were clustered to these themes or constructs and the *tigsik* represent relatively similar number of samples for each construct. The nuances of orality, metaphor, poetics and conservatism are demonstrated from the act of *pagtigsik* or *tirigsikan* (chanting of poems) by the *tigsik* masters and *tigsik* enthusiasts (poets). Moreover, the selected *tigsik* were divided to two categories. The first fifty, are the *tigsik* in printed form, collected from publications, local mail issue and digital platform while the other fifty, are the performed *tigsik*, rendered or presented in public such as in cultural presentation, poets' gathering, classroom activities and/or collected from YouTube channel.

Literature Review

In the olden days, the Spanish missionaries in *Bikol* used poetry for conversion, then later, the native poets recited *loas* (poem or praise) for poetic romances of legendary-religious or chivalric-heroic origins (Realubit, 1996, p. 20). The *Bikols* sang the beauty of their land and told stories of experience and events in their lives. On record are the *kangsin* (*tigsik*) or *abatayo* as banquet toasts known for wit, brevity, and sparkle; improvised poems which related battles and wars in the town; and exploits of new heroes, seismological and geological phenomena, massacres, strong tremors, explosion of volcanoes, or devastating typhoon (Castano, 1895, p. 37). The social life is enlivened by toasts called *tigsik*. These are four-line verses occasioned by happy gatherings whether around a *sari-sari* or variety store or during feasts. Toasts can be made on any subject, from religion and tradition to love and sex, and the *tigsikan* ends when the participants become too inebriated for poetry (Realubit, 1999). However, in the contemporary practice, *tigsik* faces transformation, in which noted *Bikolano tigsik* masters (poets) like Abdon Balde and Aida Cirujales, and *Bikol* critics like Raffi Banzuela, et.al. and Jason Chancoco express their dismay to young aspiring poets who write and perform *tigsik* without considering its customary aesthetics, intention and form. *Tigsik* performed or written by these contemporaries resonate to an emerging poetry. Its literary qualities and characteristics have been placed to question (Balde, Note from fb Messenger, 2024; Cirujales, Note from Conversation, 2024; Banzuela, et. al, 2011; Chancoco, 2008). Nevertheless, it is believed that when oral tradition dies, it follows the loss of memories of the past, its art form, poetics and philosophy, which at the end, the contemporary generation may suffer from cultural alienation in the future of their indigenous cultural and literary tradition.

Oral Literature in the Indigenous Societies

Archiving oral literature like *tigsik* may have utilized the web as a virtual store for recordings of endangered traditions and as platform for the transmission and

communication of the oral tradition. The *tigsik*, as a product of culture needs interrogation with neocolonialism in the midst of the various appropriation and hybridities at play in contemporary literature. *Tigsik* is a form of poetry long considered provincial but assertive of *Bikol* values and a vehicle for political and socio-economic advocacies. Offering toasts to anything at all with imaginative force, each *tigsik* spinner introduces his verse in sing-song with “*tinigsik* or *tigsik ko ining* ... (I toast/roast to ...).” Any chosen subject is always given most profound reverence in verse whose meanings stirs the imagination and excites the intellect. *Tigsikan* or *tirigsikan* was once a fare in a broadcasting outfit that by quirk of fate has become extinct. *Cansingan* or *tagayan* in any case is another label to *tigsik*. *Tigsik* is the most popular word used for the celebratory art of poetic jousting between two or more people enliven by wine. A repartee from a drinking partner must surpass the intensity of the others in validity and vitality, reflection and alteration, enrichment and intensification (Banzuela, et. al., 2011, pp. 5-7). As for the *Bikolanos*, *tigsik* as another form of *Bikol rawitdawit* (*Bikol* poem) finds root in language as a product of collective memory and sentiments like “*pagtubod*” (belief) and “*pagmati*” (feeling) and “*agimadmad*” (consciousness) to approximate meaning using verbal sounds. For the *paratigsik*, this entails a balance between internal meditation and external motivation. This is imperative because while the *rawitdawit* is a cultural and ideological vehicle, it is also primordially a mode of pragmatic communication. The wisdom of these *Bikol* literary forms such as *rawitdawit*, *patood*, *ariwaga* and *tigsik* exemplify the *Bikolano* virtues, literary discourse and poetics.

The term oral literature can be broadly read to include ritual texts, curative chants, epic poems, folk tales, creation stories, songs, myths, spells, legends, proverbs, riddles, tongue twisters, and historical narratives. This underscores the range of performative styles that can be accommodated within the category of oral literature. Ong (1989) noted that this oral verbalization is essentially the same as the written verbalization because all intents and purposes are simply texts that provide meaning (p.10). However, Mark Turin (2013) noted that in many cases, oral and performative traditions are not translated when a community shifts to using a more dominant language, and oral literature in general remains one of the most poorly studied and least recognized forms of human creative expression (p. 173). Ong also argued that oral art forms were essentially unskillful and not worth serious study (p.10). With this premise, it may not only decline the existence of the considered indigenous language or marginal texts but may also lead to the death of indigenous literature and/or culture. Presently, secondary oral culture proliferates, since every culture knows of writing and has consumed the comfort of digital technology. However, to varying degrees many cultures and subcultures, even in a high-technology ambience, preserve much of the mind-set of primary orality (Crystal, 2000). Moreover, in the literate’s vocabulary, the text of a narrative by a person from a primary oral culture represents a back-formation: the horse as an automobile without wheels. Oral cultures produce verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer even possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche. Nevertheless, without writing, human consciousness cannot achieve its fuller potentials, cannot produce other beautiful and powerful creations. In this sense, orality needs to produce and is destined to produce writing because orality follows a continuum that keeps the records of events and diaries chronicling the past through memory that have become dependent to modern technology (Ong, 1989, pp. 18-23). Hence, saving *tigsik* as an oral form requires a commitment of every *paratigsik* to ensure that their mother language (the *Bikol* language in different variations) is

present in all facets of everyday life. The new generation needs to be aware that the *tigsik* needs to be observed and significantly present in/for all purposes of literary and cultural exercise to prevent it from extinction because in/through writing and media, it creates an entirely different way of thinking and perceiving the world. Thus, teaching oral narratives and stories necessitate qualification, guidance, and creativity of the elders who need to bridge the past to the present because one of the significant elements of the indigenous narratives is "... understanding of a worldview embedded in aboriginal oral traditions" (Archibald, 2008, p. 13). Additionally, a lack of cultural understanding of a particular indigenous worldview limits the process of uncovering the layers that are embedded within the indigenous stories, and indigenous oral narratives may have many variations, metaphors, and symbols with implicit meanings and layers (Cruikshank, 1991). As such, without oral traditions indigenous knowledge will be recorded only in text for viewing. Indigenous communities have taken an active role in re-claiming their voices and re-telling their oral tradition. The Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest, for instance, curriculum developers, Indigenous elders, and educators are working together in creating educational programs that value orality. Here, there is a need for creating a space for indigenous communities in establishing curriculum that is based on their respective indigenous traditions around oral narratives (Archibald, 2008, p. 83). To Almario (1984), this is called indiginization, which he argues that indiginization is another original, and not a copy of the foreign. Almario contradicts the popular belief that the colonizer triumphs over the colonized; instead, it is the native culture that 'wins' in its struggle with the foreign. Almario noted the possibility that certain elements between Western and Filipino cultures are actually universal and common to them both. He posits that categories may be contextualized and committed to native's sensibility, a profound commitment to bring literature back to the homeland (Garcia, 2004, p. 14-15). This implies that colonialism did not completely obliterate the native forms of consciousness because native consciousness have existed and emerged in the postcolonial experiences. For instance, in *Bikol* literary practice, the *osipon* (stories), *rawitdawit* (poems), or *tigsik* (toast/ roast poems) in particular presents spontaneous orality which often teaches emerging lessons about a given society's culture. The passing on of this orality from generation to generation keeps the social order intact. As such, oral histories are told and retold with certain relevance and with such sophistication of diversity in keeping the knowledge and preserving the historical record. Noteworthy to mention, along linguistic characteristic, *tigsik* has not been written nor performed in English, there might be few who experiments using other language but rarely practice. The *tigsik* until now uses *Bikol* language in different native language variations; it has continuously utilized and preserved its indigenous language.

Bikol Oral Literature in the Digital Platform

Community archives of cultural and linguistic content now primarily exist online. Oral literature has embraced a wide range of digital media. Foley (2010) illustrated how oral tradition and internet technology share the core dynamic of navigating through networks. In the process, it fosters co-creative, participatory, contingent, and ever-emergent experiences. As such many communities whose speech forms were previously oral have adopted the web as a virtual store for recordings of their endangered traditions and as language-neutral platform for the transmission, communication, and revitalization of oral traditions (Turin, 2013, pp. 173-186); without writing, words as such have no visual presence, even when the objects they represent

are visual. They have no focus and no trace (a visual metaphor, showing dependency on writing), not even a trajectory. They are occurrences and events (Ong, 1989, p. 31). Nevertheless, translation of sound or voicing to writing is empirical. The *tigsik* of *Bikolanos* now perpetuates in these transition and modality. The *tigsik* collection draws on the vast repertoire of indigenous oral literary tradition that created juxtaposition. This juxtaposition is obviously illustrated in the poet's preference for performance chants instead of the written form, suggesting an emphasis on the rhythm and sound of the words as well as their performance values and creativity. It is because the oral poet had an abundant repertoire of epithets diversified enough to provide an epithet for any metrical exigency that might arise as he stitched his story together (Ogundipe, 2017; Ong, 1989, p. 21). These same characteristics and/or poetics were also emphasized by Abdon Balde during the Cagsawa Festival in February, 2024, as he delivers his *tigsik*, he mentioned some of the important points to consider by the *paratigsik*. He reiterated that *tigsik* can be best enjoyed when it is heard and viewed by the audience through on stage performance. This is where the *paratigsik* could place a fitting emotion for each delivery and at the same time the audience could be able to connect with the meaning and emotion to every performed *tigsik*. Chancoco also posited that this performance showcases the *para-rawitdawit's* (poet's) open mind in seeing how external sparks could at times be of help in energizing what is within. He added that the *talinghaga* (metaphor) is the core of the *rawitdawit* (poem). It finds root in language as a product of a collective effort by a group of people to approximate meaning using verbal sounds imitated from the environment (2008, pp. vii-viii). For the *paratigsik*, this entails a balance between internal meditation and external motivation. This is imperative because while the *rawitdawit* like *tigsik* is a cultural and ideological vehicle, it is also primordially a mode of pragmatic communication. The exciting thing about *tigsik* used in a pragmatic communication is that it reveals structure on the level of language, for instance the *talinghaga* (metaphor) of *tigsik* is complimented with *orag* (wit and creativity) and *dunong* (wisdom) to create texture that form and meaning which are inseparable. This shift of *tigsik* from oral form to digital format like podcast and publication convey greater participation, creating new interactive *tigsik* and *tigsikan*. The digital tools like audio recordings, social media, and digital archives make oral traditions accessible worldwide and readily available for future generations and researchers. Baquiran (2009) once noted that modernity offers technology that transforms the ethical and moral consciousness of the people; it influences the Filipino poetics. The fusion of modernist and nativist perspective is crucial in creating new aesthetics which the subaltern appropriates and/or abrogates his/her language and poetics (p. 16). This is also the conservatism argued by Almario (1984) that the subaltern may stand along with the modernity by appropriating national consciousness (*pananaw sa daigdig*) and regain the nativist consciousness. This transformation can also be attributed to the "theory of transformative technology". Spelliscy (2000) explores orality as a social practice rather than a technology, and relocate electronic orality outside of any quasi-theological technological enhancement. Spelliscy noted that the technological transformation of communication has been illustrated by Goody and Watt, Havelock, Ong, and others (p. 1). On one hand, the technology has its positive significance in the preservation of the oral literature. Spelliscy mentions in her study that the technologizing of the spoken through electronic media serves to rehabilitate the oral into a sphere of reason, but the magnitude of technologically-produced acoustic 'presence' also ignites distant memories of the premodern sound of oral culture (p. 1). On the other hand, Goody & Watt (1963) pointed out that writing is not only recorded speech, but saved human communication from oral oblivion. He noted, "its essential

service is to objectify speech, to provide language with a material correlative, a set of visible signs” (p. 21). In this material from speech can be transmitted over space and preserved over time; what people say and think can be rescued from the transitoriness of oral communication (Spellicy, 2000, p. 2). Moreover, Campomanes (2014) posited that in addressing the question of what makes these digital texts poetic, one is compelled to revisit our established concepts of lyricism. Initially poetry is an art for the ear, an avenue for words to come together and become a composition of beauty because of the musicality they are made to generate. With the invention of printing, poetry became a technological art: words on a page, to be read and seen for their beauty, because the use of certain devices like typography allowed for the crafting of language by the poet to take graphic form (p. 18). Nevertheless, technology offer correspondence between live extemporaneous performance and recorded orality, which its purpose is to preserve the oral tradition, its acoustics and conservative speech, thereby the contemporary and future generation may have reference of the old tradition. The rise of technology and the Western discourse have come to transform oral culture to the written world as the dominant form of record keeping. Oral literary practice has been framed in an binary opposition between oral and writing, subjective and objective, and the like. These boundaries create subjectivity and bias, in comparison to writing’s presumed rationality and objectivity. However, in contextual sense, writing and orality do not exclude each other; rather they are complementary. Thus, the contemporaries record and document their histories in techno-complex and sophisticated ways, which include performative practices in the digital platforms, social gatherings, cultural programs, radio programs, and television shows, which make oral and performative traditions translated in hybrid forms when a community shifts to using a more dominant platform or modality.

Bikol Oral Performance, Poetics and Rationality

Tigsik as unique form of *rawitdawit* (*Bikol* poem) has been performed as a paradigmatic literary art form because it carries its linguistic characteristic and metaphoric element to the present time with only of handful alterations, thus *tigsik* somehow has retained its structure, way of performance, and the poetic’s toast or roast in giving commendation or criticism. *Tigsik* is commonly perform singly without accompaniment, in a linear monovoiced narration or with shifts to a varying tones depending on the emotion the *paratigsik* wishes to express meaning to a *tigsik*, from a witty remark, riddle, exposition or narration. This mode of performance denotes forms of discourse which marks the performance style of the *paratigsik* at which rhetorics is displayed. It may be a means of emphatic adhortation, or mere questioning as performed by raising or lowering the voice, pausing and using gesture and body movement as an operative space. Banzuela, et. al. recalled in his blog that *tigsik* embodies the distilled wisdom and expression of the ages. It reveals much of the *Bikolano* character; and because there is wit in every line, there goes to some sort of transcendent power in them as they sink in the mind to settle in the heart (2011, p. 7). Nevertheless, the *tigsik* takes pride in teaching the *Bikolano* audience the changing culture brought by modernization but has still retained the sense of cultural conservatism or traditionalism, and perhaps the perception of open rationality. In this study, open rationality is the ability of the *Bikolano* to think and reason out with intellectual wit in a quick and brief period of time in *tigsikan* or *tirigsikan*. This is a cognitive intuition by proposed by Maritain (1952), he notes intuition as “the intellectual perception of the inexhaustible and incomprehensible reality thus manifested as the object of this perception” (Bersabe, 1998, p. 29-31). Moreover, the notion of *paghurophurop* is displayed during this

performance by the poet's continuous and extemporaneous exchange of *tigsik* verses. And in within the verbal chanting is the simultaneous meditation associated to the expression, "*hulit dapit sa paghurophurop*" (prayer in meditation) that has a deeper meaning than a simple expression of discernment. Serra and Banares in *Mga Ehersisyo Espiritwal* by Fr. Wilmer Joseph Tria discussed that *paghurophurop* is likened to praying, a moment of discernment and contemplation. It is transcendently elevated through the invocation of the Divine, that unveils the theodical disposition that resonates within the hearts of *Bikolanos* - their deep and profound unity with the Divine that has significant Augustinian influence. Tria noted, "... *an paghurophurop*" - contemplation is guided by praise of heart, much by prayer, prayed by Christian to receive grace of God, that makes the soul live. The contemplation has three stages: preparation, recollection, final prayer. In the preparation, the persona meditates to be enlightened with on what to do with divine intention. This is a spiritual foresight which the persona asks God for wisdom; ask with a willingness to lay aside his opinion and perspective and reach for His guidance. In the recollection, the persona contemplates in his prayer the guidance of the Almighty. The persona pays attention to how the divine spirit may be leading through conversation and circumstances during the period of discernment. In the final prayer, the persona offers gratitude from the graces he would receive and asks subsequently the blessing in performing the task (2015, pp. 18-19). This act of meditation resonates with the *paratigsik* during his *pagtigsik* or *tigsikan*. The *tigsik* master or *tigsik* enthusiast discerns or contemplates in a brief manner in the interpellation of the *tigsikan*. The contemplation serves as the inner compass of the persona. His sense of awareness has been heightened that allows him to perceive the world beyond its superficial layers. Through brief contemplation like in *tigsik*, the persona feels synchronicities and subtle ideas from the universe. It seems that his third eye is open, enabling him to see the realities because he can discern the configurations of metaphors and metonymies. He has that peculiar sensation of being rational to things and has a unique perspective on life. The persona or *paratigsik* recognizes the divine essence and the belief of connection to the realities of life.

In an interview with Eillen Nidea, a *Bikolana* theater actor, teacher and a poet, responded in her fb Messenger account from the thesis structured questions. She noted that she conceptualizes *tigsik* mentally by sitting down and compose it to any set number of stanzas before she performs the *tigsik* orally. Her motivation includes her prevailing sentiments (*pagtubod*, *pagmati*) and collective consciousness (*agimadmad*), which is anchored from keen observation (*maan*) and actual experience (*danas*). Her *tigsik* are both toast (*pag-omaw*) and roast (*pagtuyaw*). She plays various end rhymes in her *tigsik*. The schemes are aaaa, abab or aabb. She also observes the measure (*sukat*), mostly eight or ten syllabic lines, and sometimes free style but considers the rhyme most of the time (Note from Conversation, February 2024). In a one-on-one interview with Aida Cirujales, she recalled that her *tigsik* are in the forms of a blind item (*borobentot*), roast (*patuyaw*), toast (*pag-omaw*) or the *Bikol* humor (*pakunsuelo*). Her *Tigsik* collection funded by the NCCA in 2008 revolves on culture, education, parenthood, nature, love to animals, politics, ethics, human personality, and the like. Her works are aired over the radio, read from *Bikol Mail* (a local paper circulation) or viewed from invitation to poet gatherings or cultural festivals. Cirujales noted that she creates a mental outline on how she would deliver the *tigsik* before an audience. She has familiar *tigsik* to begin with and play these *tigsik* to the current topic or issue. Cirujales associates her making of *tigsik* from the *Bikol's* tag *orag* (wit) and *dunong* (wisdom). These two terms have both positive and negative connotation. The *orag* may

be attributed to being skillful and competent, but may also connote a negative perception of being *pasaway* (stubborn) while *dunong* may refer to wisdom of the old in a positive note and in contrast of being *sutil* (disobedient or pedantic). Cirujales posits:

for me, *tigsik* is a form of expressing insight and wisdom. This is our inheritance for the next generation, that in the past this was just as play by the old folks during nighttime when the moon is full. It is merely a game but it sharpens ones mind, gives excitement during *tigsikan* because it generates diversified and ambivalent ideas and meanings. *Tigsik* is only a slip of thought, but when given attention, it is beautiful and satisfying to ponder, and this is an inheritance which was left by the old folks which we need to preserve because it identifies us being the *Bikolanos* (Note from Conversation, August 2022).

During the Cagsawa Festival, in a casual conversation with Abdon Balde before his *tigsik* presentation. Balde mentioned that every time he attends cultural festival or has been invited to deliver a *tigsik*, he always carries at least five familiar *tigsik*, and play around with these *tigsik* during the performance to appropriate with the context and aid him to become more fluid or spontaneous in his *pagtigsik*. He noted that, before he delivers the *tigsik*, he discerns and ponders the theme or idea, and quickly organize it in his thought on how it will be delivered. Balde narrates, every time I deliver *tigsik*, I bring with me at least five *tigsik*, which I am familiar with already, then I just provide appropriate fit when I'm on the stage depending on the issue laid on the program. I contemplate in advance how I shall deliver the *tigsik* and style of performance. It becomes spontaneous as I continue my *tigsik*. In the performance, I ensure to emphasize the measure and form. Either, the *tigsik* may be long or short, the length depends on how I discerned the topic. However, Balde also manifested dismay how other *paratigsik* compose and structure their *tigsik*. He recalled, others thought if the *tigsik* rhymes at the end; they're already doing a *tigsik*; they're not mindful of the syllabic measure per line. An accepted *tigsik* considers the syllabic measures of eight syllable per line.) In the conversation, Balde also enumerates characteristics of *tigsik*. *Tigsik* follows singular commonality in the delivery by starting it with the remark, *tigsik* or *tinigsik ko*. The *tigsik* may function either as toast, roast or joust depending how the *tigsik* commenced. Some follow the traditional eight syllabic line but some do it in various meters, but still all *paratigsik* follow the ending rhymes. Most of the *paratigsik* contemplates beforehand the issue or theme before the live performance, bring with them familiar *tigsik*, and some performed it likened to spoken poetry, which is an appropriation to emerging forms (Balde, Note from Conversation in Cagsawa Cultural Festival, 2024). Moreover, in this same conversation-interview, Balde has emphasized an interesting debate about *tigsik*. He argues that *tigsik* is highly relational among *Bikolanos*; it connects people through the act of meditation of artistic toast, roast or joust. *Tigsikan* may lead to communal relationships and cultural identity. The toast or roast are relational or suggestive in a way. *Tigsik* just like other literary forms, "moves the audience or reader's feeling and imagination, giving and evoking visions above and beyond plane of ordinary life and experience" (Garcia, et.al., 1993, p. 3). Thus, *tirigsikan* or *tigsikan* is indeed a test of wit with literary aesthetics. It triggers own memories, connected it with the *Bikolano's* unique poetics. It takes root at the core of *Bikolano* culture and literature. The act of meditation before a *paratigsik* delivers his *tigsik* resonates with what *paghurophurop* implies, the discernment, contemplation, or meditation of cultural connection. *Paghurophurop* is best observed in the performative

tigsik; it addresses a particular note on the *Bikol* oral performance as verbal art and platform of communication and perhaps criticism.

Tigsik in a Postcolonial Context

Postcolonialism engages with the philosophical and political question of how knowledge functions in whatever context and for the benefit of which groups of people. The dominant nationalist versions of Filipino history, for example, remain mired in received and imperialist notions of intelligibility, especially in their conservation of the Western binaries of truth and falsity, objectivity and subjectivity. The historical narrativity itself determines the forms of reality, it is the monolithic myth of chronological causality and objective truth that needs to be most seriously interrogated and revised in our necessarily plural histories, and as with all other forms of cultural representation, this can be done by hybridizing them, by introducing into them the heterogeneous forms of postcolonial representation (Garcia, 2004, pp. 8-9). However, instead of mapping the historical narrativity, this paper interrogates *Bikol* poetry's *tigsik* as representation of postcolonial texts demonstrating *tigsik*'s form, content and relevance thereby enunciates the postcolonial symptoms of orality, metaphor, poetics and conservatism. One of the commonly figures of speech used as technical device is metaphor. The metaphor explores the rhetorical locus of stereotypes, hybridity and multiplicity. And, good metaphor depends on distance from cliché and readily understood simile. A comparison of strangely juxtaposed images challenges and pleases the listener, whose imaginative appreciation of the contrast is at odds with his/her intellectual understanding (Mack, 2006). On one hand, the metaphor in this study is guided with the definition by Baldick (2001) that illustrates an idea, or action to normally denoting another thing, idea, or action, so as to suggest some common quality shared by the two. This resemblance is assumed as an imaginary identity rather than directly stated as a comparison. On the other hand, Bhabha (1994) highlighted metonymy against metaphor because metonymy is a figure of contiguity that substitutes a part for a whole (an eye for an I) and must not be read as a form of simple substitution or equivalence (p.). Both metaphor and metonymy are useful in understanding the ambiguity and hybridity of *tigsik* because the interpretation of metaphor and metonymy involves the interpretation of the knowledge set by the speaker or writer and the listener or reader, which involves the transference of lexical items from one code to another in a way that preserves, or equivalently approximates, the culturally significant set of connotations or significations. The study of metaphor dates back to the time of Aristotle and touches on various aspects of human reasoning and multiple disciplines. Metaphor and postcolonial might seem to be unrelated and perhaps even antithetical because the analysis of metaphor is wedded to universalist philosophy and formalist poetics (Ramanujan, 2000). Since the first inquiries, the theory of metaphor has evolved significantly under the influence of linguistic and psychological findings (Black, 1962; Bowdle, 2005; Gentner, et. al., 2002; Gibbs and Tendahl, 2006; Glucksberg, 2003; Keysar, et. al., 2000; Lakoff, 1992; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Wilks, 1975), and the establishment of the fields of artificial intelligence (Barnden and Lee, 2002; Narayanan, 1997), cognitive science (Haskell, 2002) and neuroscience (Feldman, 2006). Following Aristotle's *Poetics*, it is widely acknowledged across these disciplines that metaphor is based on analogy (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002; Gentner, 1983; Grady, 1997; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Narayanan, 1997) and arises when one concept is viewed in terms of the properties of another. Humans often use metaphor to describe abstract concepts through reference to more concrete or physical experiences (Shutova, et. al., 2013).

Moreover, translating metaphor appropriately to its context may cause difficulty of communication across cultures. Radwanska-Williams and Hiraga (1995) argued that the interpretation of metaphor depends not only on the speaker's linguistic knowledge of the invariant meaning of the encoded lexical item, but also on associated connotations which have to do with 'knowledge of the world' and which may be culturally dependent (pp. 579-584). Thus, the interpretation of metaphor involves the intersection of cultural consciousness of the poet or critique and the audience or reader. The translation of metaphor involves the transference of one code to another in a way that equivalently approximates the culturally significant set of connotations by either the Self or Other. William Franke (2000) interpellates a proposition that all language is metaphorical and paradoxical. Thus, metaphor is intelligible only by contrast to literal language. But a new outlook with unforeseen possibilities is born with the discovery that the literal itself must be apprehended as metaphorical in its basic constitution. Influentially, I.A. Richards featured metaphor in the context of the general philosophical problem of language, that is, "how words work" and of "how thought goes on" (1965, p. 115). In his fundamental inquiry into "how words mean," metaphor emerges as the "omnipresent principle of language" (p. 92), and metaphor was no longer treated as just a technical device but as the mainspring of language's functioning (Franke, pp. 140-141). The poem then like *tigsik*, expresses these norms of metaphor as rhetorical discourse with a polyvalent characteristics which resonates its ambiguity, ambivalence and hybridity, creating an open-ended construct that one term may connote multiple meanings based in its context. These set of *tigsik* hope to reveal these characteristics based from the *paratigsik*'s linguistic knowledge and their "knowledge of the world" and which may be culturally dependent. Thus, "the use of metaphors involves the capacity to acknowledge a community, and thereby to establish an intimacy between the teller and the hearer because metaphoric expression signals a bond between audience and performer" (Mack, 2006). This what the *tigsik* offers that the interpretation of metaphor involves the intersection between the knowledge set by the poet and the audience or reader. "The said translation involves the transference of lexical items from one code to another in a way that preserves, or equivalently approximates, the culturally significant set of connotations" (Radwanska-Williams and Masako, 1995).

Virgilio Almario argues that the poet and critic must look at our local poetry as constituting various forms of native reaction to the colonial project. He describes the outlines of a new Filipino Formalism or what he calls *Ang Bagong Pormalismong Filipino*, a method of reading and writing Filipino poems. This approach is supremely interested in illuminating the traditions in Philippine literature - traditions that can lead the critic to the discovery of a unique and sovereign Filipino Self. At the very least, this undertaking would result in a broadening of the national memory as well as the propagation and strengthening of the national language (Garcia, 2004, pp.17-18). Almario added: the historical past and the present communicate with each other; this is a mutual communication between the formerly colonized and colonizer subject, and the understanding of utopian desire to contemplate in the transformation of Filipino consciousness or identity amidst effects of colonization and indigenous culture (Baquiran, 2009, p. 5). The indigenous folks did not start from emptiness; rather there are significant points to ponder, change, re-create, consult or eradicate. This is the liberating position faced by the indigenous folks when confronted with the history, tradition and the past (p. 87). Filipinism depends on the strong belief that noted Filipinos' tradition and capacity to cross the boundaries of these limitations are within

the currency of Self/Other negotiation (p. 103)". With these assumptions, Homi Bhabha's postcolonialism can transform our appreciation of the way colonialism works. No longer can we assume that the native and the foreign are absolute distinctions, that power coerces and dominates absolutely, that the result of the colonial encounter is a purely native or purely foreign thing. These literature reviews confront the theoretical assumptions indispensable to interrogate orality, metaphor, poetics and conservatism of *tigsik* with evidence for structures from its literary form and cultural tradition, and explore the implications of such confrontation on the relationship between these postcolonial symptoms.

Results and Discussion

Here are few *tigsiks* (poems) to consider to illustrate the analysis from the hundred *tigsiks* in question:

Take note of this:

(1) *Tinigsik ko ining baso*

An laog lisong kalayo;

Bumilang ka sagkod tulo,

Ta an laog inumon ko! (Abdon Balde, National Artist for Literature)

(Toast to this cup

Filled with pure fire;

Count up to three,

And I will drink it!)

This particular *tigsik* is a common opening ritual which is rooted in ancient traditions when men are gathered for a celebration, a commemoration or any event that is significant in their lives as a community. During the celebration, men are gathered in a circle to honor a celebration. The drink is poured in and the one who holds the cup/glass is obliged to recite a *tigsik* before drinking the wine. In this *tigsik*, the *paratigsik* teases his friends to count him three to drink his shot. Take note: "*Bumilang ka sagkod tulo,/ Ta an laog inumon ko!*" (Count up to three,/ And I will drink it!). The affirmation from his friends of drinking his wine signals of a happy get-together celebration and at the same time, the verses aim to stir the mind of the audience. The *paratigsik* recalls that he is going to drink a "cup filled with fire" with their approval. "Cup filled with fire" is a metaphorical statement which creates an ambivalent perceptions from the audience. Either the poet proceeds to drinking the wine or invites jousting for an interpellation. As the drinking continues, and the drinkers become tipsy, the *tigsik* becomes vulgar and wild. Consider this *tigsik*:

(2) *Tinigsik ko an tapayas*

Puwedeng gulay, puwedeng prutas;

Bulong sa harasahas

Pag nagtatagas an armas!

(I toast the papaya

It could be vegetable, it could be fruit;

An antidote for strong desire,

When one's weapon starts to harden!)

This verse lines describe drinkers when they are already intoxicated, they tend to be care-free and fluid with their feelings and ideas. They become more vulgar and wild. Take note: “*Tinigsik ko an tapayas/ Puwedeng gulay, puwedeng prutas;/ Bulong sa harasahas/ Pag nagtatagas an armas!*” (I toast the papaya/ It could be vegetable, it could be fruit;/ An antidote for strong desire,/ When one’s weapon starts to harden!). The conversation commences by illustrating a plant that is considered as fruit and vegetable, but the next verse juxtaposes to sensuality and the intepellation runs vulgar. The fruit/vegetable becomes an antidote for strong desire, when one’s weapon starts to harden. The *paratigsik* recites, “*bulong sa harasahas/ pag nagtatagas an armas*”. Here, the papaya fruit/vegetable creates an ambivalent allusion as food and an aphrodisiac for men. The seemingly casual conversation shifts to sex, which is a more interesting topic of the male subject. Sometimes, the *tigsik* takes the form of a jousting or a contest of wits among *paratigsik* (poet-practitioners). Here is a couple of *tigsik* with double meaning, flaunting one’s virility with allusion to fighting cocks. Take note:

(3) *Tigsik ko sakong balulang*
Dawa ki isay ibulang
Maisog, pirming palaban,
Pirmeng tuhog an kalaban!

(I toast my fighting cock
 It fights anyone,
 It’s brave, it would always fight
 Always pierces the enemy!)

The reply:

(4) *Tigsik ko simong balulang*
Pag balbon an nakalaban
Minatunglay bagang laman
Natatakot nang lumaban.

(I toast your fighting cock,
 When faced with a hairy foe
 Becomes limp flesh
 And would no longer fight.)

This *tigsik* involves two poets which are exchanging interpellation about the rooster. The first poet narrates that his rooster is brave and a fighter and ended up champion from every fight. However, the second poet playfully interpellates the first poet by associating the rooster to his “cock” (“penis”) which surrenders when it fights with a hairy enemy (“vagina”). This interpellation juxtaposes a literal cock fight with a sensual and vulgar tone. The second interpellation becomes more intense and wild and does not anymore illustrates the fighting of roosters; instead it turns to something sensual. This binary articulates that *tigsik* is diverse of its purpose. In an olden practice, aside from the *Bikol harana* (serenade) *tigsik* may also be used as vehicle of expressing a suitor’s feelings in an artistic way towards his object of love. Young men who are not familiar of crafting *tigsik* would go to *tigsik* experts (known poets) and for a fee, ask for a short poem that he could recite when he serenades a young maiden. Some poets are even hired by a suitor when he intends to visit the maiden’s parents to ask for her

hand. When notified of the suitor's visit, the maiden's parents would also ask services of another *tigsik* master to serve as the maiden's spokesperson. During the visit a jousting of two poets ensue. Here is a typical jousting between two *tigsik* masters during a suitor's visit called *pamamalaye* or *pamamanhikan* (a formal permission for marriage proposal).

Take note:

(5) *Tag-lalaki*:

Tinigsik ko si Maria,
Mabini na, magayon pa;
Burak бага sa lagwerta,
Lumay kami kan hamot nya!

(The suitor side:

Toast to Maria,
 Demure and beautiful;
 She's like a flower in a garden,
 Whose fragrance trances us.)

The verse begins with the suitor's direct declaration: "*Tinigsik ko si Maria*" (Toast to Maria), which conveys a celebratory and respectful acknowledgment of the woman's beauty and character. The phrase "*Mabini na, magayon pa*" (Demure and beautiful), highlights two of the most desirable qualities in a traditional *Bikolano* maiden - gracefulness (*mabini*) and physical beauty (*magayon*). These attributes reflect how *Bikolano* women were often admired not just for their appearance but also for their composure and refined demeanor. The use of metaphor's *mabini* (demure) and *magayon* (beautiful) strengthens the suitor's admiration. Comparing Maria to a *burak* (flower) in a *lagwerta* (garden) symbolizes being delicate, beautiful, and pure. The image of a well-tended flower suggests that Maria is someone treasured and nurtured, much like a prized bloom in a beautiful garden. Moreover, the phrase "*Lumay kami kan hamot nya!*" (Whose fragrance trances us!), intensifies this admiration by employing the sense of smell as a poetic device. This metaphorical statement suggests that Maria's presence is not only visually appealing but also captivating in an indescribable way, leaving a lasting impression on those who encounter her. Thus, in the context of *Bikolano*'s courtship, *tigsik* played a role similar to *harana* (serenade), serving as a powerful medium for expressing love and admiration. While *harana* relies on melody and song, *tigsik* utilizes poetic verses to articulate emotions. Only few are skilled in composing *tigsik*, so non-poet *Bikol* folks sought the help of a skilled *paratigsik* (poet) to craft appropriately-contextualized verses for them. This tradition highlights the value placed on literary artistry, as a well-crafted poem could significantly enhance a suitor's appeal. Aside from serenades, *tigsik* was also used in the formal custom of *pamamalaye* or *pamamanhikan* (formal courtship), where a suitor formally asks for a woman's hand in marriage. In such gatherings, *paratigsik* acted as spokespersons for both the suitor and the maiden's family, engaging in a poetic joust. This verbal exchange, often witty and filled with metaphors, reflected not only the suitor's sincerity but also his readiness to honor tradition and prove his worth through eloquence. A well-crafted *tigsik* could determine the success of a marriage proposal, as it showcases not only the young man's feelings but also his ability to articulate social and cultural expectations. *Tigsik* embodies the rich oral tradition of the *Bikolanos*, reflecting their love for poetry, courtship, and the

importance of wit in social interactions. It highlights the poetics of language, demonstrating that expressions of love are valued not only for its meaning but also for how beautifully they were conveyed. The practice of *tigsik* also underscores the community's appreciation for literary skill, as being able to craft and deliver poetry in a spontaneous and impromptu manner has been seen as a sign of intelligence and sincerity. Thus, as a form of impromptu versing, the poet (*paratigsik*) throws a crisp, witty and poetic commentary on almost anything, vis-a-vis imposes knowledge and values (*Minagayon Blog*, 2023). This poetic performance is an act of discernment or *paghurophurop*, grounded on the struggle for an indigenous intellectual capacity to philosophize and rationalize with his indigenous language in a given issue or topic. And here's the reply:

(6) *Tag-babayi:*
Tinigsik ko an bisita
May ambisyon sa lagwerta
An buot na makua
Burak palan ni Maria!

(From the maiden's side:
 Toast to the visitor,
 His intent in entering our garden,
 Alas! Is to pluck flower of Maria!)

The maiden's response in this *tigsik* reflects the traditional role of women in *Bikolano* courtship, where subtlety and wit are used to acknowledge and sometimes challenge a suitor's intentions. Unlike the direct admiration expressed by the suitor in the earlier *tigsik*, this reply introduces a sense of being on guard, suggesting that while the suitor's presence is acknowledged, his intentions are carefully scrutinized. The opening line, "*Tinigsik ko an bisita*" (Toast to the visitor), mirrors the suitor's greeting but immediately shifts the focus to the visitor's purpose rather than his qualities. This choice of words subtly positions the maiden or her representative in a role of evaluation rather than mere admiration. The second line, "*May ambisyon sa lagwerta*" (His intent in entering our garden), introduces an element of caution, implying that the suitor is not merely an admirer but someone with a clear objective. In traditional *Bikolano* culture, women were expected to be reserved and discerning in matters of love, ensuring that a suitor's intentions were genuine before granting any form of affection. Moreover, this verse line is also a metaphoric statement which may connote a duality that it does not only posit the literal garden but may also refer to the intention to becoming part of her family. The third and fourth lines, "*An buot na makua, Burak palan ni Maria!*" (Alas! Is to pluck flower of Maria!), reinforce this cautious intention. The flower symbolizes Maria's purity, dignity, or perhaps even her future, and the act of plucking suggests a permanent change. This response could either be seen as a playful challenge to the suitor or as a subtle warning that winning Maria's heart will not be easy. The use of *alas!* adds an emotional undertone, implying a sense of gain or loss over what the suitor truly seeks.

In the broader context of *tigsik* and *pamamalaye* (formal marriage proposal visits), this exchange represents the verbal jousting between two *paratigsik* (poets) speaking on behalf of the families. The maiden's side, represented here, plays the role of who initiates test, ensuring that tradition, honor, and family values are upheld before a suitor

is given approval. This poetic duel adds an intellectual and artistic dimension to courtship, reinforcing the idea that love is not simply an emotional endeavor but also a social negotiation requiring wit and wisdom. Beyond its literary beauty, this *tigsik* reflects the value of a time when women are expected to be discerning and protective of their virtue. It highlights the importance of courtship as a formal process, where love is not given freely but earned through patience, persistence, and respect. The reply does not outright reject the suitor but instead presents a challenge - if he truly values Maria, he must prove himself worthy beyond mere words. In a poetic jousting like this, words could be easily and intentionally twisted to test the suitor's patience or even embarrass a spokesperson's ability to deliver a *tigsik*. The jousting continues until they come to the sensitive subject of the dowry. Consider this:

(7) *Tag-babayi:*
Tinigsik ko ining dote
Si Maria mapupuwede
Kun may harong buda lote
An magurang kan babayi.

(The maiden's side:
 I toast this dowry
 Maria might agree,
 If a house and lot could be provided
 For the maiden's parents.)

While earlier exchange of verses focused on admiration, intent, and the cautious evaluation of love, this response shifts to the practical and economic aspects of marriage. In traditional *Bikolano* culture, as in many Filipino customs, marriage is not solely a union of two individuals but also a negotiation between families, ensuring financial security and stability for the bride. The opening line, "*Tinigsik ko ining dote*" (I toast this dowry), immediately signals the transition from romantic discourse to a more transactional discussion. By acknowledging the dowry in a poetic manner, the maiden's side maintains the poetics of *tigsik* while firmly steering the conversation toward a topic that would test the suitor's readiness for marriage. The second line, "*Si Maria mapupuwede*" (Maria might agree), offers a conditional response, suggesting that Maria's willingness to marry is tied to her family's expectations, a common practice in arranged or negotiated marriages. The final two lines, "*Kun may harong buda lote, / An magurang kan babayi*" (If a house and lot could be provided for the maiden's parents), explicitly lay out the primary requirement for the marriage to proceed. This request emphasizes the importance of financial stability, as providing a home and land for the maiden's parents signifies that the suitor is not only capable of supporting Maria but also respects and honors her family. In traditional Filipino society, it was common for a newlywed couple to either live with or provide for the bride's family, reinforcing the idea of extended family obligations. Beyond its literal meaning, this *tigsik* serves a deeper purpose in the poetic jousting. It acts as both a challenge and a test of the suitor's patience, as the maiden's side deliberately raises the stakes. If the suitor or his *paratigsik* struggles to respond, it could indicate a lack of preparedness, financial capability, or even eloquence - any of which could embarrass his standing. On the other hand, a clever and confident response would demonstrate not just material readiness but also quick thinking and poetic skill, both of which were highly valued in traditional courtship. The inclusion of dowry in *tigsik* underscores the

multidimensional nature of marriage negotiations in the early *Bikolano* culture. While love and admiration were essential, they were not enough to secure a marriage. A suitor had to prove his ability to provide, his resilience in the face of challenges, and his respect for the maiden's family. The poetic jousting served as a sophisticated form of vetting, ensuring that the suitor was not only sincere but also prepared for the responsibilities of marriage. Finally, this *tigsik* reflects the strategic and poetic nature of *pamamalaye* (formal marriage negotiations). It balances wit with tradition, romance with realism, and emotion with economic considerations. By turning a serious discussion into a poetic challenge, the maiden's side maintains both dignity and control, reinforcing the idea that Maria's love and her family's approval must be earned through persistence, intelligence, and financial readiness. Take note:

(8) *Tag-lalaki*:

Tinigsik ko ining dote

Warang harong, warang lote;

Pagkamoot kan lalaki

Balaog daw dawa pobre.

(The reply of the suitor's spokesperson:

I toast the dowry,

We have no house and lot to give;

But the suitor's heart

Is pure though poor.)

This *tigsik* serves as the suitor's response to the maiden's side, directly addressing the issue of dowry with honesty and sincerity. It reflects a fundamental conflict in traditional courtship - love versus material wealth. By acknowledging his financial limitations while emphasizing the purity of his intentions, the suitor's spokesperson attempts to shift the conversation from economic requirements to the true essence of love and commitment. The opening line, "*Tinigsik ko ining dote*" (I toast the dowry), mirrors the structure of the previous *tigsik*, maintaining the poetic balance in the verbal jousting. However, instead of countering the maiden's request with an offer or negotiation, the next line delivers a stark reality: "*Warang harong, warang lote*" (We have no house and lot to give). This line presents a bold and straightforward admission, setting the stage for a deeper discussion about the suitor's worth beyond financial capacity. In a society where dowry was a common expectation, such a declaration could be seen as either an act of humility or a strategic appeal to emotion. The last two lines, "*Pagkamoot kan lalaki, Balaog daw dawa pobre*" (But the suitor's heart is pure though poor), attempt to shift the focus from material possessions to the sincerity of love. The phrase *pagkamoot kan lalaki* (the suitor's feeling) emphasizes his devotion, while *balaog daw dawa pobre* (pure though poor) highlights the idea that love should not be measured by wealth alone. This response draws on the common Filipino belief in *pagmamahal na totoo* (true love), which transcends material constraints.

In the context of *tigsik* and *pamamalaye* (formal marriage negotiations), this reply serves both as a defense and an emotional appeal. It tests the maiden's side, particularly her spokesperson, on whether they will insist on financial security or consider love as a more important foundation for marriage. If the maiden's family were to dismiss the suitor's proposal solely based on wealth, it could reflect a prioritization of material gain over emotional connection. On the other hand, if they acknowledge the suitor's

sincerity, it could open the door for further discussion, perhaps leading to amicable compromises or alternative forms of support. This *tigsik* also serves a greater cultural function, reflecting a recurring theme in Filipino literature and oral traditions - the struggle of the humble yet pure-hearted lover. It resonates with the enduring notion that true love should not be bound by social or economic status. However, while this response is noble in its sentiment, it also leaves the suitor vulnerable. The maiden's side could challenge the practicality of marrying without financial stability, pushing the suitor's spokesperson to defend his position further. Ultimately, this *tigsik* captures the essence of poetic jousting in traditional courtship. It is not merely about winning an argument but also of proving one's worth through intellect, sincerity, and emotional depth. The suitor's response, though lacking in material wealth, is rich in meaning, reinforcing the belief that love, when genuine, can withstand challenges even those as daunting as economic hardship. The role of the poet in poetic jousting during *pamamalaye* (formal marriage negotiations) extends beyond mere eloquence and creativity. A skilled spokesperson must also possess the ability to play through difficult situations, particularly when faced with the opposing party's demands. This involves not only crafting witty and poetic responses but also employing verbal dexterity to either redirect the conversation or strategically evade unfavorable commitments. One of the primary challenges a spokesperson encounters is the capricious demands made by the maiden's family, often in the form of exaggerated or impractical requirements. These demands serve multiple purposes. First, they test the suitor's level of preparedness - whether he has the means to support a future family and honor the expectations of the bride's kin. Second, they serve as a way for the maiden's side to gauge the spokesperson's wit and resourcefulness, a crucial skill in traditional *Bikolano* culture where verbal jousting was an esteemed art form. If the spokesperson falters, it may suggest that the suitor lacks the intelligence, patience, or resilience necessary for marriage. In these jousting, a seasoned *paratigsik* employs various rhetorical strategies to explore the conversation. One common technique is humorous deflection, where the spokesperson acknowledges the demand but twists it into an amusing or exaggerated response, making it difficult for the opposing party to insist on their request without seeming unreasonable. For example, if the maiden's side demands an entire farm as a dowry, the suitor's spokesperson might reply with a *tigsik* suggesting that love is more fertile than land and can cultivate a lifetime of happiness. This approach allows the suitor's side to maintain dignity without outright rejecting the demand.

Another method is strategic redirection of implied binaries, where the spokesperson shifts the focus from material wealth to qualities that are deemed more valuable, such as love, hard work, or devotion. This is seen in the suitor's response: "*Pagkamoot kan lalaki, Balaog daw dawa pobre*" (But the suitor's heart is pure though poor). By steering the conversation away from financial expectations and emphasizing sincerity, the spokesperson attempts to frame love as the ultimate dowry, subtly challenging the maiden's side to reconsider their priorities. At times, evasion and citing binaries are also necessary technique. Instead of outright refusing a demand, a clever spokesperson might respond with poetic phrasing that neither confirms nor denies the ability to fulfill it. This allows room for future negotiation or an eventual compromise. For instance, if the maiden's side demands a grand wedding feast, the suitor's spokesperson might deliver a *tigsik* that praises simplicity and the joy of a humble gathering, subtly suggesting that love should not be overshadowed by extravagance. At the end, the spokesperson's skill in *tigsik* is not just about delivering well-crafted verses

but also about maintaining control of the conversation. The ability to evade commitments that the suitor is ill-equipped to fulfill ensures that negotiations do not end unfavorably. Instead of allowing the maiden's family to demand impossible terms, the suitor's side uses *tigsik* as both a shield and a weapon - protecting their position while skillfully countering demands in a manner that is both respectful and persuasive. This presentation of binaries underscores the deeper function of *tigsik* in *Bikolano* courtship traditions. It is not merely a poetic exchange but also a test of intelligence, patience, and diplomacy. A suitor may not have wealth, but if his spokesperson can hold his ground with wit and eloquence, he at the same time, demonstrates that he comes from a family that values wisdom and resilience - qualities just as important as material wealth in ensuring a stable and successful marriage. Over the years, the *tigsik* become a vehicle for airing commentaries and went beyond traditional celebrations, merry making and drinking sprees to tackle situations in all walks of life.

Balde (2024) mentioned that every time he attends cultural festival or has been invited to deliver a *tigsik*, he always carries with him at least five familiar *tigsik*, which he has already memorized, then he just plays around with these *tigsik* during his performance to appropriate his *tigsik* with the context. He also ensures the definite count and rhythm of the *tigsik*. These elements aid him to become more fluid or spontaneous in his *pag-tigsik*. He posits that, before he delivers the *tigsik*, he discerns and ponders the subject or idea, and quickly organizes it in his mind on how it will be delivered. With this plan in mind, Balde is able to appropriately demonstrate his artistic wits, sensibility and cultural ground. This is a form of indiginization which Almario (1984) reclaims as the native's sensibility and argues on mere adaptations of Western influence and Bhabha's (1994) notion of abrogation and appropriation allowing indigenous voices to reconstruct his/her own histories. Moreover, Mack (2006) asserts that metaphor in poetry serves as a rhetorical locus for cultural memory, hybridity, and identity formation. Thus, *tigsik* functions as both a creative expression and a postcolonial assertion of indigenous presence and resilience. These *tigsik* suggest an effort to reclaim and retell stories that have been marginalized or altered by colonial narratives. The emphasis on the difficulty of this process reflects the challenges inherent in decolonizing history and knowledge, highlighting the need for profound ideas and narratives that resonate with the emerging experiences of the people. Nevertheless, Bhabha (1994) posits that an emergent culture is a hybrid opposition and adherence to dominant culture. He further articulates that the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, an on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. The *Bikolano*'s wisdom, as inscribed in these verses, acknowledges the ambivalent and dual nature of language, whether the *tigsik* toasts a celebration or roasts an issue, or jousts that requires poetic interpellation between poets. *Tigsik*, as a distinct poetic tradition, thrives on the interplay of wit, rhythm, and cultural insight. It is more than just a form of entertainment - it is a reflective art that encapsulates both the joys and ironies of life. Through clever wordplay and lyrical expression, it becomes a vessel for storytelling, critique, and celebration, embodying the *Bikolnon*'s creative and philosophical spirit. Take note:

(9) *Tigsik ko an paggibo nin mga historia,
An pagsurat kaini, bakong madali sana.
Nangangaipo ini, nin hararom na ideya,
Tanganing mabinser an mga parabasa. (Aida Cirujales, Tigsik Queen)*

(I raise a toast, to the craft of storytelling,
 The process of writing is not an easy one.
 It requires depths of thought,
 To let readers believe the narratives unfold.)

This *tigsik* conveys the nuanced art of storytelling, recognizing it as a craft that extends far beyond the mere construction of words into sentences. Storytelling, at its core, is an intricate process that demands a fusion of creativity, deep-seated ideas, and a profound understanding of human emotions and experiences. Consider this: “*An pagsurat kaini, bakong madali sana/ Nangangaipo ini, nin hararom na ideya*” (The process of writing is not an easy one./ It requires depths of thought). This reminds the *paratigsik* (poet) that in the process of writing or of impromptu performance is not an easy task to create *tigsik* outright because it requires depths of thought or sound contemplation. This *tigsik* serves as an ode to the dedication and thoughtfulness of the poets who invest in their work, underscoring the challenges they face in crafting narratives or poetic situations that do not only engage but also resonate with their audience on an emotional and intellectual level. The emphasis on the depths of thought and creativity points to the necessity for the poet to draw from a rich reservoir of knowledge, imagination, and insight. This act is a process of discernment or meditation which is a requisite to create a thought-provoking verse. Aida Cirujales once noted: “*Pinaghuhurohuropan nin hararum ang sasabihun bago sambiton ang tigsik, minsan ini sarung tipsik kang isip, minsan hararum ang pinaghahalean (Notes from conversation, Graceland Naga February 2022).*” (In creating *tigsik*, it requires meditation and discernment, sometimes it is only a general insight, sometimes it resonates from a deep seated-baggage). These *tigsik* (poems) acknowledge the meticulous and often painstaking effort that goes into the storytelling process, posing commentary and/or praise. It is a recognition of the persona’s role as not just a speaker but as a persona who molds and shapes the narrative with precision and care, ensuring that each element serves a purpose and contributes to the overall impact of the poetic situation. Take note of these lines from the poem: “*Nangangaipo ini, nin hararom na ideya/ Tanganing mabinser an mga parabasa.*” (It requires depths of thought,/ To let readers believe the narratives unfold). These lines posit that *tigsik* requires depths of thought, to let the reader/audience feel the narratives unfold, and the art of extemporaneous performance requires a poet’s unique style, and sensibilities. Thus, in crafting *rawitdawit*, the poet employs his distinctive creativity, either observes a rigid structure or plays a freestyle (Cirujales, 2022; Balde, 2024); this suggests an assumption of creative plurality and an open-ended construct. However, in the midst of this neocolonialism and postmodernism influences, Ong (1989) reminds us that oral traditions operate within structured frameworks, where meaning is reinforced through repetition, formulaic expressions, and rhythmic patterns that aid memory and performance. Thus, oral forms [like *tigsik*,] follow intricate, often unspoken rules that shape its delivery and reception. Moreover, Chancoco (2008) emphasizes that *tigsik*’s elements like the metaphor (*talinghaga*) and wit (*orag*) in *rawitdawit* are not arbitrary but integral to its poetic function, creating an equilibrium between structure and spontaneity. Hence, these elements may posit the nuances of open rationality known as *paghurophurop* embedded in the *tigsik* and from *paratigsik*’s (poet’s) performance traces back the on-going negotiation between signification of mainstream and marginal’s sensibility and ambivalence. This ambivalent signification is what Bhabha calls “splitting”. Splitting is an intricate strategy of defense and differentiation in the

colonial or postcolonial discourse. This process allows the native, or the subaltern the strategy of attempting to inarticulate the voice of authority, the voice of the mainstream at the point of splitting or ambivalence. Thus, the fashion in crafting *tigsik* that negates use of other language than Bikol maintains the indiginized identity of the formerly colonized subject and the rise of alternative version and structure promotes an emerging phenomenon. Here's another *tigsik* to consider:

*(10) Tigsik ko an tigsik na nakakaanggot,
Orog na kung ginagamit sa pagborobentot.
Kun may tinatamaan, makulog sa boot,
Maski bakong pigpunto
Biyong nagpopongot.*

(I raise a toast to a *tigsik* with an infuriating downpour,
Especially when used to riddle, even provokes.
If one gets hit, it hurts the soul,
Unintentionally targeted or not, it takes an irksome toll.)

This poem poses a riddle, a blind item thrown to anyone and punches in anonymity either intentionally or otherwise. Take note of these lines, "*Tigsik ko an tigsik na nakakaanggot/ Orog na kung ginagamit sa pagborobentot*". (I raise a toast to a *tigsik* with an infuriating downpour/ Especially when used to riddle, even provokes). The "infuriating downpour that can hurt the soul," even unintentionally, illustrates the contentious nature of language, where the *Bikol* language and its impositions continue to influence and shape social and personal interactions. This *tigsik* underscores the ambivalent characteristics of language: as a tool for expression and vehicle for perpetuating power and conflicts. Take note: "*Kun may tinatamaan, makulog sa boot,/ Maski bakong pigpunto /Biyong nagpopongot.*" (If one gets hit, it hurts the soul/ Unintentionally targeted or not, it takes an irksome toll.) The verse lines are straightforward, and it hits the audience unintentionally where the audience's reactions define the meaning of the *tigsik*. The poem also highlights the metaphoric tendencies which engages on themes of identity, power, and resistance, albeit from different angles. The use of metaphor creates multiple meaning depending on how the audience/listener perceives the remark. Moreover, this *tigsik* serves also as a meta-commentary on the power of *tigsik* itself, highlighting how this poetic form can be both a source of wit and wisdom, but also a tool for provocation and discomfort. Unlike *tigsik* that celebrates love, leadership, or community values, this verse reflects on the dual nature of poetry - its ability to entertain and critique, uplift and unsettle. It acknowledges that while *tigsik* is often enjoyed for its poetics, it can also carry sharp truths that may hurt those who recognize themselves in its words. The opening line, "*Tigsik ko an tigsik na nakakaanggot*" (I raise a toast to a *tigsik* with an infuriating downpour), immediately sets a confrontational yet playful tone. And, the phrase *nakakaanggot* (infuriating) suggests that certain *tigsik*, especially those infused with satire and social critique can cause frustration or irritation among those who hear them. The word downpour evokes the image of relentless criticism or a deluge of sharp words that cannot be ignored. This sets the stage for the deeper exploration of how *tigsik* affects its audience. The second line, "*Orog na kung ginagamit sa pagborobentot*" (Especially when used to riddle, even provokes), expands on this idea, emphasizing that *tigsik* can be deliberately used as a medium to stir controversy. The term *pagborobentot* (provocation) suggests that some *tigsik* are

crafted not just to entertain but to give a riddle, challenge, confront, or even mock certain individuals or societal issues. In political and social discourse, this function of *tigsik* makes it a powerful form of expression, one that can hold people accountable while also amusing its audience. The third line, “*Kun may tinatamaan, makulog sa boot*” (If one gets hit, it hurts the soul), reveals the inevitable effect of sharp poetry: someone will always feel personally attacked. The phrase *makulog sa boot* (hurts the soul) conveys emotional impact, suggesting that *tigsik* can resonate deeply, sometimes striking at hidden insecurities or unspoken truths. This reflects how satire and social commentary often elicit strong reactions, as they force individuals to confront uncomfortable realities. Even when *tigsik* is crafted in general terms, those who see themselves reflected in its message may feel personally targeted. The final two lines, “*Maski bakong pigpunto, Biyong nagpopongot*” (Unintentionally targeted or not, it takes an irksome toll), highlight one of the most intriguing aspects of *tigsik*: its indirect yet powerful influence. Even when a verse is not meant for a specific person, those who relate to its message may still feel offended or exposed. This showcases the potency of poetic language - how it can provoke reactions beyond its intended audience. The phrase *nagpopongot* (irritated or angered) suggests that *tigsik* has the ability to spark emotions and even tension, further reinforcing its role as both an artistic and social tool. Thus, this *tigsik* acknowledges that words, though seemingly harmless, can carry immense weight. In the context of Filipino culture, where indirect expressions or metaphorical extensions are often preferred over straightforward statements, *tigsik* serves as a clever way to voice criticisms without engaging in direct conflict. Franke (2000) interpellates that all language is metaphorical and paradoxical, which is intelligible by contrast to literal language. Moreover, I.A. Richards describes it as, “how words work” and of “how thought goes on” (1965, p. 115). He noted that metaphor emerges as the “omnipresent principle of language” (p. 92) and metaphor may no longer be treated as just a technical device but as the mainspring of language’s functioning. The poem then, like *tigsik* expresses a view of metaphor as rhetorical artifice that splits apart its centers and claiming innermost reality. Thus, *tigsik* as a platform of language plays a crucial role, acting as both a medium of expression and a repository of cultural identity. Here, the style of toast, roast or joust communicates complex themes and issues, making the *tigsik* a conduit for meditation and discernment particularly when the verses confront criticism than recognition.

The ritual of *tigsik* (banquet toast) is rooted in ancient traditions when men are gathered for a celebration, a commemoration or any event that was significant in their lives as a community. During a celebration, the drink is poured in cups made of wood or coconut shell and is passed around. One who holds the cup is obliged to recite a *tigsik* before drinking the wine. The *tigsik* may be sincere, humorous, or acerbic but in all cases witty or satirical. Sometimes the *tigsik* is in answer to or in affirmation of the *tigsik* recited by the previous drinker (Balde, Rikorida Bikolandia, March 2020). Nowadays, *paratigsik* (poet) does not anymore raises a glass of *tuba* or gin to start a toast, rather the *paratigsik* directly commences the *tigsikan* in absence of the glass of *tuba* or gin and starts the verse with the remark, *tigsik ko* (Balde, Note from conversation, Cagsawa Festival 2024). This is now the common practice when *tigsikan* is done during cultural program, culminating activity or gathering of local poets. Remarkably, the passing of time, modernity and Western influence have provided dramatic shift on the way how *tigsikan* is conducted. *Tigsik* has evolved and *tigsikan* experienced the shift away from its tradition which exemplify the broader impact of adaptation and transformation that occurs when traditional customs intersect with

contemporary societal norms and global cultural phenomenon. This *tigsik* collection represented relatively similar number of samples for *tigsiks* from publication and *tigsiks* from digital platform. All these were been performed, rendered or presented in public such as in cultural presentation, poets' gathering, classroom activities. The sampling decision was based on the inference of *tigsiks* developed by *tigsik* masters (known *Bikol* poets) and *tigsik* enthusiasts (teacher, students and the like) that resonates on *paghurophurop* - the perception of open rationality. This *tigsik* collection interrogates the relationships of postcolonial configurations and postcolonial symptoms of modern orality, millennial metaphor, performance poetics and structured conservatism. The themes in the selected *tigsiks* texts are so closely interwoven because each text posits parallel postcolonial configurations from linguistic reclamation, observance to traditional literary forms, cultural references, modern poetics and social commentary, hybrid literary style, interplay between form and content, critique of government and social inequities, humanization of political critique, complex relationship with authority, cultural hybridization, resilience and collective action. Each *tigsik* articulates the ambivalent nature of *Bikol* persona which are not pulled apart but "singing new songs," a new creation from/within the border. The poems utilize the *Bikol* language to assert indigenous linguistic identity against national and global homogenizing forces. By writing in *Bikol*, the poets emphasize the importance of preserving and revitalizing indigenous languages, reinforcing the cultural identity of the *Bikolnons* and reflecting a commitment to cultural diversity and local identity preservation. These *tigsiks* (poems) use satirical or humorous commentary to connect contemporary issues with cultural heritage and reinforces communal bonds through shared cultural practices.

In summary, this *tigsik* collection conveys postcolonial configurations which reclaims and asserts indigenous linguistic identity by utilizing the *Bikol* language, subverts the dominance of mainstream language and emphasizes the importance of indigenous linguistic heritage. The selected poems highlight the contemporary realities by incorporating local cultural references, including social dynamics, educational challenges, political activity, socio-economic struggles, environmental stewardship, and personal experiences. It addresses contemporary socio-political issues, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, corruption, social inequality, remote learning, and environmental conservation, to emphasize the importance of discipline, perseverance, and respect in education and society. These *tigsiks* critique government aid distribution, social disparities, the educational system's pandemic response, and societal attitudes, highlighting the impacts of systemic inequities on marginalized communities and calling for greater accountability and social justice. In a positive note, the poems acknowledge the positive impacts of aid and support while call for greater accountability, recognition, and responsiveness from leaders.

Meanwhile, these poems (*tigsiks*) undergo transformations of being performative to print media, from traditional banquet to cultural festivals and poet gatherings. The *tigsiks* are not anymore confined to male stereotypes but to all genders, and not only performed by the *tigsik* masters (poet) but also open to all *tigsik* enthusiasts (teacher, students, and the like). The poems blend traditional *tigsik* form with modern poetics, utilizing humor, critique, celebration, and social commentary to merge traditional and contemporary influences and create a hybrid literary style - nuances of modern orality. The so-called millennial metaphor, an emerging contradiction and resistance transforms *tigsik* into a nuanced medium, embedding profound ambivalence and hybridity that, while ostensibly focusing on everyday life, rural landscapes, or personal emotions,

discreetly conveyed a collective moral grief and critique against the injustices, deprivations, and the harsh realities under colonial rule. Moreover, the exchange of interpellation between *paratigsiks* (poets) is a rationality of the poet to interpellate his/her *orag* (wit) and *dunong* (wisdom). This is the creativity and cognitive intuition of the *paratigsik* to make the argument under his control and of his/her advantage. Both *paratigsik* enter into a social contract or silent agreement in which he/she when it is not yet his/her turn to recite a *tigsik* agree to be passive in his/her behavior but open, eager and active in decoding of the signs presented to him/her before he/she responds. Thus, the *tigsik* as a postcolonial text conveys structured conservatism - a nativist essentialism (Almario, 2006), that infers and inherently possesses both structure: the rhyme and rhythm (Balde, 2024) but also open to flexible format.

Conclusion

The *tigsik*, as a product of culture needs interrogation with postcolonialism to highlight cultural identity in the midst of the various hybridities at play in contemporary literature. The themes in *tigsik* are closely interwoven because each *tigsik* posits parallel postcolonial symptoms and constructs from modern orality, millennial metaphor, performance poetics to structured conservatism. Each *tigsik* articulates the hybrid nature of *paratigsik* (poet) and the *tirigsikan*, which at the same time recreating the old into an emerging form.

The Indigenous and Modern Self: *Postcolonial Configurations of Performative and Print Form Tigsik*

The *tigsik* collection from the performance and print form have attempted to liberate the *Bikol* persona (*paratigsik*) from the subjectivity addressed to stereotype and the emerging *tigsik's* transformation and its instances of configurations vis-a-vis have maintained its ingenuity and modern poetics, such as: linguistic reclamation, traditional literary forms, cultural references, modern poetics and social commentary, hybrid literary style, dynamic interplay between form and content, critique of government and social inequities, humanization of political critique, complex relationship with authority, cultural hybridization, and resilience and collective action. These configurations demonstrated superiority of the *Bikol* persona in his/her negotiation against neocolonial challenges through his/her vernacular language, structured form and rationality of *orag* (wit) and *dunong* (wisdom) - an indigenous poetics that prevails over the influence of technology and modernism. Moreover, the concurrent presence of the *tigsik's* transformation and resistance to various new constructs like the proliferation of various measures (line verse), absence of wine in commencing the *tigsikan* and the implicit jousting resonates to modern poetics that creates a fusion of unique ambivalence and appropriation, or what *paratigsik* (poets) calls a "negotiation between cultures" - a dialectical assimilation between subjectivity, identification and modernism. Each configuration encapsulates a different aspect of postcolonial literature, demonstrating how these poems address contemporary issues while preserving and revitalizing cultural heritage. The metaphoric-metonymic descriptions and postcolonial symptoms posit how the poems uses the *Bikolano* language and appropriates few Filipino and English languages in asserting identity, adaptability, educational and societal values, social justice and collective action. These texts posit that cultural consciousness and rationality are evolving and existing in a state of tension or contradiction such as the emerging transformation of orality, metaphor, poetics and

conservatism. Thus, by writing in *Bikol* language, the *paratigsiks* have maintained the indigenous linguistic heritage and language. This is an act of linguistic reclamation that reinforces the cultural identity of the *Bikolano* people, reflecting a broader commitment to cultural diversity and preservation of local identity. The *tigsik* traditionally used for satirical or humorous commentary, is utilized to engage with contemporary concerns, thereby reinforcing communal bonds through shared cultural practices, which incorporates cultural references within the poems. This *tigsik* collection creates a tapestry that resonates with contemporary audiences by emphasizing a reference to social dynamics, educational challenges, political activity, socio-economic struggles and environmental stewardship. The inclusion of historical perspectives and collective family efforts further emphasizes the communal and performative nature of indigenous poetics, showcasing *tigsik's* relevance in addressing present-day issues. With these transformations and realities, *tigsik* remains a convivial expression, voiced as a drinking salutation, and a mirror of folk oral traditions and practices between the conservative and modernist *Bikolanos*. Thus, the *tigsik* as a performance poetry expresses various shades of cultural experiences, which reveals various forms of transformations. These transformations exist in cultures which appear to be quite similar in all countries with colonization history. For in one sense any literary forms are cross-cultural interrelated because it negotiates a gap between worlds, a gap in which the simultaneous processes of abrogation and appropriation continually strive to define and determine ones' practice. This particular literary form is therefore always presented out of the tension between the abrogation of mainstream language which speaks from the Center, and the act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of vernacular tongue, the complex of speech habits which characterizes the local language establishes its link in the currency of time. Thus, "without the process of appropriation, the moment of abrogation may not extend beyond the reversal of the assumptions of privilege, the "normal", and a correct inscription, all of which can be simply taken over and maintained by the new usage" (Bhabha, 1994).

The Postcolonial Constructs: Modern Orality, Millennial Metaphor, Performance Poetics, and Structured Conservatism

Modern orality is the transformation of *tigsik's* oral tradition in the age of digital technology, media and social change. The proliferation of digital gadgets transforms the media to shift and blend traditional consciousness with modern practice reflected in themes of social issues, digital life and identity. This becomes the conduit between the traditional spoken word and contemporary expression, which makes the *tigsik* survives and evolves through time but has significantly preserved the *tigsik's* oral tradition and poetics. The *tigsik* and *tigsikan* still observe the live performances in local poet gatherings, school culminating activities and cultural festivals and serve its function to give praise, throw commentary or pose a riddle. Moreover, the *tigsik* still uses the *Bikol* language in different variations but some *tigsiks* are structured in *Bikol* mixed with Filipino or English language, which is inevitable. Modern orality, in this sense, is the transformation of the *tigsik's* spoken tradition into a living, evolving voice of culture - blending the old poetics with the contemporary ones, but still spoken, felt and indigenous. On the other hand, millennial metaphor in this study, recognizes *tigsik* as a traditional *Bikol* poetic form, as a literary device and the millennial mindset as a modern cultural lens through *paghurophurop*. Millennial metaphor is a modern symbolic expression that reflects the attitudes, experiences, and language of the contemporary generation. This generation marries tradition and technology with the use of digital and

pop culture references to express their identity, freedom and social awareness as reflected from the discussion of the postcolonial configurations of *tigsik*. In this transformation, which the *tigsik* and *tigsikan* convey the new symbolic language that connects the tradition and modernism, uncover Bhabha's (1994) notion of ambivalence and hybridity because the various forms of social, educational, political and cultural negotiation posits an ambivalent culture which opposes and at the same time supports the dominance of neo-colonialism and patriarchy, treading on the boundary between domination and resistance, a cultural identity which altered both subjected stereotypes (colonizer and colonized), dominant over marginalized culture because of the effect of emergence. This is what *tigsik* has demonstrated in negotiating in the nativist and postcolonial border. The negotiation is mediated through the use of *Bikol* language which *paratigsik* himself/herself has articulated in his/her negotiation with his/her *tigsik* toast or roast, is also seen through the process of "refusal, rejection and radical questioning of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or correct usage and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning inscribed in words" (Bhabha, 1994), and "[encourage the Filipino people help in reclaiming the lost national consciousness from the Western influence and modernism so that the colonized subject will not be alienated with his/her Self and nation, and must be aware like a literary critic consciously aware of the various developments of modernism"] (Almario, 2006). This rejection of the power of the imperial center incorporates the colonial elements with the existing nativist-postcolonial culture in order to come to terms with the neocolonial reality. Nevertheless, the *paratigsik* has maintained his/her indigenous language, but has also appropriated and reconstructed the *tigsik* in a national language (Filipino) to new usages as an expression of a renewed sense of *Bikolano* sensibility. The selected *tigsiks* convey transformation and shift - transformation from performative to print, drinking sprees to cultural festivals, and poet gatherings becomes inclusive.

Tigsik at its core, reflects *Bikol* values, such as family and community, gratitude and respect, and moral order (*paghurophurop*). Because of this, the *tigsik* has carried a conservative spirit by maintaining the traditional morals and social harmony. The structured conservatism in this study, is still dominant in the collected *tigsik* because of its *tigsik's* form, tone and moral message that reflect on to its traditional form - the rhyme, rhythm, repetition and the customary opening line, "*tigsik ko.*" Another significant note to consider, is the presence of cultural structure that the *tigsik* observes ceremonial discourse of *orag* and *dunong*. The celebratory and didacticism to every *tigsik* keeps the *tigsik* culturally rooted, and preserved the *Bikolano's* cultural tradition and poetics. The *tigsik* is poetic in essence not just in language, but on how it is demonstrated through performance. This is the performance poetics present in each *tigsik* and *tigsikan*. It is a form of reasoning, or open rationality that showcase the *paratigsik's* reasons through feeling, rhythm, and delight. Despite the emergence of modern themes and influences, the *tigsik* continues to uphold a structured framework of rhythm, rhyme and ceremonial tone that reinforces respect, faith, humility, and communal harmony. Even when performed in contemporary contexts, the *tigsik* remains a moral aesthetic expression of *Bikol* identity and sensibility. This what Bhabha's notion of cultural negotiation conveys that "cultural practices and identities are not fixed but rather emerge from and are shaped by the spaces between cultures, creating a hybrid and fluid reality" (1994). Moreover, these poems emphasize communal cooperation and support, highlighting the resilience of individuals and communities in the face of technological challenges, environmental issues, socio-

economic struggles, and the impacts of the health scare pandemic, underscoring the importance of collective action in achieving personal and communal progress. The poems articulate contemporary issues with cultural heritage by employing the traditional and emerging form of *tigsik*. In a performative discourse, the interpellation between *paratigsik* is the rationality of the poet presenting his/her *orag* (wit) and *dunong* (wisdom). This is the creativity and cognitive to control the interpellation in his advantage. Both *paratigsik* enter into a social contract or silent agreement in which he/she when it is not yet his/her turn to recite a *tigsik* agrees to be passive in his/her behavior but open, eager and active in decoding of the signs presented to him/her before he/she responds.

Tigsik as a postcolonial text and at the same time an indigenous form of poetry, it is reasonable to infer that *tigsik* inherently possesses both structure: the rhyme and rhythm. Balde (2024) posited that among the various traditional poetic forms in the regions, the *dalit* emerged as the most favored, due to its less stringent structure compared to the compactness of *tanaga* and *diona*. Its flexible format is well-suited to the expansive expressions characteristic of *tigsik*. The poems reclaim and assert indigenous linguistic identity by utilizing the *Bikol* language, countering the dominance of national and colonial languages and emphasizing the importance of preserving and revitalizing indigenous linguistic heritage, thus demonstrating a hybridization of indigenous and modern poetic forms through their structure and diction. Taking consideration *tigsik's* purpose, its creation is imbued with ritualistic significance, echoing the oral tradition's and cultural consciousness, which reflects the collective values and beliefs of a community, embedding the poem within a broader tapestry of communal identity and tradition. Renowned poet and critic Michael Coroza delineates three indispensable elements in the art of poetry: a deep-seated awareness of poetic tradition, encompassing the historical and critical insights from past poets and critics; an openness to diverse influences, enriching the poet's expressive palette; and a boldness to innovate, challenging conventional norms to forge new paths in poetic expression. These principles underscore the intricate balance between honoring tradition and embracing change, which is central to the dynamic evolution of poetic artistry. In one of the lectures of Ophelia Dimalanta, she mentioned the anatomy of a poem, "seeing the poem on the page (emphasis on the lines); hearing the music of the poem (capitalize on musicality, never mind the meaning); enjoying the images (visual experience or poetic intension - what is materialized in the text, theme); enjoying the emotional experience; and zero-in what you would like to say" (2010). Moreover, since *tigsik* are for the most part miniatures, verses must first of all pass the poet's tack of fitting the abstract into something common, a feat which takes years to master. It is not enough, therefore that one has the penchant for banter and repartee. He must, more than anything else, have the finesse of language and perception to get another heart and soul" (Banzuela, 2011, p.8). Hence, in general, *tigsik* uses the *Bikol* language of the common folks to express the sensibilities of the common folks. This is the *tigsik* of *Bikol*: a rite of wit and wine, but more so a circle of togetherness; a primal song but is not ancient, a poet's hour but the people's day (Banzuela, 2011, p. 37).

The themes in *tigsik* are closely interwoven because each *tigsik* posits parallel nativist-postcolonial symptoms and constructs from modern orality, millennial metaphor, performance poetics to conservative structuralism. Each *tigsik* articulates the hybrid nature of *paratigsik* (poet) and the *tigsikan*, which at the same time recreating the old into an emerging form. Thus, considering Bhabha's notion on ambivalence,

hybridity and appropriation, the *paratigsik* meditates the philosophy of *orag* and *dunong* to understand the Self and Other binaries, while evacuating the Self as the site of meditation and autonomy vis-a-vis is creating a mark of modernity, which at the same time maintains the fusion of Self and Other. Moreover, the attempt of appropriating Filipino in *tigsik* abrogates the vernacular *Bikol* language, thereby promoting a hybrid and dynamic verses. However, this attempt is still limited by the proliferation of *tigsik* in *Bikol*. Nevertheless, the function and relevance of *tigsik* is relevantly significant of the *Bikolanos*' literary landscape, whether performed or written. The *tigsik* in vernacular paves the way to transformation; seems to be preoccupied with different realities such as the loss of Filipino noted values, modernist over conservative familial ties, hybrid education, multicultural language, health scare, political dynasties, divergent economy and the like are just some of the few postcolonial configurations that emerged from these millennial texts. These configurations defined the emerging modern orality and performance poetics, which marry modern poetics, utilizing humor, critique, celebration, and social commentary to merge traditional and contemporary influences and create a hybrid literary style. The common quatrain *tigsik*'s structure evolves to various line-verses, to tercet, couplet and few experiment to more than a quatrain form. Thus, *tigsik* does not only conform with a one stanza four-line verse poem, but may be composed of several *tigsiks* in one *tigsik*. Moreover, *Bikol* language in different variations is still the mainstream language for *tigsik* but there are some written or performed in Filipino language.

Paghurophurop: Perception of Open Rationality

Open rationality examines the way the *tigsikan* and *paratigsik* contemplates and rationalizes his *tigsik* before a performance. In his contemplation, the *tigsik* must express inclusivity, communal norm and indigenous expression that posits the *paratigsik*'s theodical disposition and reasoning that he stays open to emotion, dialogue and lived experience. He contemplates the picture of various aspects such as what technique he will use for his dialogue with the audience. In the act of *paratigsik*'s contemplation, the audience are tempted to turn from the examination of the *tigsik*'s mark of local color - *Bikol* language and the *paratigsiks* as a representation of postcolonial literature. With the use of *tigsik*'s modern orality, millennial metaphor, performance poetics and structured conservatism, it fulfilled the needs of the meaning of the text to which the indigenous language has subverted the criteria used by the dominant culture in understanding the colonized/subaltern literature. The indigenous language becomes a site of struggle because it destroys the monopoly of the colonizer's language (English) or the mainstream language (Filipino) in presenting meaning. The *Bikol* language has able to perpetuate the *paratigsik*'s indigenous sensibilities and consciousness in asserting that regional literature written in various vernacular language has successfully questioned the claim of English to assume the dominant status of a standard code – the language of the erstwhile center and the claim of the Filipino as the mainstream language of the colonized. With this, the colonizer's culture comes out in the colonized subject's identity and culture that the hybrid characteristics of the colonized subject reveal the various transformation of the subject. Thus, open rationality values dialogue, empathy, and lived experience as sources of truth. Through performance, rhythm and imagery, the *tigsik* expresses moral reflection and social insight that arise from everyday life. The *tigsikan* allows both *paratigsik* and audience to participate in meaning-making, turning poetry into a shared act of reasoning that affirms human values such faith, resilience, and community.

The *paratigsik* in this collection, presented an effective identifying relationship between self and place, identity and culture, linguistics and language. Through these selected *tigsiks*, this paper has attempted to prove that there is a *Bikolano* consciousness that exists beyond the stereotypes created from the fusion of the nativist and Third Space's hybrid and ambivalent identity and culture. This is an identity that cannot be neatly defined, but the border that created the emergent hybrid culture and identity transcends this definition. The *paratigsik* (indigenous Self) is a common persona, but may also be an intelligent folk with a cognitive intuition and rational mind that "fair skin" persona claims. *Bikolanos* do not only do the honest job of housekeeping, farming and fishing but they are also poets, writers, entrepreneurs, political leaders and the like which are also evident among the superior stereotypes. This is a rationality that is continually being re-discovered by the indigenous folks themselves, who have assimilated mentally even during and after the propagation of superiority of the colonizers. The phenomenon of *paghurophuop* or the perception of open rationality is attributed to the dialectical assimilation and resistance embedded in *tigsik* (banquet toast) and *tigsikan* (oral performance). The *tigsik* which is known to *Bikolanos* posits diverse discourses either to deliver a direct criticism, throw a blind item or simply praise a meritorious action. This act of intellectual discernment or cognitive intuition during the *tigsikan* (poetic conversation) contemplates Maritain's (1952) cognitive intuition and analogy of being or essence. It articulates how the *Bikol* folk responds rationally and readies himself for interpellation in a limited time. In the oral performance of *tigsik*, the *paratigsik* or the so-called *tigsik* masters and/or *tigsik* enthusiasts carefully craft the *tigsik* as toast, roast or joust. This process involves a deliberate pause (discernment of being) to reflect on the meaning and intention behind each stanza, ensuring that the message must be conveyed appropriately. The other *paratigsik*, in turn or the audience listens attentively, reflecting on the verses and its deeper implications, and how it will be rebuttal instantaneously. This dynamic interplay between *tigsik* performers exemplifies open rationality, as it involves deep reflection, cognitive intuition, and thoughtful engagement. Through this literary engagement, open rationality is demonstrated as a conduit of communication between *paratigsik(s)* and audience/reader.

The perception of open rationality is an open-ended construct, imperfectly defined as the open way of thinking characterized by the absence of boundaries between the logical and illogical (Conde, 2004), a cognitive intuition (Maritain, 1952) and a theodical disposition that resonates within the hearts of the *Bikolanos* (Fr. Tria in Serra and Bañares, 2015). In this study, open rationality is derived from the philosophy of *paghurophuop*, which is guided with the *Bikolnon's orag* (creativity and wit) and *dunong* (wisdom) that establish a space of position of resistance and identity, and eventually attempt to create and re-create position in cultural studies and literature. This theorizing in progress is a preliminary interrogation on orality, metaphor, poetics and conservatism in *tigsik*. The concept has been borrowed from Homi Bhabha's Third Space, Almario's nativist essentialism and Tria's discourse of *yaon* (being). Hence, to further explore the richness of these postcolonial configurations, it is recommended that readers engage with the poems through the lens of linguistic reclamation, appreciating the significance of the *Bikolano* language in asserting cultural identity. This engagement will deepen understanding of the poets' efforts to preserve and revitalize indigenous languages, fostering a greater appreciation for linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. Moreover, readers then may examine the poems' use of traditional

literary forms and their ability to connect modern issues with cultural heritage. By analyzing the *tigsik* form and its application to contemporary concerns, readers can gain insights into the adaptability and relevance of indigenous literary practices. This interrogation highlights the dynamic nature of cultural heritage and its role in addressing modern realities. Finally, it is recommended that readers consider the poems' critique of government and social inequities, focusing on how the poems address systemic issues and advocate for social justice. By exploring the poets' engagement with contemporary socio-political issues, readers can better understand the role of literature in critiquing and challenging systemic inequities. This focus on social critique will underscore the importance of literature as a tool for advocacy and change, highlighting the poets' commitment to social justice and equity.

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