

Making Literature Alive: A Closer Look at *Pala'isgen*, a Tagbanua Epic

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The Tagbanua, one of the ethnic groups of Palawan, have a rich cultural and literary heritage, which includes the ethnoepic *Pala'isgen*. Consisting of six chapters, the epic details the heroic exploits of Pala'isgen, who is endowed with supernatural powers which he uses in defending his people against their enemies.

Pala'isgen is comparable to other Filipino ethnoepics; however, it still remains as unexplored wealth. This may be attributed to the absence of its publication or inclusion in a text book or anthology. This prompted the researcher to find a way by which *Pala'isgen* could be included in English classes, particularly in first year high school, which focuses on Philippine Literature.

Pala'isgen was recorded, transcribed, and translated into Filipino by Dr. Paul Jagmis, Sr. His Filipino translation was the basis of the researcher's English translation.

The researcher also conducted ethnographic research in Cabigaan, Aborlan, Palawan, where many of the Tagbanua live, including the man who chanted the longest portion of the epic. Thus the researcher's description of the residences of the Tagbanua, their sources of livelihood, culture and values enriched the teaching materials.

The researcher then prepared four sample lesson plans, emphasizing student-centered learning activities. One of these plans will be detailed in the presentation of this paper. The researcher then developed an instructional compact disk (CD) to aid in teaching the *Pala'isgen*. The disk contains the English translation, a summary, information about the Tagbanua, sample lesson plans, and a glossary.

The teaching materials were then field tested in three first year classes in Palawan State University Laboratory High School. Based on the evaluation of faculty observers, the students participated enthusiastically in the activities, liked the *Pala'isgen*, and confirmed that the use of the CD and other instructional material helped them understand the epic.

The observers' and students' evaluations affirmed the researcher's idea that *Pala'isgen* is an interesting literary piece and could enliven the teaching of literature in our schools.