

## *The Language of Legends: Indigenous Instructional Materials*

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### **Abstract**

Legends are fully formed narratives that are considered recapitulations of past experiences, showcasing the identity of a people. With this concept, this research gathered, translated and analyzed said indigenous materials to uncover the identity of the people to whom the legends belong. It attempted to analyze the legends of Sorsogon City and their variants. Specifically it sought to identify the typology/classification of the legends from Sorsogon City and at the same time unravel the beliefs, traits, values, traditions and cultural practices that are reflected in the legends. It also aimed to propose instructional materials in teaching both English and literature classes out of the study of legends.

This is an interpretative type of literary criticism which involved collection, translation, description, analysis and interpretation of data gathered. The data collection and validation were done simultaneously using the parameters of Manuel's vertical and horizontal tests. The study revealed through the structural and motifemic analysis of the legends, that there are beliefs, traits, values traditions and cultural practices reflected therein. Consequently, Sorsogon City legends as authentic folkloric items emerged as valuable classroom materials to be used as spring board selections for grammar lessons or it can be used in analyzing and appreciating legends as prose narratives for a literature lesson or in lessons integrating grammar and literature.

Hence, it was recommended to undertake similar studies on legends or other prose narratives of other provinces/ regions/ nations to understand better the humanity of the people to whom the said genre belongs thereby preserving them for posterity.

Keywords: Legends, Literary Criticism, Vertical and Horizontal tests, Motifemic Analysis, Sorsogon City, Bicol Region, Philippines

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## **Introduction**

One of the fundamental objectives of education is to perpetuate all that is desirable in our national heritage. It aims to awaken awareness and appreciation for the uniqueness of our identity as a people, and take pride in the legacy our forebearers have bequeathed. If Rizal envisioned the youth to carry on the torch of progress for the fatherland, then it is through what they learn today about the past, that will determine what they make of the future. Education must provide a panoramic view of a country's continuing saga not only by means of written history but also through oral and unrecorded indigenous practices of its people. Philippine educators are now cognizant of this growing need, that they have been encouraging "field studies" on regional literature; hence more materials on our culture should be included in the curriculum.

The researcher opines that every person should have a better understanding of his cultural heritage, its belief, customs and traditions. Thus, being a teacher, she should know the nature of the learner in order to provide concept/ideas applicable to his needs. In the same sense, the learner should also be aware of his own nature to know himself better, leading him to an understanding of his ways as well as that of others particularly those of the same community where he belongs.

Folklore, is commonly defined as the "lore of the folk; the knowledge of the people". It is a new terminology which took the place of the phrase "popular antiquities that include old beliefs, customs, superstitions and sayings of the people. It was coined in 1846 by an English antiquary William John Thomas. The different genres of folklore such as myths, epics and legends serve as a showcase depicting people's culture and tradition. Hence these genres are effective vehicles in explaining and/or validating the nature of an individual in relation to his ethnic group.

Despite the significance of such folkloric genres to our cultural identity, it is sad to note that researchers in Bicol Folklore are bothered by the dearth of published materials in indigenous lore all over the region. Not much focus is given to these folkloric items that abound in the different provinces of Bicol; particularly on Sorsogon verbal - prose tradition.

Sorsogon City, being the first and only city in the province of Sorsogon was chosen as the locale of the study because of various considerations. It is one of the seven cities in the Region V or known as Bicol Region consists of six provinces such as Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate and Sorsogon. Its geographical location presents a center of trade, commerce, industry and education. It has a rustic ambiance which combines with its rural and cosmopolitan outlook. The population of the locale is composed of Sorsogonans from other municipalities of the province as well as migrants from Bicol and other regions. They carry with them non-material components of their culture such as language, customs and traditions, beliefs, values and other forms of verbal traditions. Though legends abound in the rural-urban city of Sorsogon, very little has been done by way of collecting and compiling genre for posterity.

The researcher has decided to undertake the task to explore and uncover the vast wealth of 'legendary treasure' this study hoped to yield. This study focused on the

collected, transcribed and translated Sorsogon legends and attempted to analyze their nature, role and function to society, Specifically, it sought answers to the following: what typology/classification are drawn from the identified legends; what beliefs, traits, values, traditions and cultural practices are reflected in the legends; and what instructional materials out of the legends can be proposed in teaching English and Philippine literature?

### **Theoretical Background**

This study was anchored on several theories on the reciprocal nature of a society's culture and literature/folklore in relation to community identity. According to Kenneth Goldstein (1964) "every society creates its own culture and literature". Maramba (1971) claims that "for while a literature disseminates itself, it simultaneously disseminates the culture behind it". The study of culture and literature prove to be beneficial if one wants to know the background of a particular society. In the local setting, Berango (1992) noted that it is incumbent upon every Bikolano to involve himself in the further retrieval or collection and study of Bikol Literature to find the roots of his abundant and meaningful culture, to explain his present dream, aspirations, heartaches and cope with worries and problems made finally to find his suitable and valuable position in the future".

Folklore, one of the oldest forms of literature is a product of culture and society. It serves as a showcase of the earliest forms of literature such as myths, legends, tales, proverbs, riddles, songs and dance forms which are transmitted from one generation to another. The different folkloric genres of Sorsogon City once collected, translated, documented, classified as folklore and analyzed according to their narrative elements uncovered some of the traits, practices, culture and traditions that the present generation should get to know and understand.

According to Bernabe, Bonifacio and Tangco (2001) It is reasonable to say that folklore, legends in particular shared by Filipinos is a vital part of Philippine culture, thus legends served both as an "integrative and substantial" part of the Sorsogon's culture. Integrative in the sense that it is a medium that unifies and binds the members of the community in words and deeds. It is also substantial because it is the articulation of beliefs, concepts and practices that serve as identity which also promote social and cultural awareness and concern.

### **Materials and Methods**

The primary sources of data were legends collected from the informants of the different barangays in Sorsogon City who were instrumental in the validation of said data as folkloric materials. During the collection of legends, the researcher simultaneously conducted the vertical and horizontal tests of Manuel (1967) to validate the folkloricity and authenticity of each item. The two contexts of folklore research and collection were considered- the natural and artificial context as cited and used by Segundo<sup>1</sup> in the methodology of her work. The said contexts were discussed by Goldstein in his book, A Guide to Field Workers on Folklore.

This paper used an interpretative type of literary criticism. It employed the content analysis under the descriptive method which aims to the objective, systematic and

qualitative description of the manifest content of communication as discussed by Aquino. The collected and translated legends were classified according to types. A motifemic analysis highlighting the nature, role and function of the legend was further undertaken to determine the motifs which in turn formulate the theme/themes of the narrative.

## Results and Discussions

### A. Typology/Classification of Sorsogon City Legends

There were forty-three (43) identified Sorsogon City legends. For easy reference, they were presented according to classification in three categories.

| Classification   | Legends   |
|--|---|
| <b>First Origin of Names of Places</b>                     | 1, Abuyog; 2. Almendras-Cogon; 3. Bacon; 4. Balete; 5. Balogo; 6. Barayong; 7. Basud; 8. Bibinchan; 9. Bitano/Dalipay; 10. Bonga; 11. Bucalbucalan; 12. Buenavista; 13. Buhatan; 14. Burabod; 15. Capuy; 16. Caricaran; 17. Gimaloto; 18. Guinlajon; 19. Macabog; 20. Marinas; 21. Pamurayan; 22. Pangpang; 23. Panlayaan; 24. Piot; 25. Polvorista; 26. Rawis; 27. Salvacion; 28. Sampaloc; 29. San Juan (Bacon); 30. San Juan Roro (Sorsogon); 31. Sawanga; 32. Sirangan; 33. Sorsogon; 34. Sta. Lucia; 35. Sto. Domingo (Tubog); 36. Sulucan ; 37. Talisay; 38. Ticol; 39. Tugos |
| <b>Second Origin of Geographical Features or Landmarks</b> | 1. Legend of Manonggol;<br>2. Legend of Tulong Gapo;<br>3. Legend of Pinakulan Island   |
| <b>Third Origin of a Plant</b>                             | 1. Legend of Pili   |

Table 1: Classification of Legends

The above table shows the typology or classification of legends. They are (A) Origin of Names of Place; (B) Origin of Geographical Features or Landmarks; and (C) Origin of a Plant. There were thirty-nine (39) legends under the first classification; three (3) under the second; however one of the legends could also be included under the first classification. The third classification happened to have only one legend.

### Variants of the Identified Legends

Variants are versions of the same text that have some (minor) contradictions to other types but they neither carry different messages nor represent possible changes of mind on the part of the narrator and his audience. The legends have been passed on from generations by word of mouth and in the course of transmission, some details might have been omitted consciously or unconsciously while others could have been added due to the imagination or enthusiasm of the story teller, hence the presence of variants.

Each narrator or story teller has his/her own unique/individual style of narrating a story. Some are meticulous enough to include each and every detail of the narrative, while others only focus on the main point or gist of the story. The variants of the Sorsogon legends are presented in the table.

| <b>Origin of names of Places</b>   | <b>Number of Variants</b> | <b>Origin of Geographical Features or Landmarks</b> | <b>Number of Variants</b> | <b>Origin of a Plant</b> | <b>Number of Variants</b> |
|--|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>1. Abuyog-<br/>First Variant<br/>Second variant<br/>Third Variant</b> | 3<br>1<br>1               | <b>1. Tulong Gapo</b>                               | 1                         | <b>None</b>              | 0                         |
| <b>4. Buhatan</b>  | 1                         |   |                           |                          |                           |
| <b>5. Marinas</b>  | 1                         |   |                           |                          |                           |
| <b>6. Panlayaan</b>  | 1                         |   |                           |                          |                           |
| <b>7. Sorsogon</b>   | 1                         |   |                           |                          |                           |
| <b>8. Ticol</b>  |                           |   |                           |                          |                           |
| <b>Total</b>   | 9                         |   | 1                         |                          | 0                         |

Table 2: Variants of the Legends by Classification

The forty-three (43) identified legends have ten (10) variants from two out of three classifications. The first classification has six items with one variant each and another item has three (3) variants. The second classification has also one item with a variant and the third classification has only one item and no available variant.

| <b>Classification</b>                           | <b>Number of Legends</b> | <b>Number of Variants</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| A. Origin of names of Places                    | 39                       | 9                         | 48           |
| B. Origin of Geographical Features or Landmarks | 3                        | 1                         | 4            |
| C. Origin of a Plant                            | 1                        | 0                         | 1            |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | 43                       | 10                        | 53           |

Table 3: Classified Legends and Variants

There is a total of fifty-three (53) identified legends of Sorsogon City categorized into three. The first classification has thirty-nine (39) legends with nine (9) variants; the second classification has three (3) legends and one (1) variant wherein onne of them could also fall under the first classification. The third classification has only one (1) legend and no available variant.

Of the three classifications of Sorsogon City legends, the greatest number are on names of places, and such have been influences by previous colonizers (Spaniards,

Japanese, Americans) who had occupied the place, mingled and familiarized themselves with the native inhabitants; as well as the local customs and traditions of the people. Likewise, miscommunication on the part of the colonizer and the local inhabitants due to language confusion also led to naming of certain places.

## **B. Beliefs, Traits, Values , Traditions and Cultural Practices Reflected in Legends**

Legends are prose narratives classified under ancient literature. To quote Maramba *It is accepted that literature is one of the vehicles of the culture of a people and because of this, the value of ancient literature becomes manifest. As part of the expression of a people before or at least at the inception of acculturative processes, it is a pure or near pure expression of our indigenous culture.*

The researcher divided the discussion into two. The first comprises the beliefs, traditions and cultural practices; and the second includes the traits and values discernible from the narratives.

### **1. Beliefs, Traditions and Cultural Practices**

The Sorsogonans have particular beliefs, traits, positive and negative values, traditions and cultural practices that are discernible from the legends and are still observed up to the present.

(1) Belief in the presence of evil spirits- from the Legend of Brgy. Balete. People believed that the evil spirits dwelling in the three Balete trees caused sickness and death among the residents. The eventual death of Kando who himself cut the trees strengthened this belief.

(2) Belief that lightning could turn people or things into stones from the following legends; (a) Legend of Pinakulan Island (Bitan-o/Dalipay). The lovers running away from their parents were struck by lightning and their bodies were turned into stones which later became an island and in (b) the Legend of Manongo, a flash of lightning struck Mingol, the black cat and the carabao; all three of them were turned into black stones. (c) Legend of Tulong Gapo (First Variant). A boy unintentionally neglected by his parents got struck by lightning; two people trying to save him met the same fate. They were never seen again but three stones emerged in the spot where they were last seen. (d) Legend of Tulong Gapo (Second Variant). Three ladies having a swimming competition in the nearby sea vanished after a sudden downpour of rain accompanied by lightning. Later, the residents noticed three stones that surfaced in the same place where the three ladies had swam.

(3) Belief in Superstitions such as talking to a black cat on a rainy day or night would cause lightning to strike- from the Legend of Manonggol. An old woman reminded Mingol that talking to a black cat on a rainy day or night would cause lightning to strike. Mingol mocked the old woman and using his guitar sarcastically played accompaniment to the meowing of the cat. A flash of lightning hit him, the black cat and the carabao.

(4) Belief in punishment by the Supreme being in the event that children disobey their parents –from the following legends;(a) Legend of Pinakulan Island (Bitano/Dalipay) Dalipay eloped with Bitano whom her parents disliked. The lovers were hit by lightning and were turned into stones. Later, the stones became an island. (b) Legend of Pili. A woman was cast off by her family when she continued having a relationship with the man of her choice. They ran away from home and lived afar from their family. The woman gave birth to an extremely ugly child who nevertheless, was kind and helpful to her parents.

(5) Belief in Miraculous Deeds of Patron Saints from the two legends: (a) Legend of Brgy. Sta Lucia. A blind woman named Romana Beltran regained her eyesight after initiating a novena in honor of a saint, who was Lucia. (b) Legend of Brgy. Salvacion

Residents claimed that the chapel of their patron saint had always been seen illuminated during the night although there was no source of light.

(5) Belief in the effect of a curse- from the Legend of Pili The severed head of an old man cursed the unborn child of the man who beheaded him. The child was born very ugly and physically despicable.

(6) The tradition of Bayanihan from the following legends: (a) Legend of Abuyog (Fourth Variant). The name of the place was derived from the cooperative effort of the residents in any undertaking that was called *bonyog or bayanihan*.. (b) Legend of Brgy. Buhatan (First and Second Variant). The place was called Buhatan because of the frequent transferring of the barangay chapel. This was done through *bayanihan* or the concerted efforts of the residents.

(7) The Celebration of the Feast of Saints-from the legend of Brgy. San Juan (Roro). The barangay celebrates its feast day every twenty-fourth of June in honor of their patron saint, St. Joseph de Baptist.

(8) The practice of serenading a woman as a way of showing affection- from the Legend of Manonggol . Mingol serenaded Viring but after rendering several songs, Viring's windows remained closed. It was only when rain fell and Viring pitied Mingol that she finally asked him in. She then sang songs in reply to Mingol's.

(9) The practice of using fireworks during fiesta and merry-making activities- from the Legend of Brgy. Polvorista. The barangay' name was derived from *polvora* the materials used in making fireworks, common during merry making or festivals.

## **2. Traits and Values**

Both positive and negative traits and values of the people from the community where said legends originated were also taken into account.

| Positive                                 | Negative                          |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1.Bravery/Courage                        | 1.Envy                            |
| 2.Friendliness                           | 2. Impulsiveness                  |
| 3.Generosity                             | 3.Disobedience                    |
| 4.Religiosity                            | 4.Lack of Respect for Elders      |
| 5.Assertiveness/fighting for one's right | 5. Ignorance or lack of education |
| 6.Unity                                  |                                   |

Table 4: Positive and Negative Traits and Values

Of the six (6) reflected positive values, religiosity was revealed in five (5) legends. This trait/values was considered the most common among others. Bravery/courage stand second in the number of legends where this trait was reflected. Generosity, assertiveness and unity were in two (2) legends and friendliness is the trait reflected only in one.

Based from the number of legends where the above-mentioned traits and values where reflected, it can be deduced that Bicolanos, Sorsogagon in particular are indeed religious. They are also brave and courageous whenever the situation calls for it.

In terms of negative traits and values, lack of education was depicted in five (5) legends, mostly from the naming of places due to language confusion between the inhabitant and colonizer. Disobedience to parents was also reflected in four (4) legends where it can be traced from the old tradition that daughters should follow their parents' choice of husband. There were four (4) narratives reflecting envy and lack of respect and another legend that revealed impulsiveness of the characters.

It can be figured out from the discussion that lack of education and disobedience were the most common negative traits deduced from the narratives. However, although they have been considered as negative, it can be inferred that it was only because of the situation/condition stated in the story. Lack of education/ignorance is not an innate character of a person. The characters involved in the items where this trait was exhibited were only victims of circumstances. Similarly, disobedience was mostly displayed by characters who are daughters arranged to marry men, who are chosen by their parents.

### **C.Instructional Material Integrating the Legend**

Legends are prose narratives regarded as true by the narrator and his audience. It is set in a period less remote when the world was such as it is today, and present a human situation from which a problem arises or is presented followed by its consequences or outcome. They also serve as a showcase and vehicles of the culture and identity of a people, as part of the expression through language. They function as basic to social tradition, which contribute part of the social heritage, or the "living mirrors of the past".



Sorsogon City legends as authentic folkloric items can be valuable classroom materials to be used as spring board selections for grammar lessons; to be used in analyzing and appreciating legends as prose narratives for a literature lesson or in lessons integrating grammar and literature.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the aforementioned findings, the researcher came up with the following conclusions (1) The typology drawn from the legends of Sorsogon City include origin of names of places, origin of geographical features or landmarks and origin of a plant; (2) There are ten variants from the total number of collected legends. Nine from origin of names of places and one from origin of geographical features or landmarks. Six beliefs such as presence of evil spirits, lightning turning people or things into stone, superstition, punishment by the Supreme Being, miraculous deeds of saints; and effect of curses were gleaned from the motifs. Likewise, the tradition of *Bayanihan*; the celebration of patron saints; the practice of serenading a woman; and using fireworks during fiesta or merry making activities were other evident practices revealed. Six positive and five negative traits were also reflected from said legends. Local legends can also be used as instructional materials in teaching.

### **Recommendations**

The researcher recommends the following on the basis of the preceding conclusions: (1) Undertake similar studies on legends or other prose narratives of other provinces/regions and even other nation to understand better the humanity of the people to whom these prose narratives belong; and for comparative studies with other places having the same folkloric genre; (2) Include local legends and other types of prose narratives in the study of Bicol literature and introduce various folkloric methods of analysis according to the specific indigenous genre; (3) Incorporate Sorsogon prose narratives particularly legends into the curriculum of Philippine Literature subjects in different schools of Sorsogon Province; (4) Initiate compilations and publications of other types of Sorsogon prose narratives and of other provinces and region for posterity; and (5) Use the reflected traits and values from the local legends to enhance/develop, enrich or re direct the present generation's way of life.

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