

Classifying Local Sugilanon: A Narrative Approach to Cultural Stories

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Abstract—The primary objective of this study is to analyze the classification of Southern Leyte folk stories that depict the life and experiences of the Southern Leyteños in selected folk tales, which can be used in the teaching and learning folk literature. This study employed qualitative design using content analysis. The researcher carefully selected participants representing various towns of Southern Leyte. The study underwent validation by chosen validators. The classification of the folk stories of Southern Leyte is as follows: familial, horror, nature-related, religious, romantic, heroic, and supernatural/fantasy. These classifications are evident in the folk stories of Southern Leyte. The folk stories of Southern Leyte display classifications that reflect emerging narratives in the region, illustrating the collective experiences and lives of the Southern Leyteños, both past and present. These also explain various aspects of tradition, practices, history, and lifestyle.

Keywords— Adaptation, strategy, content analysis, folk literature.

I. INTRODUCTION

Analyzing the classification of folklore in a region is essential for gaining insights into the culture and history of a community. Folklore, encompassing myths, legends, and oral narratives, mirrors a society's collective experiences, traditions, and beliefs. Researchers can identify critical elements that define a community's cultural heritage by systematically categorizing these stories. This process highlights how folklore preserves and transmits traditional knowledge across generations. It also underscores the role of storytelling in maintaining cultural continuity and fostering a sense of identity among community members (Galdo, 2021).

The study of folklore classification provides valuable insights into a society's traditional knowledge and practices. Different categories of stories, such as myths that explain natural phenomena, legends that recount historical events, or folk tales that convey moral lessons, each serve distinct cultural functions (Galdo, 2023). Recognizing these categories allows researchers to understand people's underlying beliefs and values better. This knowledge enriches our comprehension of ancient traditions and aids in disseminating cultural practices and narratives, ensuring they remain relevant and accessible to contemporary audiences.

Furthermore, the analysis of folklore classification intersects with various academic disciplines, including anthropology, history, and literature. Anthropology uses folklore to explore communities' social and cultural dynamics, while history relies on these stories to reconstruct past events

and societal changes. On the other hand, literature examines folklore's artistic and narrative qualities. This interdisciplinary approach enhances our understanding of how folklore evolves and contributes to the broader narrative of cultural and historical development. Scholars and literary critics often draw inspiration from these studies to delve deeper into folk narratives' cultural contexts and historical significance.

The overarching goal of studying folklore classification is to preserve and celebrate a place's history and culture. By documenting and analyzing traditional stories, researchers contribute to safeguarding cultural heritage. This process also promotes the diversity and uniqueness of regional narratives, highlighting the distinctive identities of different communities. As folklore is a living tradition that adapts to changing times, its classification helps ensure its significance is recognized and appreciated, fostering a deeper connection between past and present cultural experiences.

Studying folklore classification is crucial in preserving and understanding cultural and historical contexts. It enables researchers to uncover the rich tapestry of traditions and beliefs embedded in folklore, offering insights into communities' identities and values. This analysis contributes to a more comprehensive appreciation of cultural heritage and its continuing relevance in contemporary society by bridging gaps between past and present and across various academic fields.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study is anchored in Riessman's (1993) narrative theory, which emphasizes the study of storytelling and how narratives are constructed. In folklore studies, narrative concepts, such as the sequence of events, characters, and narration, can be used to understand the formation and meaning of each story.

These theories help provide a deeper understanding of a region's classification of folklore and its significance in the community's culture and history.

Narrative theory is highly suitable for studying folklore because it provides conceptual tools to understand and analyze the nature of stories within their context and meaning. Narrative emphasizes the study of storytelling as a process of creating meaning and experience. In folklore studies, it is essential to understand how stories are constructed and how listeners and storytellers modify their stories based on their goals and experiences.

In summary, narrative theory is highly relevant and suitable for studying folklore in the following ways: First, it provides structure and context for learning stories, helping in understanding the meaning and form of each folklore within their cultural context. Second, it emphasizes the relationship between events and characters within stories, which contain themes and motifs expressing the values and experiences of the community. Third, it shows the evolution and development of stories over time, reflecting changes in the culture and society of a place. Fourth, it highlights the influence of history and daily experiences on the creation of stories, reflecting the collective memory and experiences of the community. Lastly, it shows the relationship between social actions and folklore descriptions, expressing people's values, beliefs, and behaviors in a specific place. Overall, narrative theory provides a deeper understanding and explanation of the importance and meaning of folklore as part of a community's culture and history.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative research designs. The qualitative method used content analysis based on Neuman's (2011) concept. Using this approach, the validation results of the validators in the content analysis were confirmed based on the analyzed folk stories. This approach effectively presents the analysis of folk stories with a systematic and straightforward way to measure the study variables to identify the emerging culture that will reveal the unique identity of the folk stories from Southern Leyte.

In the analysis, the researcher carefully read the collected folk stories to ensure the identification of necessary data contained in the stories. A thorough reading was conducted on the stories, and the culture included in the folk stories of Southern Leyte was analyzed. According to the required data and cultural study, the 15 collected folk stories were subjected to the researcher's content analysis method. As evidence of the analysis, each folk story narrated by participants was written down. Each line of the folk story was numbered. The numbers of each story were colored and recorded to facilitate easy identification and recognition of words or statements.

The classification featured in the folk stories of Southern Leyte was analyzed. At this stage, a thorough reading of the folk story text was conducted after identifying the significant excerpts of Southern Leyteño as to its classification that support the observed results.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Folk stories are part of indigenous narratives and encompass various contents that can be categorized based on their classification. The classification of these stories was analyzed based on the prevailing overall trend or content of the examined stories. Like other indigenous narratives, the fifteen (15) folk stories from Southern Leyte were grouped into seven (7) distinct classifications. The folk stories of Southern Leyte are classified as familial, horror, nature-related, religious, romantic, heroic, and supernatural/fantasy.

In fact, the folk stories of Southern Leyte display classifications that reflect emerging narratives in the region. They illustrate the collective experiences and lives of the

Southern Leyteños, both past and present. According to De Leon (2017), these stories also explain various aspects of tradition, practices, history, and lifestyle.

The researcher analyzed the overall classification of the fifteen (15) folk stories from Southern Leyte, as stipulated below, and it reveals the predominant classification of folk stories in Southern Leyte.

Supernatural or Fantasy

Of the collected folktales of Southern Leyte, five (5) fall under the supernatural or fantasy classification. These folktales, *Doña Marta Cueva Encantadia*, *Syudad sa Panaon*, *Amigong Duwende*, *Ang Sugarol ug ang Ijang Mysterysong Hikot*; and *Si Inday Uho ug ang Amigong Sirena*, center on supernatural forces or magical powers that ordinary humans cannot perform. The excerpts prove that these folktales fall into the classification of supernatural or fantasy.

In the folktale *Doña Marta Cueva Encantadia* from Hinunangan, Southern Leyte, an enchantress resides in a cave.

(T3, P1 and P2) *Doña Marta* is a beautiful fairy who resides in the cave. She carefully guards and cherishes the cave.

In *Syudad sa Panaon*, enchanted beings with no nostrils live in a city visible only to a select few.

(T3, P3 - P6) There, they saw a grand city luxurious within a tree. They could not believe what they saw. They described the beauty and comfort of this amazing city. They were toured around the entire city by a man. They were taken to a place where there were beautiful maidens, but they had no nostrils.

In Maasin City, Southern Leyte, the folktale *Amigong Duwende* describes the friendly dwarfs playing with Nes at school.

(T3, P4 and P5) The child was astonished to see tiny people talking near a large anthill. They were laughing and playing. Since the child was curious, he investigated. To his great surprise, he saw three dwarfs and talked to them.

In *Ang Sugarol ug ang Ijang Mysterysong Hikot*, the power of a red thread given by an enchantress and an old sorcerer is highlighted when it leads her to a large tree.

(T5, P2 - P4) After a long time eating, the top of the tree began to sag. She was worried it might fall. When she touched it, she saw a grand mansion. The support she was leaning on was a golden staircase of the mansion.

Meanwhile, in Malitbog, Southern Leyte, the folktale *Si Inday Uho ug ang Amigong Sirena* shows fantasy when a child encounters a mermaid and joins *Inday* underwater.

(T3, P4) While fishing, she saw a child asking for help. Upon seeing the child, she was amazed by its appearance. The child's body was half-fish and was a mermaid.

According to narrators, elders believe in supernatural beings and spirits. Though not visible, these beings are said to be around, living like ordinary people. Southern Leyteños support this from the folktales, which are inherently spiritual and strongly believe in spirits. Despite this, these tales also teach children to respect their surroundings and honor unseen beings that are part of the world's life cycle.

Family-Oriented

The folktales *Bulawanong Guso* from Tomas Oppus, Southern Leyte, and *Si Epi ug Eko ang Bakol* from San Ricardo, Southern Leyte, fall under the family-oriented classification. These folktales reflect the importance of family among Southern Leyteños as the primary source of values in life. Furthermore, Southern Leyteños view the family as a symbol of true love, providing security and satisfaction regardless of life's circumstances.

For instance, the folktale *Bulawanong Guso* depicts a family's struggles, and despite their hardships, a couple's sacrifices and waiting for food while fishing led to an unexpected blessing from the sea.

Excerpt from *Bulawanong Guso*:

(T1, P2) The villagers always shared joy and helped each other with good methods of livelihood to earn money for their families.

Similarly, the story of siblings *Epi* and *Eko* in *Si Epi ug Eko ang Bakol* reflects a typical Southern Leyteño family. Despite their mother's anger and resentment, the siblings realize the value and responsibility of each family member. They eventually return home, seek forgiveness, and bring their mother to the forest house they found.

Excerpt from *Si Epi ug Eko ang Bakol*:

(T1, P1 and P2) In a place in Panaon, a family was struggling to provide for their two children, Epi, who was very naughty, and Eko, who was a hunchback. Epi would always carry Eko along with him in his mischief.

The folktales *Bulawanong Guso* and *Si Epi ug Eko ang Bakol* are filled with incredible events but underline the essence and value of family to children. These stories emphasize that regardless of the challenges faced, the strength of family love prevails, which the youth should follow. The study shows that folktales play a role in illustrating cultural values and the role of family in society.

Horror

The second classification of Southern Leyte folktales is horror. These include *Mistryosong Barko sa Subang Daku* and *Ang Wowog*. These stories feature terrifying and unsettling events meant to scare children away from undesirable behaviors or practices. Elders commonly used this method to discourage children from playing in quiet places in the afternoon or wandering alone at night.

In *Mistryosong Barko sa Subang Daku*, it is inferred that elders prohibited children from playing in rivers during dusk or heavy rain.

Excerpt from *Mistryosong Barko sa Subang Daku*:

(T6, P7 and P8) According to the story about the mysterious ship, people should never go near or approach the river, especially children and pregnant women, because it might take people aboard MV Cacao to offer them to the fairies. This only happens in December during the rainy season when the water is high. It goes from one to two months carrying many cacao pods.

According to a narrator, this ship is believed to take an innocent being, especially a child, to be offered to the fairies in exchange for their wishes. This might be why children avoid playing in the river. Pregnant women should also be

cautious when the ship arrives in December, as it is often rainy. The ship is believed to carry many cacao pods to other places.

Similarly, the *Wowog* is a malevolent being that preys on and kills people. Unlike other mysterious beings, it has a human-like appearance. This is why children in Liloan, Southern Leyte, are advised to return home early or before dark, thinking that the *Wowog* might come out and eat wandering children.

Excerpt from *Ang Wowog*:

(T8, P1) Since ancient times, the *Wowog* has been feared and should be anticipated during its appearances because it is more dangerous than the *wakwak* and *kikik*. It captures and kills people by biting them, tearing them apart until they die, and then devours them.

According to an interviewee, if the *Wowog* cannot find a pregnant woman or baby to prey on, it attacks anyone it encounters at night. Even a flying head can wrestle with people. It grabs its victim with its long hair, which is as strong as a human arm and wraps around the victim's neck to strangle them, trying to enter the victim's nose and mouth to suffocate them. It will also try to drown the victim if near water.

In the horror folktales, there are warnings for youth to learn lessons that shape their character and recognize social values, serving as a form of social control.

Nature-Oriented

The folktales *Ang Kugtung* of Liloan, Southern Leyte, and *Mensaherong Pungaw* of Sogod, Southern Leyte, are classified as nature-oriented. These stories emphasize the importance of preserving and protecting nature. They argue against the destruction of natural habitats and highlight the role of humans as stewards of the world's resources, as granted by the Creator.

In *Ang Kugtung*, the abundance of the sea provided to people is shown. Due to the continuous destruction of fish habitats, nature's anger led to the creation of a giant fish called *kugtung*.

Excerpt from *Ang Kugtung*:

(T5, P2 and P3) It is believed that this kind of fish eats, damages, and kills people due to its sharp teeth. The various wastes in the sea created this mysterious fish called *kugtung*.

This tale imparts the lesson of the value of marine resources. Currently, Liloan is a sanctuary for various fish species and reflects people's efforts to clean and improve the sea. It is also a center of livelihood for the residents of Liloan.

The story of *Mensaherong Pungaw* from Sogod, Southern Leyte, particularly in the barangay of Libas, depicts a place surrounded by dense forest, which was a source of livelihood. According to the narrative, hunting and planting were everyday activities, and tales about the *pungaw* or owl were widespread.

Excerpt from *Mensaherong Pungaw*:

(T3, P2-P4) According to the story from his grandfather, there are two types of *pungaw*: the *pungaw* of the dense forest and the *pungaw* of the open area. The *pungaw* of the dense forest always makes noise every night, while the *pungaw* of the open area rarely makes noise and is rarely seen.

The classification of Southern Leyte's folk stories reveals the depth of cultural expression, values, and beliefs ingrained in the region's oral tradition. Whether rooted in the supernatural, family dynamics, horror, nature, or other themes, these stories serve as a vital medium for transmitting lessons, cultural identity, and communal experiences from one generation to the next. They underscore the richness of Southern Leyteño heritage and provide a window into the community's worldview, blending tradition with moral guidance.

V. CONCLUSION

The folktales of Southern Leyte reflect a rich tapestry of cultural values, beliefs, and social norms. These stories, categorized into supernatural, family-oriented, horror, and nature-oriented themes, offer insights into the local way of life and the lessons imparted to children and the community. Supernatural or Fantasy tales explore themes of magic and the unseen, reinforcing the belief in supernatural forces and the respect for unseen entities. Family-oriented folktales emphasize the importance of familial bonds and the role of family in providing love, support, and stability despite hardships. Horror stories serve as cautionary tales that warn against undesirable behaviors and encourage adherence to societal norms through fear and superstition. Nature-oriented folktales highlight the need for environmental stewardship and respect for natural resources, reflecting a deep connection to the land and its preservation. These stories entertain and educate, offering valuable lessons on respect, family values, and environmental responsibility. Thus, an Extension/Community Activity can be organized in the form of a Folktale-Based Art and Writing Workshop, where participants creatively express Southern Leyte's folktales through illustrations, short stories, and theatrical performances, fostering cultural preservation while enhancing artistic and literary skills.

Recommendations

1. **Preservation and Promotion:** Efforts should be made to preserve these folktales as part of Southern Leyte's cultural heritage. This can be achieved through documentation, storytelling events, and inclusion in educational curricula to ensure that future generations appreciate and understand their cultural significance.
2. **Educational Integration:** Incorporate these folktales into local school programs to teach students about their cultural heritage and the values embedded in these stories. This can foster a sense of identity and continuity among the youth.
3. **Community Engagement:** Encourage local communities to participate in storytelling traditions and share their folktales actively. This will help maintain the relevance of these stories and keep them vibrant in modern times.
4. **Environmental Awareness:** Use nature-oriented folktales as a basis for environmental education programs. Highlighting the relationship between cultural stories and ecological stewardship can promote greater awareness and action toward conservation.

By valuing and integrating these folktales into various aspects of community life, Southern Leyte can preserve its cultural legacy while fostering a deeper understanding and respect for its traditions and natural environment.

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