

STRUCTURAL AND MOTIFEMIC ANALYSIS OF LEGENDS

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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 analyzed said indigenous materials to uncover the identity of the people to whom the legends belong. It attempted to study the classification, structure and themes of the legends of Sorsogon City and their variants. The results emphasize the difference between the prose narratives from fiction, having its own distinct elements. This is an interpretative type of literary criticism. After the data collection, validation were done simultaneously using the parameters of Manuel's vertical and horizontal tests. Through the structural and motifemic analysis of the legends, the study revealed that there are beliefs, traits, values traditions and cultural practices reflected therein. 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, Motifemic Analysis, Sorsogon City, Bicol Region, Philippines

I. 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 Sorsoguenos’ 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 Sorsoguenos 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?

II. 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 Goldstein (1964) "every society creates its own culture and literature". It is supported by the idea of Maramba (1940) who 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, it can be noted that it is incumbent upon every Bikolano to involve himself in the further retrieval or collection and study of Bikol. This action may help the Sorsoguenos find the roots of his abundant and meaningful culture, to explain his present dream, aspirations, heartaches and cope with worries and problems to finally 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 Sorsoguenos' 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.

III. 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 Segundoⁱ 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 (1977). The collected and translated legends were classified according to types. Structural and motifemic analysis highlighting the form, nature, role and function of the legend was further undertaken to determine the motifs which in turn formulate the theme/themes of the narrative.

IV. Results and Discussions

There is a total of fifty-three (53) identified legends of Sorsogon City categorized into three. The first classification, Origin of Names of Places, has thirty-nine (39) legends with nine (9) variants; the second classification, Origin of Geographical Location or Landmarks, has three (3) legends and one (1) variant. The third classification, Origin of a Plant, 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 influenced 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.

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.

Narrative Structure:

After the legends were validated and considered as authentic folkloric materials, each item was analyzed based on the elements of folklore as prose narratives. The principal elements are orientation, complicating action and the resolution/result. However, Labov (1972) also takes into consideration the addition of the abstract or summary, evaluation and coda whatever the analysis requires it. The researcher included a synthesis of each structural analysis to determine the main subject/idea of the entire narrative. It also explains the reason/s why or how a particular legend came about.

Abstract is the entire idea or summary of the narrative. This is often followed by the orientation except when the evaluation comes after it. This element, however, is not present in other patterns if the orientation comes first in the narrative.

Orientation refers to the time, place, characters involved and situation in which the events of a narrative occur. This is always present in the combination of elements except in an abstract-evaluation pattern.

Complicating action is the structuring of the relationship between characters and events. It is the highest point of Interest or the turning point in the story. This is always followed by either the resolution/result or evaluation.

Evaluation is the perception of the outcome based on the given situation/conflict as described in the narrative. It may come before or after the resolution/result. Its position varies depending on the manner of narration used by the informant.

Resolution/result is the culmination of the narrative which shows whether or not the problem is resolved. It is present in nine, out of eleven patterns and its order in the structural chronology can be interchanged with the evaluation.

Coda signals the end of the narrative. This is often added in narratives to emphasize the belief in supernatural powers and the will of the Supreme Being.

Pattern of Elements in the Narrative

Legends follow a particular pattern of elements in revealing the facts/ideas in the narrative. There were eleven (11) patterns such as:

- a. abstract-orientation-complicating action-resolution/result-coda
- b. abstract-orientation-complicating action-resolution/result

- c. abstract-orientation-evaluation
- d. abstract-evaluation
- e. orientation-complicating action-evaluation- resolution/result-coda
- f. orientation-complicating action-resolution/result-coda
- g. orientation-complicating action-evaluation-resolution/result
- h. orientation-complicating action-resolution/result
- i. orientation-resolution/result-evaluation
- j. orientation-complicating action-resolution/result-evaluation
- k. orientation-evaluation

The stories related b) the informants in the vernacular were recorded and translated faithfully to the "original text" as possible without in any way altering any of the details or sequence of narration. Based on the combinations arrived at after the structural analysis, it can be deduced that legends follow any of the eleven (11) individual patterns in revealing the idea or essence of the narrative. The presence of one element compliments another, but the absence of one does not necessarily affect the meaning of the whole. Each element has its own function different from the other depending on the given information and on the manner of narration rendered by the informant.

The structural patterns of legends are dependent upon its narrator. All the elements of a prose narrative may or may not be present in the rendering of a story. Some may lack one, two, three or four of said elements but the main idea or essence of the narrative is not in any way altered nor affected. The completeness or incompleteness of the narrative based on the combination of elements is largely dependent upon the circumstances of narration. Unlike the short story and other written prose types which are fixed forms, the legend which is oral in origin has a flexible structural pattern dependent upon its narration.

Of the fifty-three (53) legends including the existing variants, one (1) each falls under the abstract-orientation-complicating action-resolution/result-coda; orientation-complicating action-evaluation-resolution/result-coda and orientation-resolution/result-evaluation patterns; two (2) each under the abstract-orientation-complicating action-resolution/result; orientation-complicating action-evaluation-result and orientation-complicating action-resolution/result-evaluation. Five (5) under the orientation-evaluation combination; six (6) under the abstract-orientation-evaluation; seven (7) under the orientation-complicating action-evaluation-resolution-coda; ten (10) under the orientation-complicating action-resolution/result, and sixteen (16) for the abstract-evaluation pattern.

Beliefs, Traits, Values, Traditions and Cultural Practices Reflected in Legends

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.

A. Beliefs, Traditions and Cultural Practices

The Sorsoganons 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-
2. Belief that lightning could turn people or things into stones from the following legends;
3. Belief in Superstitions
4. Belief in punishment by the Supreme Being in the event that the children disobey their parents.
5. Belief in Miraculous Deeds of Patron Saints from the two legends:
6. Belief in the effect of curses.
7. The tradition of *Bayanihan*.
8. The Celebration of the Feast of Saints.
9. The practice of serenading a woman as a way of showing affection.
10. The practice of using fireworks during fiesta and merry-making activities.

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.

Table 1 . Positive and Negative Traits and Values

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	

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 were reflected, it can be deduced that Bicolanos, Sorsoguenos 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.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

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".

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 (10) variants from the total number of collected legends. Nine from origin of names of

places and one from origin of geographical features or landmarks. (3) Legends are describable in terms of the five elements of prose narratives to determine structural patterns and motifs. (4) Six beliefs such as the 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.

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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