

Genre and motif variations in Biliran folk narratives: Insights for literary and cultural studies

Roland A. Niez^{1*}

¹Biliran Province State University, Naval, Biliran Province, Philippines; dnalorzie3@gmail.com (R.A.N.).

Abstract: Biliran folksongs, folktales, and various forms of folk narratives from the elderly will be documented to help safeguard the dwindling oral tradition. This study aims to contribute to the preservation and conservation of the vibrant and genuine cultural legacy of oral traditions in the Philippines. Utilizing the Biliran folk narratives as a corpus and triangulating these with interview data from participants, deductive content analysis, discourse analysis, and thematic analyses were applied to analyze and generate data and results. The genres of the twenty-one (21) folk narratives from various towns or municipalities included six (6) myths, ten (10) folktales, and five (5) legends. The predominant motifs were magic, mythological figures (creators and gods), rewards and punishments (physical actions), tests or trials, miscellaneous groups of motifs (which could hardly stand on their own), and character themes. Customs, traditions, and cultural practices such as the Bayanihan spirit, religious devotional practices, preservation of natural resources and environment, hospitality, storytelling, and a sense of community and friendship were identified. Both positive and negative traits and values were also manifested by the Biliran Ons. Similar studies and documentation of these folk stories could be conducted in other remote areas or places of Biliran and its adjacent provinces of Leyte and Samar to ensure timely collection and documentation, safeguarding and preserving for future generations what remains of these oral traditions and verbal arts.

Keywords: *Biliran folksongs, Cultural legacy, Folktales, Folk narratives, Oral tradition, Philippines.*

1. Introduction

Studying folklore offers a window into the rich tapestry of unrecorded writings, traditions, and cultures that define various groups of people. Folklore, often referred to as folk literature, encompasses any verbal, spiritual, and material aspect of culture that is observed, imitated, and transmitted orally. These tales, originating orally, evolve over time, influenced by memory, immediate needs, purpose, and individual talent, yet they often lack identifiable authors. According to Dr. Damiana Eugenio [16], a prominent folklorist from the University of the Philippines (UP), the term "folklore" lacks a universally accepted definition. However, its roots trace back to European scholars of the 19th century Del Rosario [9]; Dumauai [12]. Folklore translates to the "lore" or knowledge of the people. Initially, it referred to oral traditions preserved among the illiterate masses, later extending to encompass the oral literature of diverse global communities. Eugenio [16] categorizes Philippine Folk Literature into three primary groups: folk narratives, folk speech, and folk songs. Folk narratives encompass prose forms like *alamat* (folklore), legends, and *kwentong bayan* (folktales). Folk speech includes *bugtong* (riddles) and *salawikain* (proverbs). Folk songs can be further divided into story-telling songs (folk ballads), which are rare in Philippine folklore, and non-story-telling songs, which constitute the majority of the country's rich folk heritage. Various studies across the Philippines have explored folk literature in terms of artifacts (e.g., voodoo dolls), oral traditions, culture, and behavior (e.g., rituals).

The island province of Biliran, the focus of this study, boasts a wealth of folk narratives. Historian Dr. Rolando Borrinaga [4] suggests that much of Biliran's folk literature between 1899 and 1909 reflected the moral, cultural, and spiritual experiences of its native population during that era. However,

there remains much to explore in the realm of oral literature. Despite the recognized importance of folk literature, its integration into Basic and Higher Education curricula in the Philippines remains in its infancy. The Commission on Higher Education [6] mandates tertiary courses leading to bachelor's degrees to include regional literature of the Philippines. This initiative aims to foster an interdisciplinary approach that encourages students to view themselves as integral members of both national and global communities. The Department of Education [11] has also introduced policies relevant to language in education. DepEd Order No. 74, issued in 2009, institutionalized Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) nationwide. This policy emphasizes using learners' mother tongues to enhance learning outcomes from kindergarten to Grade Three DepEd [10]. MTB MLE focuses on four key developmental areas: language, cognitive, academic, and sociocultural awareness. Recognizing the value of folk literature, DepEd has highlighted its importance in the curriculum. With the K-12 Basic Education Program's implementation, there is an increased demand for supplementary instructional materials. The Division Localization Theme Matrix (DLTM) initiative was established to capture the unique regional features of Eastern Visayas, highlighting local heroes, flora and fauna, foods, games, songs, legends, and poetry.

The study generally aimed to preserve the art of oral tradition and enrich the vanishing folk literature of the East Visayan Region. By exploring the genre and motifs of Biliran folk narratives, the researcher intends to develop localized teaching materials for literary and cultural studies across various educational institutions. Specifically, this sought to surface undocumented folk narratives in Biliran province, explore the genre and motif of the said narratives, and uncover indicative customs, traditions, values, and cultural practices of Biliranons revealed in the folk narratives.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Folk Narratives or Folk Literature

A "narrative" serves as another term for a story. Narration transforms an experience into a verbal account by aligning a verbal sequence with a sequence of events believed to have occurred. Rather than a mere collection of clauses or sentences, a narrative is viewed as a cohesive entity. While individual sentences may appear disjointed, recognizing their interconnectedness ("narrate" originates from the Latin "relate") transforms them into potent cognitive and affective constructs. Essentially, narratives serve as mediums for conveying experiences. Their capacity to engage the mind and evoke emotions hinges on the narrator's artistry and sensitivity. A skilled narrator can captivate an audience, influencing their thoughts, emotions, and potentially their future actions.

Oral narratives, given their oral transmission, exhibit distinct characteristics: Variability: Folk narratives often exist in multiple versions, with no single text deemed authoritative. Different narrators offer unique renditions based on varying circumstances, necessitating the recreation of the narrative with each telling. Temporal Reflection: As a result of this iterative recreation, folk narratives encompass both past and present elements. Narrators weave past language, symbols, and events shared with their audience into their tales, yet their narratives also encapsulate contemporary situations and values. Individual and Communal Representation: While a narrator infuses personal dispositions and circumstances into the narrative, their creativity is bounded by community acceptance. The recreation of a narrative involves negotiation between the narrator and the audience, ensuring the story resonates with communal values and beliefs Thompson [33].

Blench and Campos [3] posit that oral literature emerged in societies where recording long or significant texts was unfeasible outside of memory and interpersonal transmission. With globalization posing threats to oral traditions, they documented representative Ifugao oral literature genres in a 2010 study, primarily focusing on classification rather than interpretation.

Alunan [1] has made significant contributions to the preservation of Waray oral literature, particularly the "Susumaton." She contends that the susumaton is integral to the Visayan way of life, yet it remains understudied. Alunan emphasizes the importance of understanding oral narratives as creative performances and highlights the susumaton's classification as UNESCO's invisible cultural heritage (ICH), encompassing traditions passed down through generations, such as oral traditions and performing arts Nfah-Abbenyi [28]. Furthermore, Alunan [1] suggests that while much of Waray

literature is oral, its transformation into written form can privilege literacy, promoting cultural development.

In a study by Villanueva [37] on Ilokano folk songs from select municipalities of Cagayan and Ilocos Norte, the richness and authenticity of these folk songs were underscored. Villanueva advocates for the conservation and propagation of these literary pieces, positing that appreciating folk literature can enhance individuals' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, influencing their ideals and beliefs.

These findings informed the creation of instructional materials for literary and cultural education in various educational institutions in the East Visayan region. Thus, documenting Biliran folk narratives becomes imperative, revitalizing disappearing oral traditions and transmitting the values and aspirations of the Biliranons.

2.2. Genre classification

Folk narrative genres exhibit significant variation across cultures. Major genres such as legends, myths, and folktales are prevalent in numerous cultures. Bascom [2] proposed a formal definition of these genres, considering elements like belief, time, place, attitude, and principal characters within the narratives.

Fairy tales typically unfold in unspecified times and places, as evidenced by the familiar opening phrase, "Once upon a time...". These tales are generally considered fictional, often culminating in a happy ending and incorporating magical elements. A majority of fairy tales are categorized under the Aarne-Thompson-Uther classification system, a widely accepted framework for organizing folk tales Uther [36].

Urban legends, also known as contemporary legends, belief legends, or FOAF (Friend of a Friend) tales, are narratives rooted in modern settings, purportedly based on actual events. These tales often recount hazardous or embarrassing situations. Brunvand [5] has developed a type index classifying many urban legends.

Furniss [17] underscores the historical context of genre classification, stating, "Genres have a backstory. We need to look into such histories because it is crucial to know that naming and identifying genre types is a historically relative process and that the application of genre designations might be inconsistent throughout time" (p. 106). Consequently, genre is now perceived as a culturally bound concept characterized by stylistic elements that inform the categorization of artistic works. A genre encompasses both diachronic and synchronic dimensions, thematic diversity and artistic merit, and generates social meaning open to interpretation or deconstruction. The meaning ascribed to a genre within a society is shaped by cultural conventions, evident in its linguistic representation.

2.3. Motif Index

In folklore studies, motifs represent recurring elements or themes within the lore of specific folk groups. Folklorists engage in compiling and categorizing these motifs to uncover patterns both within and across cultures. While motif indexes exist across various domains like folk music and art, the majority focus predominantly on folk literature. One of the most comprehensive and esteemed motif indexes in folklore is Thompson's Motif Index of Folk-Literature. This index meticulously categorizes story elements from various cultures, facilitating cross-cultural comparisons across genres such as folktale, myth, local legend, medieval romance, exempla, saints' legends, jestbooks, novella, fabliaux, and fables.

Thompson's classification approach often results in multiple titles for a single motif, necessitating an intricate network of cross-references and even an index within the Index. Thus, Thompson offers a pragmatic method for comparative folklore studies, emphasizing the identification of individuals, objects, and events over a formal thematic definition. His work remains invaluable in the field.

Contrarily, Propp [29] contested the foundational nature of motifs, introducing the concept of "function" as a novel method for categorizing folktales. Propp defines function as "the act of a character, delineated by its significance for the progression of the story." He posits it as a stable, consistent narrative element, independent of the character performing it. In contrast to motifs, Propp identifies a mere thirty-one functions across folktales.

Dundes [13] suggests that folktales utilize symbols to convey imagination, potentially laying the groundwork for motif representations. While fantastical elements like self-grinding salt mills or magical artifacts might seem implausible, Dundes argues they likely carry symbolic significance.

Furthermore, motif analysis assists in drawing connections between narratives. Jason [21] defines a literary motif as the fundamental content unit occupying primary formal slots in a literary structure. A "character" (comprising object and attribute) and a "deed" (consisting of verb and adverb) together constitute the thematic elements of a narrative. If fragmented, these components lose their literary essence.

3. Methods

3.1. Design

This paper adopted a qualitative approach to describe and interpret folklore narratives. The research primarily employed deductive content analysis and discourse analysis to recognize emerging genres and motifs and to uncover the cultural contexts within which these narratives are constructed. Additionally, the study aimed to determine whether these narratives accurately reflect the beliefs, traits, values, customs, traditions, and cultural practices both historically and presently held by the people of Biliran. Content analysis is a systematic and replicable research methodology that utilizes texts, images, recordings, and other media as data Mayring [26].

Discourse analysis encompasses various techniques for analyzing language in use. Unlike focusing solely on the "objective" reality of an event, discourse analysis emphasizes the language surrounding an event and examines how this language varies based on the communicator and the audience. Discourses represent "ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity" Gee [18]. Within discourse analysis, researchers can concentrate on different aspects of language referred to as "standards of textuality." These standards include intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality de Beaugrande [7].

3.2. Sampling

Although a limited number of Biliran folk narratives have been posted online, this number is insufficient to provide a comprehensive representation of the various towns and municipalities in Biliran province, the focus of this study. To address this gap and to verify other folk stories from the identified communities, twelve original residents, recognized as folklorists, were identified and selected as participants by the researcher. Utilizing a purposive sampling technique, the researcher visited different municipalities to meet with the selected folklorists. Personal individual interviews were conducted, and the researcher listened to their oral narratives. The folklorists were selected based on specific inclusion criteria: 1) They are native residents of Biliran province; 2) They are aged sixty (60) years old and above; and 3) They are natives of the island province who have lived exclusively in Biliran.

3.3. Instruments

One of the primary instruments for this study was adapted from Bascom's Genre Classification and Stith Thompson's Motif Index Frameworks. These frameworks were employed to determine and categorize the various genres and motifs present in the folk narratives. Content analysis was used to analyze the text and identify the types of genres and motifs exhibited in each narrative. The identified features included belief, time, place, attitude, and principal character, with elements of prose narratives encompassing myths, legends, and folktales. Stith Thompson's motif index comprises 23 distinct elements, including magic, animals, marvels, mythological elements, tests, characters of wisdom and foolishness, deceptions, rewards and punishments, societal norms, taboos, chance and fate, sexuality, reversals of fortune, foretelling the future, ogres, captives and fugitives, character traits, unnatural cruelty, miscellaneous motifs, humor, the deceased, religious themes, and the nature of life. In addition to the discourse analysis instrument, an Interview Guide was utilized to triangulate the folk narratives as corpora. A protocol was established through a workshop where experts reviewed and evaluated the

contents of the instruments to ensure their content validity and reliability. Inter-rater validation was also conducted to ascertain the content validity and reliability index of the interview tool.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The first phase of data analysis involved the application of the folkloricity test. The folk narratives underwent both vertical and horizontal tests as outlined by Manuel [25] to validate their folkloricity and authenticity. The vertical test aimed to ascertain whether the stories had been transmitted through three generations of narrators or storytellers. This technique involves tracing the passage of folklore stories from ancestors to descendants. Interviews were conducted with local elders in the originating places of the stories to verify their lineage. Conversely, the horizontal test sought to confirm the folkloricity of narratives by identifying the existence of at least three versions of each story within the study area.

Following the classification, identification, and analysis of the genre types of the folk narratives, the research progressed to the second phase: motif index classification. Utilizing the Discourse Analysis instrument, textual analysis guides were employed to comprehensively identify and generate indicative customs, traditions, values, and cultural practices reflected in the narratives. This discourse analysis provided the context for decoding the indicative customs, traditions, values, and cultural practices specific to the Biliranon culture. Text coding was employed to categorize ideas until emergent themes became apparent. The third phase involved Content Analysis. Folk narrative texts were scrutinized using the frameworks of Bascom and Stith Thompson to unveil the genre and motif indices.

4. Results and Discussions

One of the major aims of the study is to uncover the undocumented folk narratives in the island province of Biliran. The data are shown in Table 1.

Out of the eight (8) towns/municipalities in Biliran, only four (4) — Naval, Maripipi, Kawayan, and Almeria — have been identified with distinct folk narratives. Naval dominates with fifteen (15) narratives, followed by Maripipi with four (4). Almeria and Kawayan each contribute two (2) narratives. Given their geographical proximity, it is unsurprising that narratives from Almeria and Kawayan share common origins and locations.

Table 1.
List of folk narratives discovered in Biliran Province.

Town/ Municipality	Title of folk narrative
Naval	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ang Biyahe sa Upat ka Managhigala (The Journey of the Four Friends) 2. Si Juan Nga Kusgan (Juan the Strong One) 3. Estorya San Maripipi (The Story of Maripipi) 4. Hulagway sa Simbahan Ilawom sa Dagat (Picture of a Church Under the Sea) 5. Itlogay (Itlogay) 6. Estorya San Barangay Bato (Barangay Bato) 7. Birhen del Rosaryo (Virgin of the Rosary) 8. Bato Akin-Akin (Bato Akin-Akin) 9. Kahoy Nga Kahibulungan (The Legend of the Magical Tree) 10. Isla Higtangan (Island of Higtangan) 11. Ang Gugma ni Marcus ug ni Marta (The Love of Marcus and Marta) 12. Ang Kamahinungdanon sa Usa ka Panumpa (The Significance of a Vow) 13. Ang Sinaguwelas (The Grapevine) 14. Ang Tugas sa Menteryo (The Lesson of the Tugas Tree) 15. Ang Salingsing sa Kawayang Patay (The Bamboo Flute of the Dead)
Almeria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Ang Sinugdan sa Almeria (The Origin of Almeria) 17. Isla de Panamao (The Legend of Isla de Panamao) 18. Maria Benita (The Legend of Maria Benita)

Kawayan	18. Maria Benita (The Legend of Maria Benita)
Maripipi	19. Barangay Ol-og (The Legend of Barangay Ol-og) 20. An Estorya ni Ursula (The Story of Ursula) 21. Ang MV Tacloban sa Pampang ng Isang Isla (MV Tacloban in the Shore of an Island)

The narratives discovered in these towns are emblematic of Biliran's rich heritage, tradition, and culture. They serve as a window into the character, beliefs, and practices that distinguish Biliran from other regions. These stories not only reflect the intrinsic qualities of the Biliranons but also spotlight the enduring beliefs and practices that define their identity.

Analyzing the content of these folk narratives reveals that they encapsulate cultural and societal values that resonate with broader Filipino traditions. These values, beliefs, and practices have been integral to the identity of the Biliranons, shaping their past and influencing their present. Some narratives even feature characters whose traits mirror those of the Biliranons, underscoring the continuity of these cultural attributes over time.

Thompson [33] observed that in many cultures, oral storytellers and epic singers played a dominant role, in preserving literary expressions within the memories of the folk. This observation aligns with the Biliranons' emphasis on storytelling as a cherished tradition, facilitating the transmission and propagation of their narratives across generations.

Beyond serving as a repository of cultural values and beliefs, Biliran's folk narratives often depict supernatural beings, spirits, and fairies as allies aiding the Biliranons in their daily struggles. In challenging situations, many claim to have received intervention and luck from these entities, reinforcing their significance in Biliran's folklore and daily life.

Table 2.

Genre of Biliran folk narratives.

Title of folk narrative/s	Myth	Legend	Folktale		
			Realistic tale	Tale of magic	Heroic tale
1. Ang Biyahe sa Upat ka Managhigala (The Journey of the Four Friends)			√□		
2. Si Juan Nga Kusgan (Juan the Strong One)	□√				
3. Estorya San Maripipi (The Story of Maripipi)	√□				
4. Hulagway sa Simbahan Ilawom sa Dagat (Picture of a Church under the Sea)				√□	
5. Itlogay (Itlogay)				√□	
6. Estorya San Barangay Bato (Barangay Bato)		√□			
7. Birhen del Rosaryo (Virgin of the Rosary)			√□		
8. Bato Akin-Akin (Bato Akin-Akin)	√□				
9. Kahoy Nga Kahibulungan (The Legend of the Magical Tree)		√□			
10. Isla Higtangan (Island of Higtangan)	√□				
11. Ang Gugma ni Marcus ug ni Marta (The Love of Marcus and Martha)			√□		

12. Ang Kamahinungdanon sa Usa ka Panumpa (The Significance of a Vow)				<input type="checkbox"/>	√
13. Ang Sinaguwelas (The Grapevine)			√ <input type="checkbox"/>		
14. Ang Tugas sa Menteryo (The Lesson of the Tugas Tree)				<input type="checkbox"/>	√
15. Ang Salingsing sa Kawayang Patay (The Bamboo Flute of the Dead)				<input type="checkbox"/>	√
16. Ang Sinugdanan sa Almeria (The Origin of Almeria)	√ <input type="checkbox"/>				
17. Isla de Panamao (The Legend of Isla de Panamao)		<input type="checkbox"/> √			
18. Maria Benita (The Legend of Maria Benita)		<input type="checkbox"/> √			
19. Barangay Ol-og (The Legend of Barangay Ol-og)		<input type="checkbox"/> √			
20. An Estorya ni Ursula (The Story of Ursula)		<input type="checkbox"/> √			
21. Ang MV Tacloban sa Pampang ng Isang Isla (MV Tacloban on the Shore of an Island)			√ <input type="checkbox"/>		

Table 2 reveals that, of the compiled narratives, six (6) are categorized as myths, ten (10) as folktales, and five (5) as legends. Within the folktales, there are four (4) realistic tales, five (5) magical tales (marchen), and one (1) heroic tale.

Across diverse cultures, folk narrative genres exhibit variability. Nonetheless, legends, myths, and folktales consistently emerge as prevalent genres across many cultural contexts. For instance, narratives such as "Juan the Strong One," "The Story of Maripipi," "Bato Akin-Akin," "The Island of Higtangan," and "The Origin of Almeria" are classified as myths. These narratives not only recount historical realities and connections among places and people in Biliran's past but also offer explanatory frameworks for existing phenomena, serving as guiding principles for successive generations of Biliranons.

In contrast, narratives like "Barangay Bato," "The Legend of the Magical Tree," "The Legend of Isla de Panamao," "The Legend of Maria Benita," "The Legend of Barangay Ol-og," and "The Story of Ursula" are categorized as legends. Legends, similar to myths, are prose narratives believed to be factual by both narrators and audiences. However, they typically unfold in a timeframe perceived as closer to the present, feature a secular rather than sacred worldview, and predominantly center on human protagonists. This characterization aligns with Eugenio [15].

The remaining narratives fall under the folktales category, specifically encompassing realistic and magical tales. These narratives span a wide range of topics, reflecting the lives, beliefs, and cultural conceptions of the people of Biliran Island. They narrate tales of heroes and villains, animals and magical beings, as well as stories of joy and sorrow.

Table 3.
Motifs exemplified in the Biliran folk narratives.

Folk narratives	Motif	Exemplification
1. Ang Biyahe sa Upat ka Managhigala (The Journey of the Four)	Friends' journey (N400) Gratitude and blessings (K2100)	The primary motif of the story revolves around the journey of four friends, who leave their island to sell their mats in the city of Tacloban. The friends experience blessings and fortune in their journey, ultimately attributing their success to their good nature, respect

<i>Friends</i>)	Unity and cooperation (P420) Filial respect and obedience (Q450) Perseverance and hard work (J2100)	for their parents, and gratitude. The friends work together, pooling their resources and skills to achieve their goals, demonstrating the value of unity and cooperation in Filipino culture. The four friends respect and obey their parents, seeking their permission before embarking on their journey. This motif highlights the importance of filial piety in Filipino culture. The characters demonstrate perseverance and hard work, both in their mat-making and their journey to sell them. Their efforts are rewarded, emphasizing the value of diligence.
2. Si Juan Nga Kusgan <i>(Juan the Strong One)</i>	Child with special abilities (D1070) Miracle birth (D2010) Abandonment and reunion (H210) Trial and redemption (Q10) Forgiveness and reconciliation (Q100)	Juan, the central character, possesses extraordinary strength and growth, which is the primary motif of the story. Unable to have children, the couple is blessed with a child through a miracle, emphasizing the importance of family and parenthood. Juan's father abandons him in the forest, but they are later reunited after Juan survives and returns home, showing themes of forgiveness and family bonds. The father's decision to abandon Juan serves as a trial, but his redemption comes when he recognizes his error and promises to be a better parent. Juan forgives his father for abandoning him, and the family is reconciled, emphasizing the importance of forgiveness and family unity in Filipino culture.
3. Estorya San Maripipi <i>(The Story of Maripipi)</i>	Forbidden love (H1330) Escape and isolation (H330) Tragic love and death (H1362) Family expectations and social norms (Q10) Place name origin (D1600)	The primary motif of the story revolves around the love between Maria and Pepe, which is forbidden due to their differences in social status. Maria and Pepe escape societal expectations and their families by fleeing to an uninhabited island, where they live out the rest of their lives, emphasizing the theme of isolation. The love story between Maria and Pepe is tragic, as they ultimately die on the island. However, their faces look happy in death, suggesting that their love was fulfilled. The story highlights the importance of family expectations and social norms in Filipino culture, as Maria's parents disapprove of her relationship with Pepe due to their different social statuses. The naming of the island Maripipi, after the two lovers, is a motif that commemorates their love story and the sacrifices they made for their love.
4. Hulagway sa Simbahan Ilawom sa Dagat <i>(Picture of a Church Under the Sea)</i>	Mysterious caves (C310) Supernatural phenomena (D1000) Folk cautionary	The story's central motif revolves around exploring the mysterious caves on the island of Higtangan. The caves contain various supernatural phenomena, such as stone figures resembling humans and animals, the face of Rizal carved into a stone, and a church with a cross under the sea. The story serves as a cautionary tale, with Pepe advising the tourists to be cautious and use only their eyes to admire the unusual things they see for their safety.

	tale (Z10) Journey and exploration (Q5)	The narrative follows the journey of the tourists as they explore the caves, discovering the supernatural phenomena, and experiencing wonder and fear.
5. Itlogay (<i>Itlogay</i>)	Enchanted Object (D1100) Tests of virtue and wisdom (H1000) Transformation (T100) Rags-to-riches (S100)	Itlogay, the giant egg, is an enchanted object that speaks and is revealed to be the king's child. The story features tests of virtue and wisdom as the three children are asked if they would marry Itlogay, with the youngest child passing the test by accepting the proposal without hesitation. The transformation occurs when the youngest child marries Itlogay and becomes a princess in the king's palace. The youngest child, from a poor family, marries Itlogay and becomes a princess, representing a rags-to-riches theme.
6. Estorya San Barangay Bato (<i>Barangay Bato</i>)	Punishment for misdeeds (Q200) Consequences of bad attitude (Q251) Naming of a Place (C211)	The man's disappearance and the appearance of the large rock in his old house signify punishment for his misdeeds and negative behavior. The story highlights the consequences of having a bad attitude, as the man's actions lead to his eventual disappearance. The naming of the place Barangay Bato comes from the discovery of the large rock in the man's old house, which symbolizes the consequences of his actions.
7. Birhen del Rosaryo (<i>Virgin of the Rosary</i>)	Divine intervention (D300) Sacred figures (A100) Miraculous event (E200)	The Virgin of the Rosary's appearance and subsequent disappearance serve as a form of divine intervention that results in the Japanese soldiers halting their war against the people of Naval. The Virgin of the Rosary is a sacred figure, embodying religious and spiritual significance in the narrative. The appearance and disappearance of the Virgin of the Rosary are miraculous events, emphasizing the divine nature of the story.
8. Bato Akin-Akin (<i>Bato Akin-Akin</i>)	Misunderstandings and miscommunications (J2000) Fate and destiny (F400) Social inclusion and exclusion (Z200)	The story centers on misunderstandings and miscommunications between the man and the deaf-mute couple, highlighting the importance of communication and understanding. The tale portrays the concept of fate and destiny, as the man is compelled to marry the daughter after seeing her naked, and Bakakay is ultimately unable to find her, leading to his demise. The deaf-mute couple and their daughter live in a secluded part of the island due to their differences, illustrating the theme of social inclusion and exclusion.
9. Kahoy Nga Kahibulungan (<i>The Legend of the Magical Tree</i>)	Transformation and metamorphosis (D100) Family relationships (Q100)	The story features the mother's transformation into a mermaid and the magical growth of a tree from fish bones. The tale emphasizes the importance of family relationships and the emotional bond between the children and their mermaid mother.

	Nature and the supernatural (A100)	The narrative showcases the connection between nature and the supernatural as the mermaid mother and the magical tree embody otherworldly powers.
10. Isla Higatangan (<i>Island of Higatangan</i>)	Origin of place name (D2300) Resourcefulness and innovation (A1300) Connection to nature (A100)	The story explains the origin of the name "Higatangan," derived from the Tangan-tangan plant. The tale highlights the resourcefulness and innovation of the early inhabitants of Higatangan Island, who discovered a practical use for the Tangan-tangan plant. The narrative emphasizes the strong connection between the inhabitants and their natural environment, showcasing the island's abundant flora and the significance of the Tangan-tangan plant.
11. Ang Gugma ni Marcus ug ni Marta (<i>The Love of Marcus and Marta</i>)	Childhood Friendship and Love (N140) Coming of Age (Z301) Compassion and support (H1330) Overcoming challenges (A200)	The story revolves around the deep bond between Marcus and Marta that begins in childhood and evolves into love as they grow older. The narrative highlights the coming of age of Marta as she experiences menstruation for the first time and learns to navigate the changes in her body. The narrative highlights the coming of age of Marta as she experiences menstruation for the first time and learns to navigate the changes in her body. The couple faces various challenges throughout their lives but manages to overcome them together, demonstrating the power of love and unity.
12. Ang Kamahinungdanon sa Usaka Panumpa (<i>The Significance of a Vow</i>)	Love Transcending death (N450) Resurrection (A750) Devotion and sacrifice (H1000) Overcoming challenges (A200)	The story revolves around the unwavering love and commitment of Tomas and Donya Louisa, even after her death. The narrative features the miraculous resurrection of Donya Louisa, brought back to life by Tomas using a ritual he observed with the snakes. Tomas demonstrates his devotion and sacrifice by staying with his deceased wife in the grave for nine days, fulfilling their vow.
13. Ang Sinaguwelas (<i>The Grapevine</i>)	Help and kindness (B300) Inter-species communication (F250) Punishment and reward (Q450) Perseverance and	The theme of help and kindness is central to the story, as the sparrow seeks refuge from various trees, ultimately finding solace in the compassionate mango tree. The narrative features communication between various species, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all living beings in the story's universe. The Creator's intervention in the story leads to the punishment of the heartless grapevine and the reward of the kind mango tree, illustrating the concept of divine justice. The disabled sparrow demonstrates perseverance and resilience in its search for shelter, embodying the virtues of determination and hope in the face of adversity.

	resilience (A230)	
14. Ang Tugasa Menteryo (<i>The Lesson of the Tugasa Tree</i>)	Remorse and redemption (Q200) The value of human life (Q250) The power of nature (A120) Growth and transformation (A210)	The theme of remorse and redemption is central to the story, as Andes grieves over his actions and seeks to understand the meaning behind the tugasa tree. The narrative emphasizes the value of human life, reminding readers not to prioritize material possessions or work over the well-being of loved ones. The story highlights the power of nature, as the tugasa tree grows from a broken plow and becomes a symbol of life and healing. The growth of the tugasa tree and its transformation into a source of healing represents change and the potential for redemption, even in the face of tragedy.
15. Ang Sinugdan sa Almeria (<i>The Origin of Almeria</i>)	Settlement and development (A120) Conflict and resolution (A300) Leadership and governance (C100) Cultural exchange and influence (D200)	The story emphasizes the process of settlement and development as the inhabitants of Jagna, Bohol, establish a new community in Almeria. The narrative explores conflict and resolution, highlighting the religious controversy that led to the transfer of the seat of government from Almeria to Kawayan. The story focuses on leadership and governance, illustrating the roles of political figures such as Margarita Sabornido, Eugenio Obispo, and Mateo MacFarland. The narrative underscores the impact of cultural exchange and influence, as the Spanish missionaries and American colonizers contributed to the development of Almeria.
16. Isla de Panamao (<i>Legend of Isla de Panamao</i>)	Enchanted landscape (D800) Mountain spirits (F400) Mysterious Galleon (S100) Hidden Kingdom (F232) Unrequited love and madness (T500)	The story portrays Isla de Panamao as an enchanted landscape with picturesque views and an evocative atmosphere. The belief in mountain spirits inhabiting Mount Panamao contributes to the sense of mystery and magic surrounding the island. The appearance of the galleon from Isla de Panamao, with its passengers and cargo, forms the story's central mystery. The legend implies the existence of a hidden kingdom on the island, populated by fair-skinned aristocrats and producing cacao. The tale of a Spanish officer who, in a fit of passionate love follows his lover to Isla de Panamao, and subsequently goes mad when he cannot find her or the mysterious galleon.
17. Maria Benita (<i>The Legend of Maria Benita</i>)	Fairy inhabitant (F300) Supernatural love (T400) Mortal and Immortal love (T410) Tragic death (T430) Feuding towns (Z320)	Maria Benita, a beautiful fairy maiden, is believed to inhabit Mount Panamao and interacts with the local people of Almeria and Kawayan. The story's central theme is the tragic love affair between Maria Benita and her mortal lovers from Almeria and Kawayan. Maria Benita, a supernatural being, falls in love with mortal men from the two towns, leading to tragic consequences. Both variations of the legend end in tragedy, with the death of Maria Benita's lovers. The conflicting legends from Almeria and Kawayan reflect the real-life feud between the towns and their residents' sadness over the discord.

18. Barangay Ol-og (<i>The Legend of Barangay Ol-og</i>)	Animal protagonists (B200) Etiological Legend (D1600) Food Source discovery (D1650) Observant community (Z350)	The story centers around a pair of birds called "banog" who play a significant role in the narrative. The legend explains the origin of the name "Ol-og" for the barangay, derived from the word "Tel-og," which means "food." The birds' search for food (worms) leads them to Barangay Ol-og, which becomes the place's namesake due to its abundance of food. The early settlers observe and witness the birds' daily routine, eventually naming the barangay "Ol-og" after the birds' food-seeking behavior.
19. An Estorya ni Ursula (<i>The Story of Ursula</i>)	Mysterious stranger (E400) Wealth and prosperity (N300) Local legend (D1800) Impact on community (Z200)	Ursula is a mysterious figure who becomes the center of attention when a ship arrives, claiming to have come to buy harvested cacao from her plantations. The ship's crew associates Ursula with wealth and prosperity, as they believe the bright lights on the cliff indicate a majestic and prosperous city. Ursula becomes an unforgettable figure in the hearts of the Binalayons, turning into a local legend. The ship's arrival and Ursula's story significantly impact the local community, as they come to believe in her existence and remember her as a legend.
20. Ang MV Tacloban sa Pampang ng Isang Isla (<i>MV Tacloban in the Shore of an Island</i>)	Maritime misfortunes (J1000) Survival and rescue (T500) Illusions and disappearances (E720) Community and gratitude (Z100)	The maritime disasters featured in the story are the grounding of MV Tacloban and the sinking of MV Doña Marilyn. Sergio's survival at sea and rescue by the MV Malaysia crew demonstrate themes of perseverance and rescue. The crew of MV Tacloban experiencing illusions of a prosperous city and the mysterious grounding of the ship introduce elements of illusion and mystery. Sergio's return to his community and his continued appreciation for life and the kindness of those who saved him underscore themes of community and gratitude.

The term "folklore" encompasses a rich tapestry of oral traditions that have been recorded and passed down through successive generations, forming an integral part of a culture's intangible heritage. The Philippines, in particular, boasts a diverse literary landscape, both oral and written, replete with folktales that reflect the lives and experiences of its ancestors Hufana and Semorlan [20].

According to Prof. Johannes Wilbert, as cited by Mangarin et al. [24], the isolated nature of certain habitats within the Philippines has contributed to the preservation of tribal cultures, resulting in a wealth of oral literature, ancestral histories, and narratives featuring spirit beings, cunning animals, and tales of human frailties and passions. Folk literature not only entertains but also offers insights into human anxieties, aspirations, and the mysteries of the natural world Russell [30].

In the context of this study, the term "motif" is employed by folklorists to describe recurring narrative elements such as characters, objects, actions, and events that form the backbone of many folktales and traditional stories Macdonald [23]. These motifs serve as markers that aid in analyzing and understanding the values, customs, practices, and traditions of distinct cultures.

Utilizing Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, this study identified the dominant motifs present in Biliran folk narratives. The analysis revealed prevalent motifs such as magic, mythological figures (including creators and gods), rewards and punishments, tests or trials, miscellaneous motifs that are less distinct, and themes related to the nature of life (encompassing justice, injustice, right or wrong, wealth and poverty), as well as character themes. However, certain motifs

commonly found in Thompson's framework, such as humor, captives and fugitives, reversal of fortune, and ogres, were notably absent in the Biliran narratives.

The absence of these motifs could potentially be attributed to external cultural influences that may have shaped or altered the narrative traditions within Biliran. It is plausible that certain motifs did not emerge due to broader cultural or regional influences on Biliran folklore. A recurring motif observed across many stories is the presence of paranormal beings, creatures, and spirits that have the potential to harm humans.

Table 4.
Customs, traditions and cultural practices of the Biliranons.

Themes	Positive traits and values	Significant statement/Sample extract
Generosity and kindness		" <i>Kaning generosity bitaw, oo.</i> " ("That generosity, yes.") P2 " <i>Matinagdanon siya, maloloy-on kay nalooy man siya sa may diperensya, Mao to iyang kinaiya.</i> " ("She is generous, compassionate because she feels pity for those with disabilities. That's her character.") P5
Love and affection		" <i>Kay naa man gyud element ana, of course, love, affection. Pero usa ana treachery.</i> " ("There is an element of course, love, affection. But one is treachery.") P1 " <i>The values portrayed in the story include cooperation, sympathy, love, respect, trust, friendship, loyalty.</i> " P6
Resourcefulness and resilience		" <i>Kanang pagka unsa kanang pagkamatinahuron o</i> " ("That would be about respectfulness or") P4 " <i>The values portrayed in the story include cooperation, sympathy, love, respect, trust, friendship, loyalty.</i> " P6
Joyfulness and hopefulness		" <i>Hopeful, joyful ka</i> " ("You are hopeful and joyful") P2
Religiosity and strong faith in God		" <i>kana ilang pag.. kanang sa paminsan kalihokan sa simbahan mokuan pa man gihapon silage prosesyon, kanang mahal na araw bitaw.</i> " ("that's their participation in church activities like processions, especially during Holy Week.") P4
Compassion and humility		" <i>Kami bitaw lahi man mi pobre man kami pobre mi sa peso pero dato lang ang amo kasing-kasing sa among isigkatawo.</i> " ("We are different, we may be poor in terms of money, but our hearts are rich for our fellow people.") P5
Respect		" <i>Kanang pagka unsa kanang pagkamatinahuron o</i> " ("That would be about respectfulness or") P4 " <i>Ang pamatasan sa mangga ug sa kuan kaning...lomboy ug sa sa sinaguwelas kay naa man gyuy tarwo nga bisag mag-ayo ka nag ka biyente di ka tubagon. So di naa gihapon.</i> " ("The manners of the mango, lomboy, and

		sinaguwelas trees are still present because there are people who, even if you treat them well, won't reciprocate. So, they still exist.") P5 "The values portrayed in the story include cooperation, sympathy, love, respect, trust, friendship, loyalty." P6
Sympathy		"The values portrayed in the story include cooperation, sympathy, love, respect, trust, friendship, loyalty." P6
Loyalty		"The values portrayed in the story include cooperation, sympathy, love, respect, trust, friendship, loyalty." P6
Themes	Negative traits and values	Significant statement/Sample extract
	Treachery and distrust	"Kay naa man gyud element ana, of course, love, affection. Pero usa ana treachery." (There is an element of course, love, affection. But one is treachery) P1 "The connection between the fairy and the people was only tainted when a Manileño broke the trust which Maria Benita built with the people." P6
	Social class divide and arrogance	"Aww..mopili ug dato kay naa man poy dato nga matapobre dili makagusto sa pobre. Sama kadto kang Itlogay pobre may ila pagtan aw diato. Wa sila mosugot. Kadtong usa ang iyang kinaputhan kay nagtoo man nga badaw kuno mao iya swerte misugot siya..." (Well, they choose the rich because some rich people are arrogant and don't like the poor. For example, in the story of Itlogay, they looked down on the poor. They didn't agree. The one who got her eventually thought that was his luck, so he agreed...) P3 "Ang pamatasan sa mangga ug sa kuan kaning...lomboy ug sa sa sinaguwelas kay naa man gyuy tarwo nga bisag mag-ayo ka nag ka biyente di ka tubagon. So di naa gihapon." ("The manners of the mango, lomboy, and sinaguwelas trees are still present because there are people who, even if you treat them well, won't reciprocate. So they still exist.") P5
	Hypocrisy	"ang tanan nga mag.. ang ang magsisimba ba daw dili man daw tanan Diosnon." ("not all those who attend church are godly.") P4

The participants identified nine (9) positive traits and values depicted by the Biliranons: generosity and kindness, love and affection, resourcefulness and resilience, joyfulness and hopefulness, religiosity and strong faith in God, compassion and humility, sympathy and loyalty. On the other hand, the researchers extracted three (3) negative traits and values of the Biliranons from the identified folk narratives: treachery and distrust, social divide and arrogance, and hypocrisy. It can be deduced that the positive and good traits/values of the Biliranons far outweigh the negative/bad ones.

Generosity and Kindness are values that are offshoots of the Christian influence. “*Utang na boot*” and “*tabang sa kapwa*” are local terms that signify the same meaning. Biliranons are naturally helpful and generous people. They give as much as possible and help family members — and even strangers — when needed. This is seen through the abundance of charity drives and foundations in the country, especially when calamities arise.

Having been once regarded as the only Christian nation in Asia, the Biliran people exhibit a strong sense of religiosity or faith in God. The area is filled with several churches, shrines, and other religious icons. Additionally, the site is well-known for its faith healers, mediums, and healing techniques.

Helpfulness and obedience are values that are instilled in people as a result of strong family ties. Younger family members are expected to show their elders that they love and respect them by doing as they are told and by pitching in with home duties and volunteer work. The Biliran tales still show hospitality as an ancient tradition. It is a tiresome but lovable custom among the people to welcome family members, friends, neighbors, strangers, and foreigners into their homes for free food and housing throughout their stay.

5. Conclusion

The undocumented folk narratives of Biliran synthesize the intricate tapestry of life, customs, traditions, and culture cherished by the Biliranons, deeply rooted in their historical heritage. Predominantly comprised of folktales, these narratives frequently explore motifs centered on magic, deities, physical trials, and character-driven actions. They vividly portray the authentic essence of Biliranons, reflecting their ethnic and religious legacies that persist from the past into the present.

These folk narratives from Biliran serve as invaluable repositories of the region's mythical, legendary, and historical past, illuminating the connections between bygone eras and contemporary life. Nevertheless, in our ever-evolving society, cultural transformations are inevitable. Many traditional customs and folkways are fading into obscurity, overshadowed by the relentless march of technological advancement.

Environmental influences significantly shape the origins, propagation, and structure of these narratives. Equally vital are the contributions of folklorists and the generational transmission that sustains these stories over time. Therefore, Biliran's folk narratives offer a rich reservoir of insights for cultural and literary studies, filling crucial gaps in Philippine literature and educational resources. They hold immense potential for enhancing educational curricula and fostering a deeper appreciation of Biliran's cultural heritage among students and scholars alike.

6. Recommendation

Similar studies and other documentation of these folk stories may be conducted in other remote areas/places of Biliran and its adjacent provinces of Leyte and Samar to ensure the timely collection and documentation to safeguard and preserve for future generations what dearth has been left of these oral traditions and verbal art. Academic institutions such as State Universities and Colleges, the Department of Education, and Local Government Units may work hand in hand to strengthen and ensure this initiative is prioritized.

Following this investigation, Biliran folk narratives may be examined or explored from various angles, including sociocultural, anthropological, historical, and linguistic aspects, since most folklore studies previously conducted only focused on classificatory and corpus levels.

It is necessary to establish a group or institution that will protect oral tradition and document it to keep the tradition alive in the history of our people.

Despite the legitimate functions that folktales can play in the classroom, teachers must use caution and common sense when selecting their resources to ensure that the current curriculum's main objectives are successfully met.

To re-instill in the minds of Biliranons, especially the in today's younger generations, these folk narratives need to be utilized and integrated into the teaching of subjects and courses related to culture, literary, Mother-tongue and localized instruction, and other Philippine discipline and local studies.

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