

ARIMBAY'S VERBAL LORE: AN ANTHOLOGY OF FOLKTALES

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ABSTRACT

This is a descriptive ethno-literary research that documented, translated, classified, and analysed folktales from Barangay Arimbay, Legazpi City, Albay Province, Philippines. The ethnographic methods of data collection, as well as the vertical and horizontal tests of Manuel (1985) were employed in the validation of 74 diversified folktales gathered from the said locale. The Labovian and literary approaches for the structural and textual analysis were employed to identify structural patterns, themes, beliefs, values, cultural practices and traditions discernible from the texts. This study revealed that the environment plays a major influence in the creation, transmission and diffusion of varied types of folktales, while the life of a folktale largely depends upon its narrators and on its generational transmission. Said folktales mirror a belief system where the supernatural and paranormal outweigh religious influences. Arimbay folktales are well-springs of information about the people's mythical, legendary, historical past and mainstream experiences which bridges the gap between the old world and their present or contemporary life.

Keywords: Arimbay, verbal lore, anthology, folktales

INTRODUCTION

Folklore comes from the Eti-Anglo-Saxon words “folc” meaning people and “lar” learning, (Thoms, 1846) which means knowledge or wisdom emanating from the common folk or the grassroots accumulated in time by constant and collective practices of a people known as culture and tradition. Culture is a generic term for “way of life” (Pohlong, 2004). It embodies both material and non-material aspects of a people's civilization. The material component of a people's culture is anything tangible and empirical such as houses, vehicles, tools, cooking implements, food and dishes, clothing, and others. This component is of special interest to archaeologists who literally dig deep into the soil for remnants of fossils, relics and artifacts that fuel the writing or re-writing of history. On the other hand the non-material or oral forms of literature open doors to anthropologists, ethnographers, and the literati for such folkways include widely held beliefs, tales, legends, anecdotes...songs and oral epics; ceremonies, rituals... magical techniques and procedures... charms, prayers, incantations... proverbs and mnemonic devices (Bayard, 1960) and other forms of verbal art handed down orally from age to age.

The multi-disciplinary nature of folklore and its transcendental value has primarily influenced the dynamics of society. Related studies from various fields prove the interrelatedness of folklore to the social sciences and almost every aspect of human endeavor. Dolby (1996) and Seward (1996) recognize the contribution and influence of folklore on liberal arts education. Hence, Workman (1996), Richardson (1984), Wilson (1996), and Bauman (1996) aver that folklorists and other scholars need to work together in order to reposition folklore, incorporate and teach it across

disciplines, thereby highlighting Brandy's (1996) findings of student's and layman's growing interest in postmodernism, ethnic literature, cultural and folklore studies. Goldstein's Field Worker's Guide (Goldstein, 1964) indicates the folklore processes such as problem formulation, pre-field preparations, the establishment of rapport to informants, participant-observation and interview methods, and the techniques in motivating informants.

In the Philippine setting, Del Prado (1981), Realubit (1983), Meñez (1996), and Hornedo (1979) provide historical, anthropological, theological and ethnological explanations on the social behavior of peoples while Moll (2001), Realubit (1999), Nasayao (1995), Bachiller (1995) and Segundo (1988) affirm that folk literature mirrors the folks and their world. Much about their peculiar identity is gleaned from their oral traditions, practices, and rituals. On the other hand, Amador (2011), Besmonte (2010), Villamor (2009), Conde (2006), and Gilbas (2003) unravel the belief in supernatural beings such as *agta*, *aswang*, *kalag* and other legendary creatures which are essentially imbued in the everyday activity of the folks. Despite the post-modern environment, these folks still embrace primitive beliefs and practices that have deeply influenced them.

For Dorson (1959), folklore is common to all people. Understanding, appreciating and sharing another culture's folklore transcends race, color, class, and creed more effectively than any other single aspect of our lives and, as an element of our past and present society, it is something we can all relate to. Its value is no less than any part of our history and heritage and such must be documented and preserved as a legacy for our future. Hence, the need to collect, record, study and preserve existing folktales of places like Arimbay, Legazpi City in the Philippines, before the tradition finally fades in time.

Located between the Barangays of Rawis and Bigaa, along the highway from Legazpi to Tabaco City, Arimbay's interesting topography offers diverse scenery from agricultural lands and serene beaches, to a few business and commercial establishments revealing the rural-urban character of the locale. With a population of 3,753 residents (2015 Census), Barangay Arimbay is made up of seven puroks with an assortment of geographical features. Aside from the presence of a few professionals in the area such as teachers, doctors, engineers, and others. The common forms of livelihood associated with such surroundings include rice, coconut, vegetable and root crop farming, fishing, and handicraft making. The upland, lowland, river banks, and coastal areas provide a variety of environmental factors that shape and promote cultural activity. Barangay Arimbay is host to a good number of folklore genres and materials generated from the urban-rural community itself. One of the most popular (if not the most popular) folk narratives in the locale is the folktale. Folktales are prose narratives of a grave or serious nature (from the perspective or point of view of the folk), often containing the element of the supernatural. Its time frame is vast and encompassing as it may include settings from the remote or distant past to the contemporary present (Segundo, 1988), such as mainstream folktales. The narratives told by word of mouth from one generation to another, may consist of stories from all walks of life such as historical, religious, elemental, and other tales. Mainstream folktales on the other hand, may include firsthand accounts/ personal experiences, or narratives heard from living relatives, friends, acquaintances, and others circulating within the locale. Schlosser (1997) avers that folktales speak of universal and timeless themes, and help folks make sense of their existence and/or cope with the world in which they live.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is a qualitative-descriptive, ethnographic-literary research that made use of the ethnographic methods of community immersion, participant-observation and unstructured interviews in the data collection (Goldstein, 1964) and validation of folklore material using the three generation in-depth vertical test and/or the five version horizontal test to determine the folkloricity of an item or text. (Manuel, 1985). To be assured that a text gathered from the field is indeed authentic folklore material, it should have been transmitted or passed on from parent to offspring or near kins for at least three generations. Key informants were 60 years old and above to be assured that said informants are in the “middle of generations”. Since they themselves are offspring of their sires, yet are also parents and/or grandparents; hence, they are both receivers and givers of the lore in their respective repertoires. The vertical test therefore, could determine the number of generational transmissions of a text, as well as its folkloricity. If the item does not pass the first test in terms of folkloricity, then the second one may be administered. Manuel (1985) claims that there should be at least five repetitions or versions of the same text within the locale of the study (from other informants). This proves that the item is widely circulated or diffused within the community and is therefore folkloric material. The collected folktales were classified according to typology and translated from the vernacular into the English language as faithfully as possible to the original text and context of the narrative. Said translations were subject to juror review and evaluation.

An analysis of the various folktales was done using the Labovian structural pattern for folk narratives to examine the five major parts of each folktale namely: 1.) Abstract or summary which refers to the entire idea or summary of the narrative. 2.) Orientation or information about time and place in which the events of a narrative occur and may also include the introduction of agents of action participating in the plot of a narrative within the situation also known as the exposition. 3.) Complicating Action is the essence of the minimal definition of a narrative. It is referred to as the conflict, crisis or problem within the narrative leading to the climax (and often a Coda is added as a sign that the narrative has ended). 4.) Evaluation looks into the main point of the narrative to determine its function, thus validating its classification. 5.) Resolution explains how the problem has been solved (Labov, 1972). A textual analysis was further undertaken to identify themes, beliefs, values, cultural practices, and traditions discernible from the texts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Documentation, Translation and Classification of Folktales

The locale was amply represented by 15 informants who were 50 years old and above coming from all seven puroks of the barangay. In six months' time, 74 diversified folktales were documented, translated, and classified into six types. Below is a sample of a religious folktale from an informant, translated into the English language.

Sample Narrative

Señor San Roque
Inistorya ni Eliza A. Arcinue
Sinurat ni May Antoinette S. Imran

Dyes anyos ako kaidto kan nagkakawat kami ki insurektos kan mga amiga ko sa Barrio San Roque. Ma-alas sais na kan banggi kan biglang nagtaram su sarong kakawat ko:

“Ate Liza, hilinga nasusulo an kapilya!” Ay iyo man naggad, halangkawon na su kalayo. Di nagdalagan ako pauli, nyako,

“Pay, Pay, nasusulo su kapilya.”

“Nata, ano an nangyari?”

“Inda basta uto nagkakalayo na.”

Nagdaralagan duman su ama ko buda su mga kataraid ninda. Arayo pa sinda, tanawon na su kalayo, pero pag abot ninda sa kapilya, makangalas ta dai man lamang ki kalayo. May nahiling daa sindang beinte-singkong pidasong tiklad na naka-bugkos duman sa laog kan kapilya. (An tiklad pigagamit yan sa pag-atop.) Nariparo man ninda na su sapatos kan imahen ni Señor San Roque, maation daa, buda pano ki dugi.

May sarong lalaking nag-istorya samo duman sa kapilya na kan sarong aldaw daa; mga alas-sais ki hapon, nagkasilyas sya duman sa may daungan sa may dagat. May nahiling syang gurang na lalaki hali sa pier. May puro-pasan daang tiklad na nabubugkos. Nagdali-dali daa syang naghugas asin sinabat nya su gurang para tabangan mag alsa kan tiklad na binakal sa pier.

“Ako na po maalsa kaan.”

“Bayai na noy ta kaya ko man ini.”

“Saen mo po dadarahon iyan na pigpapasan mo?”

“Sa harong ko; yaon dyan, harani man sana.”

Taod-taod nawara sana ito. Narumduman kan lalaki su gurang pagkailing kan pandok ni San Roque, su bado asin su sapatos nya, buda su tiklad sa laog kan kapilya. Ginirabuhan sya.

“Iyo iyan su pigbulig nyang tiklad.”

Namangnuhan kan mga tawo na luho na palan su atop sa tangod kan natitindugan kan imahen ni Señor San Roque. Pigtatagduan na sya kan uran ta dai pa man nariparo kan mga tawo itong raot na kisame. Kaya gayod sya na an nagdisponer kan tiklad na iaatop kan “harong” niya.

Pinakarahay tulos kan mga taga duman samo su atop asin piglinigan su kapilya. Nagdara man sinda ki mga burak para sa imahen. Nag-iribi su mga tawo asin naghagad ki tawad sa kapabayaan ninda sa Santo. Ito an aldaw na dai mi malilingwan.

Taon-taon mi pigpuprusisyon an imahen ni Señor San Roque; kan bago pa iyan kaidto, direcho an tindog nya, ngunyan gari kuba na ki diit. Dai mi man sya pighihiro pero dakul na an nakaka-reparo kan pagbabago kan anyo nya. Gari guminurang naman sya.

Translation

Señor San Roque

Written and translated by May Antoinette S. Imran

I was barely ten years old when we used to play a game called “insurrectos” in Barrio San Roque. It was six o’clock in the afternoon when one of my playmates noticed something.

“Ate Liza, look! The chapel is on fire!”

I looked to the direction where he was pointing and indeed huge flames have enveloped the whole chapel reaching parts of the roof. I ran home to tell my father.

“Pay, Pay, the chapel is on fire!”

“Why? What happened?”

“I don’t know, I just saw it burning!”

My father, together with our neighbors rushed to the site of the commotion. From a distance they could see the conflagration and how the flames engulfed the roof of the old chapel. When they reached the place however; they were all astonished to find out that there was no fire at all! They went inside the chapel and searched every nook and cranny, but not a single flame was visible. They were able to find however, twenty-five (25) pieces of “tiklad” bundled together on the floor. (“Tiklad” is a local material made of nipa or anahaw used for roofing bamboo huts.) The people who entered the chapel also noticed that the boots of “Señor San Roque” were dirty and full of mud.

A nervous barrio folk narrated to us his experience the previous day. He said at around six o’clock in the afternoon, he felt the call of nature and looked for a place by the dock where he could attend to his toilet needs. While seated behind a tree, he saw an old man carrying a bundle of “tiklad” on his shoulders. He hurriedly washed himself and met the old man to help him carry the bundle he bought from the pier.

“Let me carry that bundle for you.”

“Don’t bother young man, I can manage.”

“Where are you taking that bundle?”

“To my house, nearby.”

After the old man walked a few meters away, he disappeared. Inside the chapel, the young man suddenly remembered the old man after seeing the image of “Señor San Roque, his muddy boots and the bundle of “tiklad” lying on the floor. He felt goose bumps all over.

“This was the bundle he carried on his back;” the man said, pointing to the “tiklad” on the floor. Some people noticed a large hole on the roof of the chapel, directly above the spot where the image of the saint was standing. Rain would drip on the image as no one noticed the leak on the roof. Perhaps it was the saint himself who brought the “tiklad” to fix the roof of “his house”.

The barrio folk immediately went to work. They fixed the roof, cleaned the chapel and brought fresh flowers for the image. Many cried and asked for forgiveness from the saint for their forgetfulness and negligence. It was indeed an unforgettable day.

Every year, we would have a procession in honor of Señor San Roque. When the image was new, it stood up straight like a young man, now (after many years) he looked stooped, a little bent. No one has done anything to alter his appearance, but many Barrio folks have noticed the changes in the image. It’s as if he has grown older.

Classification

Apart from the narrative on Señor San Roque, the researcher was able to gather a good harvest of diversified folktales yielded by the grassroots. The anthology of Folktales, their types and sub-classifications are as follows:

A. Religious Tales are prose narratives that reflect deeply rooted Christian influences on the lives of people. Examples of which are stories of: 1. The Blessed Virgin, 2. Saints, 3. Strange Apparitions, and 4. Messages through a Medium or Healer.

B. Historical Tales are prose narratives that highlight a significant or poignant period in the history of a people such as wars, invasion, liberation, calamities and others, and the aftermath on their lives. Examples of which happened during: 1. Japanese Time, 2. American Regime, 3. Post-War, and 4. Contemporary Times

C. Elemental Tales are prose narratives about the belief in unseen beings such as fairies, elves, dwarves, and the like, and their effect on the lives of people evident in tales on: 1. Engkanto (Fairies/Elves or White Ladies), 2. Dwende (White, Red, Black Dwarves), 3. Agta (Tiny, Black People), 4. Kapre (Hairy Tree Giant), and 5. Halas (Snake).

D. Witches or “Aswang” Tales are prose narratives on the lore of a shape- shifting-nocturnal being, who preys upon sick persons, pregnant women or unborn babies. The creature may disguise itself into such forms (according to the stories) as: 1. “Ayam” (Dog), 2. “Ikos” (Cats), 3. “Orig” (Pigs), and 4. “Layog” (Flying Witches).

E. Ghost Tales are prose narratives about spirits or souls of the departed who try to communicate with the living through strange apparitions or messages. Such narratives are about the: 1. “Kalag” (Souls seen or heard through dreams, apparitions or voices) and 2. “Santelmo” (Ball of Fire/St. Elmo’s fire)

F. Tales on Folk Beliefs and Practices are prose narratives on traditional beliefs and customary practices which come in the form of a premonition or warning such as: 1. “Pagiwas sa Helang o Kagadanan” (Avoiding Illness/Death) and 2. “Paghula” (Divination)

Table 1 shows that *elemental tales* or narratives on fairies, elves, dwarves, satyrs, and the like were as recalled by the informants, the biggest in number followed by *aswang tales*. *Religious tales* came in third, followed by *ghost* and *historical tales* respectively, while *tales on folk beliefs* and *practices* came in last.

Table 1. Types of Folktales Gathered from Barangay Arimbay, Legazpi City

Types of Folktales	Number	Rank
a. Elemental Tales	32	1
b. Witches or “Aswang” Tales	17	2
c. Religious Tales	9	3
d. Ghost Tales	7	4
e. Historical Tales	6	5
f. Tales on Folk Beliefs and Practices	3	6
Total	74	

The Locale

a. Barangay Arimbay is composed of seven puroks with varying topography of upland, lowland and coastal areas. Purok 1 is located beside the Arimbay River. Puroks 2 and 7 are coastal areas. Purok 3 is an upland area full of trees. Purok 4 is a lowland area near rice lands along the highway. Purok 5 is an elevated area that leads to a wooden bridge over a river that passes through bamboo groves known as “Marurugi”, while Purok 6 is another lowland area by the highway to Legazpi City adjacent to National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) office.

Table 2. Location, Types, and Number of Folktales as Narrated by the Informants

Purok	Location	Types of Folktales Narrated by Informants	No. of Folktales	Rank
2 and 7	Coastal Areas	Elemental, Religious, and Ghost Tales	32	1
1 and 5	Riverbank Areas	Elemental and Aswang Tales	22	2
4 and 6	Lowland Areas	Elemental and Aswang Tales	14	3
3	Upland Area	Aswang and Ghost Tales	7	4
TOTAL			74	

b. The coastal areas ranked first in narrating folktales followed by riverside communities. The lowlands were third while the upland area came in last. Communities located near bodies of water produced the biggest number of folktales. Lowlands produced an average number while the upland area generated the smallest number of tales.

c. The biggest number of folktales recalled by the upland area are *aswang tales* followed by *ghost tales*. The lowland areas, on the other hand, shared *more elemental* tales followed by *aswang tales*. The coastal areas contributed the biggest number of *elemental tales* followed by a significant number of *religious* and *ghost tales*, while communities near the riverbank shared an equal number of *elemental* and *aswang tales*.

d. *Elemental tales* abound in coastal areas, lowlands and riverside communities; more *aswang tales* thrive in the upland area than in communities by the river. *Religious tales*, on the other hand, proliferate in coastal areas while *ghost tales* abound in both upland and coastal areas.

Communities located near bodies of water had the biggest number of *elemental*, *religious*, *ghost*, and *historical tales*, including *tales on folk beliefs and practices*, while *aswang tales* were mostly present in the upland areas. Folk beliefs evident in the tales claim that *elementals* dwell in artesian wells, river banks, and places near bodies of water. They also inhabit trees found in both lowlands and coastal areas. On the other hand, *aswangs* thrive in hilly places where many tall trees and bamboo groves are found. Holy shrines of saints are located in the coastal areas, hence, the presence of *religious tales* in the locale. Japanese bunkers and tunnels by the sea are grim reminders of the Second World War. The long stretch of the Arimbay shoreline used to be a Japanese camp where many Filipinos and Americans were held captive; thus, *historical* and *ghost tales* abound in the area.

The environment, particularly topography, plays a major influence in the creation, transmission, and diffusion of folktales. The biggest number of folktales is about *supernatural* and *paranormal entities* followed by *religious tales* on miracles of saints and other holy beings including mediums believed to heal the sick and predict the future. Most of the folktales are concerned with mystery, magic, and mysticism of unseen beings either as *elementals*, *aswangs*, or *spirits* of the dearly departed. The same holds true to religious figures such as saintly apparitions, dream premonitions and divine messages through medium intermediaries. *Historical tales* reflect the impact of the Second World War, while *tales on slowly diminishing folk beliefs and practices* are the least in number.

Structure of a Folktale

The folktales were analyzed according to: a. Abstract or summary; b. Orientation in terms of: 1) Time 2) Place 3) Person 4) Situation; c. Complicating action; d. Evaluation; and e. Resolution/Result. Below is a sample of a folktale with a complete structural pattern (abstract-orientation-complicating action-evaluation-resolution) analyzed using the Labovian Method (Labov, 1972).

“Señor San Roque”

a. Structure

1. *Abstract* - The story is about the narrator’s experience when she was just ten years old. The attention of the Whole community was caught by a burning chapel and the image of the ‘Miracle Worker Saint’, Señor San Roque, to remind them of their duties toward their patron, which they have set aside due to either forgetfulness or negligence.

2. *Orientation* - The time frame mentioned was six o’clock in the afternoon, when the narrator was barely ten years old, at Barrio San Roque. The personages involved were the narrator, her playmates, her father, the man who saw a mysterious old man and the barrio folk.

The narrator and her playmates were playing a game called “insurrectos”, when one of them noticed that the chapel was on fire. Startled by the sight of the burning chapel, the narrator and the other children ran home to tell their parents, who in turn, hurriedly rushed to the rescue.

3. *Complicating Action* - When the villagers reached the chapel, they were all astonished to see that there was no fire at all! The people entered the old chapel, where they saw a bundle of twenty-five pieces of “tiklad” on the floor. They also noticed that the boots of the image of “Señor San Roque” were dirty and full of mud.

A nervous male barrio folk told the people that he saw a strange old man with exactly the same countenance and clothes as the saint by the dock, the previous day. He was carrying a bundle of “tiklad” when the man offered to help him. The old man said he could manage the load which he was bringing to his house nearby. The man felt goose bumps all over when he realized who the old man was.

4. *Evaluation* – The villagers noticed a hole on the roof where drops of water would pour on the Saint during rainy days. Many of them begun to realize the meaning of the strange phenomenon.

5. *Resolution* - The Barrio folk fixed the roof, cleaned the chapel and brought fresh flowers for the image. Many cried and asked for forgiveness for their forgetfulness and negligence. Every year, the community sponsors a procession in honor of Señor San Roque, as proof of their devotion to their patron saint.

b. *Theme/s* - A Saintly Miracle; Repentance for human frailty and negligence; Communal indulgence for religious obligations.

c. *Beliefs* - There are many miracle stories of saints and their deeds. Señor San Roque is known to be a miracle worker who helps heal the sick, protects the poor and the helpless.

d. *Values* - Religiosity, vigilance in times of danger, helpfulness and cooperation, repentance and devotion.

e. *Cultural Practices and Traditions* - Taking care of the images of saints and looking after the cleanliness and upkeep of chapels and churches is a devotional practice of some people. They are called “taga-ataman” or caretakers. They believe that the saints whose images they look after will bestow upon them blessings and protection.

“Bayanihan” or communal cooperation in times of celebrations, need and danger in the locale, is an age-old tradition not only of Bicolanos, but of other Filipinos as well.

The celebration of the feast day of saints with a procession after the mass is also a cultural tradition still practiced up to the present time.

Analysis of Structural Patterns

The 74 folktales collected from Barangay Arimbay in a span of six months; yielded four types of structural patterns as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Structural Patterns of Folktales

Structural Patterns of Folktales	Number	Rank
A. Abstract-Orientation-Complicating Action-Evaluation-Resolution	42	1
B. Abstract-Orientation-Complicating Action-Evaluation	23	2
C. Abstract-Orientation-Complicating Action	7	3
D. Abstract-Orientation	2	4
TOTAL	74	

The implication of the above patterns and numbers indicate that a large majority of the folktales are still fully formed and contain the complete details of the narrative. One third of the collection however, still contains many of the details of the narrative but lack the solution to the complicating action. A small number of narratives end with the complicating action and no longer have an evaluation and resolution, leaving the tale with its basic information; while only two narratives have an abstract-orientation pattern without any complicating action, evaluation and resolution; thus, containing only a few details of the narrative.

The structure of the narrative is fully dependent upon its manner of narration; hence the type of story-tellers responsible for its generational transmission are in fact carriers of the narrative tradition.

Story Tellers and their Types of Narrations

Based from the structural analysis and unstructured interviews conducted by the researcher; 74 folktales as shown in Table 4 yielded the following results: There are 42 *enthusiastic and careful narrations*; 23 *enthusiastic yet forgetful types*; seven *hurried narrations* and two *careless ones*. There were no *creative narrations* as per data generated by the research.

Table 4. Types of Narrations

Types of Narrations	Number	Rank
a. Enthusiastic and Careful	42	1
b. Enthusiastic yet Forgetful	23	2
c. Hurried Storytellers	7	3
d. Careless	2	4
e. Creative Storytellers	0	
TOTAL	74	

There are varied types of narrations of story-tellers (depending upon their situations and predicament when they were interviewed by the researcher): 1. The *enthusiastic and careful type* gives full attention to all events and details in the story through an accurate rendition of the text; 2. The *enthusiastic yet forgetful type* misses out on certain details inadvertently (perhaps due to old age or memory gap); 3. The *careless one* is unmindful of many important details or inconsistencies

in the narrative; 4. The *hurried type* deliberately omits certain parts of the text to hasten the pace of narration; and 5. The *creative* one adds more details to the story in order to please the audience or replace forgotten details with new ones. For the *creative type*, what the memory fails to remember, the imagination can promptly supply.

While a large majority of the stories collected were fully formed or lacked only one (1) part of the narrative, the life span of a text largely depends upon the type of narrations and on its generational transmission. If many narrators are *forgetful*, *hurried* and *careless*, parts of the narratives could be missing or get lost in the process of generational transmission and diffusion (within the locale or to other places via social mobility and migration). If the next generations show little or no interest in the preservation of such a cultural practice or tradition, these will eventually fade in time; or die away with the older generation who used to perpetuate it. Not all old folks, however, are into verbal lore storytelling. Some no longer see its relevance and are ashamed, shy or hesitant to render folklore in the presence of others particularly younger people for fear of ridicule.

The form of a narrative is directly proportional to its content or amount of information within the text; on the other hand, the more diminished the parts of the structural patterns are, the lesser information and important details could be found within the narrative. A small portion of the collected tales has diminished in structural parts, details and length showing a tendency towards eventual disintegration. Hence, the anthology is just in time to preserve the remaining ones.

Themes, Beliefs, Values, Cultural Practices and Traditions

Themes

A theme is the central idea of a narrative that portrays a significant human experience or reveals a universal truth. The themes of most stories bolster the belief in the existence of supernatural beings/creatures and spirits, and that such entities could cause man harm. Hence, man should be vigilant in times of danger or be prepared for sudden encounters with the supernatural and the paranormal. To avoid such encounters incurring the wrath or vengeance of said entities, peaceful co-existence between man and unseen beings seem to be the best resolve. Respect for nature and its mysteries will provide man and the other “beings” lurking in his environment ‘private spaces’ for mutual existence.

Strong faith in God, saints and other holy beings including man’s belief in miracles is proof of the Christian influence in the lives of people. Close Family Ties, Childhood Innocence, Love and Respect for the dearly departed, Repentance before doomsday and even Foreboding signs of Pestilence and Death are more deeply rooted in religious beliefs discernible in the folktales. Table 5 shows 100 themes drawn out of the seventy-four folktales. They were further classified as follows:

Table 5. Themes in Arimbay Folktales

Themes	Number	Rank
a. Encounter with an elemental or “Aswang”	65	1
b. Strong faith in God, saints and other holy beings/man’s belief in miracles	21	2
c. Vigilance in times of danger	18	3
d. Fear and respect for the unknown/the mysteries of nature	12	4
e. Close family ties	9	5
f. Childhood Innocence/Imagination	8	6
g. 1. Paranormal experiences with spirits	5	7
2. Vengeance of unseen entities	5	
h. 1. Love and respect for the dearly departed	4	8
2. Divination	4	
3. Effects of the war	4	
i. 1. Industry	2	9
2. Displacement	2	
3. Disrespect for nature	2	
4. Importance of repentance before Doomsday	2	
5. Foreboding signs of Pestilence and Death	2	
j. 1. Charity for the sick	1	10
2. Curiosity	1	
3. Generosity	1	
4. Hospitality	1	
5. Love transcends worlds or dimensions	1	
6. Man reaps his punishment due to disobedience	1	
7. Nature is man’s best friend or worse enemy	1	
8. Negligence	1	
9. Preservation of a historical and geographical landmark	1	
10. Skepticism getting in the way of healing	1	
11. Superstition	1	
12. Value of marriage	1	
TOTAL	100%	

Beliefs

A belief is the state of mind in which a person perceives something to be true, with or without empirical evidence to prove a case with factual certainty (Primmer, 2018). There is a total of 100 beliefs derived from the folktales which are classified into six types as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Beliefs Deduced from Arimbay Folktales

Beliefs in:	Total	Rank
a. Supernatural Beings	40	1
b. Christian Faith	29	2
c. Divination	17	3
d. Paranormal Entities	10	4
e. Forebodings of Death	2	5
f. Antidotes for Pestilence and Death	2	6
TOTAL	100	

The implication of the results reveal that the belief in *Supernatural and Paranormal beings, Divination and Antidotes for pestilence and death* are Pre-Hispanic influences. Various forms of divination show a mixture of prayers and rituals from both sides of the hemisphere. The “*Oracions*” are believed to be powerful prayers in Latin or Spanish to ward off evil in the form of supernatural and paranormal beings. The rituals are indigenous practices which include cures for the sick, fortune telling, or conjuring unseen entities.

Many of these beliefs are traceable to the ancient Bikols as Realubit (1983) claims were recorded by early historians. She avers that there was a pantheon of gods headed by *Gugurang* (the god of good) who lived in *Kamurawayan* or heaven, and *Aswang* (the god of evil) who lived in *Gagamban* or a place of fire. *Gugurang* was known as a Spirit while *Aswang* was often pictured as alternately a snake or animal. Del Prado (1981) also claims that “Bicol Myth is interspersed with beliefs and superstition... such supernatural beings include Katambay, Patyanak, Yasav, Bakonawa, Isaw, Sarimaw and many others. Belief in Paranormal entities such as *Kalag* (spirit) or *Tagno* (soul of *anitos* or deceased ancestors) is rooted from the belief in the afterlife. Other rituals and practices included indigenous healing, where natives employed fruits, leaves, roots of trees and plants for medicine; *Hidhid*, an execration or exorcism offered when public calamity destroyed the town, such as... pestilence, and destructive typhoons, etc.

The folktales mirror a belief system where the belief in the supernatural or paranormal outweighs the Christian or religious influences. The mingling of both beliefs though, is evident in age-old rituals where the “*Parabulong*” or “*Albularyo*” (Healer, Shaman, Diviner, etc.) uses the power of both traditions and blends them into a powerful antidote for healing or for whatever purpose it may serve.

Aside from age-old superstitions, topography is one of the environmental factors that contribute to the belief in supernatural beings. The river under the Arimbay Bridge is a well-spring of numerous elemental stories of all sorts; while the elevated hilly terrain of Purok 3 which is full of old, sturdy trees has become the source of many narratives on the *aswang* phenomenon. A place called “*Marurugi*” or Bamboo grove in Purok 5 is also a popular locale for *aswang* tales.

The presence of several shrines, chapels, and families caring for venerated images in the barangay attest to the strong Christian influence in the area; Healers and even mediums also reside in the locale. Their healing methods comprise prayers and rituals revealing both ancient beliefs and religious influences.

Belief in *paranormal beings, forebodings of death and antidotes for pestilence and death* are offshoots of antiquated superstition more than topographical factors. The Christian doctrines on the existence of the soul and the afterlife are also contributory to such beliefs.

In the belief system of the Arimbay community as gleaned from the folktales, superstition supersedes religious beliefs and practices. It has a stronger bearing on the lives of people. However, the element of the supernatural in the form of miracles, white and black magic, the mysterious and the macabre, etc. pervades in both traditions. Hence, Pagan and Christian rituals continue to thrive in this “rurban” (Merriam Webster, 1934) community.

Values

Values are a person’s principles or standards of behavior; one’s judgment of what is ethically and morally right or wrong and important in life (Oxford Dictionary, 1884). There is a total of 175 values drawn from the narratives and classified into 10 types as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Values Deduced for Arimbay Folktales

Values	Total	Rank
a. Close family ties	37	1
b. Vigilance/bravery(in times of danger)	29	2
c. Respect for (mysteries of) nature	25	3
d. Religiosity/Strong Faith in God	15	4
e. Helpfulness	10	5
f. Obedience	9	6
g. Innocence	8	7
h. Hospitality	5	8
i. 1. Charity	3	9
2. Friendship	3	
3. Gratitude	3	
4. Industry	3	
j. 1. Dedication to duty	2	10
2. Precaution for children’s safety	2	
TOTAL	175	

Close family ties rank first among all values derived from the folktales. The family and its welfare as well as its cohesiveness come first and foremost among all other priorities. Bolstered by a strong Christian influence, folks of the locale still believe in the old adage that, “The family that

prays together stays together”. However, many family members go out of their way even to work in foreign countries as OFWs just to provide for their families. Extended families and dependence on parents for support by offsprings and their families is one disadvantage of such value.

The strong belief in *supernatural beings (such as elementals and aswangs)* and *paranormal entities encourage vigilance/bravery in times of danger*. The danger perceived in the tales is more of harm brought about by unseen beings rather than criminal or lawless elements. Corollary to such belief is Animism which shows *respect for (the mysteries of) nature* where trees, rivers, streams, wells, mounds, caves, and other solitary places are supposed to be left untouched so as not to harm or disturb the “spirits” or entities that dwell in them.

As the only Christian country in Asia, *Religiosity or Strong faith in God* is evident in the Arimbay community. Many chapels and Shrines of saints and other religious icons abound in the area. The place is also known for mediums, faith healers, and even healing practices.

Helpfulness and Obedience are inculcated values emanating from close family ties where younger family members have to show love and respect for their elders by being obedient to their bidding and helping in the household chores and community undertakings.

Innocence is also viewed both as a virtue and value taken in the context of unmarried women and of course the unsullied world of children.

Hospitality as an age-old tradition is still discernible in the Arimbay tales. Accommodating family members, relatives, friends, neighbors, even strangers and foreigners into one’s abode for free meals and lodging through the duration of their stay is a burdensome yet an endearing practice of the people.

Charity and Gratitude are values which are offshoots of the Christian influence. “Utang na boot” and “tabang sa kapwa” are local terms that signify the same meaning.

Friendship shows camaraderie among neighbours and acquaintances. The term “pakikisama” is closely related to this value as it suggests a strong alliance or bond among friends in times of need as well as revelry.

Industry speaks of community livelihood which comes in the form of fishing, planting, chopping firewood, braiding abaca fibers, baking bread, selling wares, etc.

Dedication to duty shows steadfastness to one’s profession or industry. Patience and hardwork are its corollary virtues.

Cultural Practices and Traditions

Cultural Practices and Traditions are beliefs passed down within a community or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past manifested through a culture or sub-culture as customary practices of a particular ethnic or cultural group (Green, 1997).

One hundred twenty-three cultural practices and traditions were drawn from 74 folktales further classified into 11 types as shown in Table 8:

Table 8. Cultural Practices and Traditions

Cultural Practices and Traditions	Total	Rank
a. Shamanism	27	1
b. Talismans or “Pangontra” against elementals and aswang	26	2
c. Close family ties	12	3
d. Religious devotional practices	11	4
e. Bayanihan (community endeavour)	9	5
f. Incantations for paranormal entities	6	6
g. Homage and respect for the dead	5	7
h. 1. Livelihood	4	8
2. Unhygienic toilet habits	4	
i. 1. Shelter	3	9
2. Children’s games	3	
3. Indigenous household items	3	
j. 1. Use of artesian well (drinking water, washing, bathing)	2	10
2. Hospitality	2	
3. Safety precautions	2	
4. Eating habits	2	
k. 1. Common expressions	1	11
2. Women’s safety	1	
TOTAL	123	

Shamanism or the ancient practice of high priests or priestesses performing rituals and reciting spells and incantations (for conjuring, controlling and subduing entities, spirits and elements for purposes of healing, planting, divination, burial, etc.) is closely related to the practice of wearing or placing *talismans* in certain parts of the house and the yard for protection against *aswangs* or *elementals*. The practice and tradition are bolstered by the strong belief in the supernatural or unseen beings. The *shaman* or *parabulong* provides the talisman, amulet or *pangontra* which comes with an *oracion* or prayer to ward off unseen beings or creatures. *Practices of hanging garlic by the windows and placing a hardbroom upside down by the door* is done to prevent the *aswang* from entering one’s dwelling. The medallion of *San Benito* or the all-powerful eye called *dignum* are said to be effective amulets against both supernatural and paranormal entities.

History tells us that Shamanism was very much a part of the beliefs and practices of the Ancient Bikols. The *Balian* or *Balyan*, who was a priestess could perform many rituals such as the *Hidhid*, *Lumay*, curing the sick and creating or crafting charms and amulets for specific purposes. The Ancient Bikols believed in the power of charms (Del Prado, 1981). The amulets would come in the form of shells, roots, plants, etc. and were used for invisibility, weakening the enemy in a fight,

revealing and killing thieves and restoring stolen objects; and for overall protection.

Close family ties and Religious devotional practices are strong influences of the Christian faith. *Eating together during mealtime and attending Sunday mass and other religious services with parents, siblings and other kins* show the cohesiveness of the family as a social unit.

Building chapels and Holy Shrines in honor of Religious Icons or Patron saints and celebrating their feast days; taking care of venerated images/icons and looking after the cleanliness and well-being of chapels and churches; including observance of religious processions such as the *Perdon, Santacruzán* or *Processions for San Isidro Labrador* are manifestations of religious devotional practices. Other calendar occasions include *Kagharong* and *Misa de Aguinaldo* in December, while *Senaculo* and *Pabasa* are performed during Holy Week.

Bayanihan is a community endeavor that shows oneness and cooperation among neighbors in times of need, danger, celebrations and religious obligations.

Incantations in the form of prayers or curses against paranormal entities such as *Kalag* or *Santelmo* is closely related to *Shamanism* as knowledge of such rituals come from the *Albularyo* or *Parasantigwar*. This event includes certain practices of warding off impending death by burying clothes worn by a person or throwing them into the sea if the person is seen or perceived by others to be walking around headless. The foreboding of impending death should be acted upon immediately to avert a person's untimely demise. On the other hand, *preparing close kins for their death through confession, communion and anointing of the sick* is a religious practice which also mirrors concern for the welfare of family members and belief in the afterlife.

The tradition of *paying homage and respect for the honored dead especially war heroes and victims* is carefully observed through a specific calendar of occasions. *Visits to cemeteries during All Saints and All Souls days* are ongoing practices of Filipinos. Including the dearly departed in prayers, and having special masses on their birthdays and death anniversaries are continuing traditions in the Filipino culture.

Catching and selling fish; planting palay, vegetables and root crops; chopping wood, braiding abaca fibers used for making ropes and twine, bags and other handicrafts; including selling firewood and baking bread, are forms of livelihood in the locale discernible from the narratives.

Said forms of livelihood have come a long way from early Bikol inhabitants who according to Del Prado (1981) were:

“Not ever idle, the natives were dedicated to the cultivation of their lands... abaca and coconut are cultivated on high land... as the valleys and plains are solely for palay. They... knew how to make agricultural implements... There were fishing gear and household utensils made of bamboo, coconut shell and wood.”

The *kubo-kubo* is a form of temporary shelter or small dwelling made from light materials such as *nipa and bamboo*. There are still many houses in the area with such structure; hence they are

pictured vividly in the narratives. There are also *indigenous household items* such as *buko* or snail shell for a lamp, *Karaba* for an outdoor torch; *papag* or rattan bed, *Kariton* for transporting things and belongings, and *kuron* or earthen wares or pots for cooking. The use of the artesian well or *bubon* for drinking water, washing and bathing is still observed in some Puroks.

Unhygienic toilet habits are perhaps due to lack of comfort rooms brought about by financial needs, the remoteness of the locale or poor living conditions.

Children's outdoor games such as Insurrectos, Taraguan, Sinsito, San Pedro, etc., are also vividly captured in the narratives though seldom played by youngsters nowadays.

Hospitality is still a tradition, though not very well depicted in the stories. The same holds true to *Safety Precautions* such as *vigilance in the presence of dangerous animals such as snakes, dogs, wild pigs, etc. and using disguises during the Japanese invasion* so as not to be recognized by the enemy.

The least mentioned were the *use of common expressions such as, "Oragon", "Susmaryosep" and even "Lintian"*; and *women walking alone at night, without fear of danger*. Expressions change with every generation as language continues to evolve. This perhaps explains why only very few narratives contained these verbal utterances or expletives. The changing times have also brought uncertainty in terms of safety and security particularly in the case of women who are more vulnerable to crime and lawless elements.

The folktales reveal cultural practices and traditions deeply rooted in the belief system of the people and/or the Christian faith. *Shamanism, use of talismans or pangontra against elementals and aswang, incantations for paranormal entities, traditional shelter (kubong-kubong), indigenous household items (kuron, buko, karaba, papag, etc.), eating habits (with bare hands) and unhygienic toilet practices* are remnants of pre-colonial influences.

Religious devotional practices such as *kagharong, senaculo, pabasa, pasyon, etc.* are performed on certain calendar occasions together with processions such as *perdon, aurora, santacruz* and those of venerated icons of saints during their feast days. Building of chapels and shrines, as well as, looking after and caring for images of saints and other holy beings are part of the Christian tradition.

On the other hand, *close family ties, bayanihan (community endeavour), homage and respect for the dead (burial customs), livelihood, hospitality, safety precautions, children's games, use of artesian well, common expressions and concern for women's safety* are offshoots of both pre-colonial and Hispanic influences.

Many cultural practices and traditions live on despite the changing times. They are deeply rooted in the lives of the people bolstered by a strong belief system traceable for back to the ancient times. There are quite a number however, which are no longer as popular as they used to be. Some have quietly slipped into oblivion as people have put an end to such practices. Cultural Practices and Traditions continue to thrive for as long as they remain functional or useful to the community. When they are overtaken by newer, more effective ways, they become obsolete and retire into a

historical niche, if carefully documented or recorded. If not, they just fade away in time or die with the generation that perpetuated the practice.

Inevitably, modernization erodes age-old culture in the name of progress. Many aspects of contemporary life are discernible through the folktales. Changes come both ways introducing new ideologies and technology while discarding old beliefs and folkways.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The environment particularly topography, plays a major influence in the birth or creation, transmission, and diffusion of folktales, while the structure and life of a folktale largely depends upon its story-teller's narrations and on its generational transmission. The Arimbay folktales mirror a belief system where the supernatural and the paranormal outweigh religious influences; however, the tales are also value-laden, often expressing poetic justice, love for family, submission to the will of God, and respect for man and his environment. The texts showcase beliefs, traits, values, cultural practices and traditions that mirror a people's heritage and identity. Arimbay folktales are well-springs of information about the place's mythical, legendary and historical past which is linked to their present or contemporary life. Society and culture however are dynamic, hence change is inevitable. In its course many folkways and traditions die and give way to the birth of newer, more relevant and functional ones. It is from this perspective that similar folktale researches in other barangays of towns and cities of Albay be decisively undertaken to ensure the timely intervention of folklore collection in order to save and preserve for posterity what little is left in terms of the community's verbal art.

Similarly, it is recommended to conduct a study on the psyche and belief system of the Arimbay community to understand the enduring presence of superstition despite modern or contemporary influences. For purposes of its cultural worth, another study using the same data on folktales from Arimbay may be undertaken using the standards of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines. Lastly, the dissemination of the collected folktales may be done through production of reading or instructional materials for different grade levels, comic versions, scripts, plays, etc. for informative, educational and entertainment purposes.

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