

FOLKTALE AS PERFORMANCE: A COLLECTION AND STUDY ON
THIRTY CEBUANO VERSIONS OF THE JUAN PUSONG TALE IN
MALITBOG, SOUTHERN LEYTE

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In Partial Fulfillment
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by
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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis entitled "FOLKTALE AS PERFORMANCE: A COLLECTION AND STUDY OF THIRTY CEBUANO VERSIONS OF THE JUAN PUSONG TALE IN MALITBOG, SOUTHERN LEYTE," prepared and submitted by Sister M. Agnes B. Lentejas, O.S.F. in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Literature has been examined and is recommended for acceptance and approval for ORAL EXAMINATION.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Oral literature is certainly a vehicle in the expression of a nation's way of life, customs and traditions, and aspirations and beliefs. It is a national treasure in so far as it mirrors the people's ideals, strengths, and cultural peculiarities. As such folklore also enriches culture.

A nation's folklore is like earth rich in gold or iron ore. It is there but it is unavailable for the country's use until it is mined and processed. And unlike gold or iron ore, folklore is perishable. The processing can wait if necessary but unless the folklore is mined in reasonable time much of it will be lost forever.¹

To presume that a nation is richly endowed with oral tradition without doing anything to develop or enrich it is to be culturally negligent. Modern man who proudly claims a share in such cultural heritage but takes no interest in it has himself expressed his lack of love for such wealth and is therefore unworthy of such portion.

It is a shameful fact, yet it is true that a great many of the so-called "educated class" of Visayans do not care for literary works written

¹Francisco R. Demetrio (ed.), Dialogue for Development (Cagayan de Oro. Xavier University, 1972), p. 8.

in the vernacular, while they subscribe to all kinds of English publications and books.²

What is questionable with many educated Visayans is that they take native literature for granted. Some even consider such native creations, especially those written in vernacular, wanting in art.³

It is evident that there is a great need to rekindle in the Filipinos an ardent zeal that would move them to go back to their roots. This need, fortunately, is gradually and favorably being given more attention. "Much valuable activity in preservation has already been carried out in the Philippines by men and women for whom the work of collecting was largely a labor of love. But a very great deal remains to be done."⁴

The move to unearth the rich deposit of an almost forgotten Filipino tradition has reached such a favorable momentum that educational agencies throughout the country

²Maria Colina Gutierrez, "The Cebuano Balitao and How it Mirrors Visayan Culture and Folklife" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of San Carlos, Cebu City, 1961), p. 11.

³Catalina Manlosa-Bucad, "The Elements of Joy and Melancholy in Cebu Visayan Literature" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of San Carlos, Cebu City, 1953), p. 2.

⁴Rhys Carpenter, Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1956), p. 2.

are actively engaging themselves in research and cultural activities.

Folk literature is undoubtedly one of the best sources of man's values, customs and tradition, and, as such, Filipino literature is among the most colorful and interesting cultural contributions to literature in general.

This floating literature of the "bookless world" is a group heritage that imparts a unique identity and individuality to Filipinos as a people.

Our folk literature paints intimate pictures of Filipino life and character unrecorded in historical documents and archeological relics, for literature expresses man's innermost and unperceived thoughts, feelings, sentiments, ideals and aspirations.⁵

If Filipino literature is made to "represent genuine Filipino tradition,"⁶ then one can also assume that Cebuano folklore, for its part, represents the Cebuano tradition, itself a unique expression of the most intimate and profound sentiment of the Cebuanos.

Cebuano literature which has long been in existence has often been neglected by many Cebuanos themselves. It is an extremely disparaging reality that, given the liberty to choose between foreign and native literature, many

⁵Lucila V. Hosillos, "Filipinism in Folk Literature," Sunday Times Magazine, XIV, 48 (July 12, 1959), p. 10.

⁶Dean S. Fansler, Filipino Popular Tales (Hatboro: Folklore Associates Inc., 1965), p. viii.