

Crafting, Grounding, and Acceptability of a Local History as Embodiment of a Local Filipino Legend

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ABSTRACT

This research describes the process of collecting historical data and crafting it into a written form that aims to translate a local event from the past into a historical legend. The narrative complements the dearth of local Filipino literature that informs, entertains, and inculcates local culture and values. Despite the influx of local stories in towns and provinces around the Philippine archipelago, only old tales are repeatedly compiled, and published. This paper addresses this gap by documenting a local town history. There were two sources utilized in obtaining the historical data of the narrative: local history books of Alicia town and Isabela province in north Philippines including church pamphlets; and a semi-structured interview form. The high acceptability and grounding of the narrative are due to its closeness to the real event, revealing that respondents manifested a shared understanding of the meaning of the legend. This research recommends the need for more storytellers. Due to the limited time and resources, adjacent towns were not explored. The written narrative could have been widely-sourced and hence richer. The narrative's effectiveness to inform and educate the young was not also explored. It is also recommended that this narrative be integrated to History and Character Education subjects in upper elementary or high schools, a true test of its effectiveness and a way to realize the rootedness of their culture or why they do what they do. The duty of the storyteller or researcher is to provide experiences making them realize the importance of local stories.

Keywords: acceptability, crafting, grounding, identity, local legends

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1. INTRODUCTION

When an important event in history comes to pass, people tend to forget this facet of life unless documented. The documented narrative becomes an important source of knowledge and inspiration. From these stories comes an understanding of the many whys of the local culture. Through storytelling, people are gradually inducted into their own culture. Some institutions promote the perpetuation of culture, for example the UNESCO keeps an updated list of world cultures that observe good practices in safeguarding the intangible cultural heritages of the world. For example, Turkey's "The Art of the Meddah" has been inscribed as good practice because of its sustainability, and until these days, it is being practiced in the country. In the Philippines, the Department of Education provided for the use of local materials to make learning relevant and efficient. This way, the country's cultural heritage is preserved and local culture is instilled. (DepEd Order 35, s. 2016). Many different efforts are directed towards compilation, collection, analysis and preservation of Philippine folk narratives for different purposes: for example, the UNESCO-funded newly rewritten 42 traditional

tales coming from different parts of the archipelago was aimed to disseminate and promote oral Philippine literature and languages (Pavon and Diaz, 2021); the analysis of prevailing themes, contents, and polytheistic beliefs in folktales were conducted by Eslit (2023); Castillo (2023); Dalusong (2023), and Asliman (2003). To inform how the different folktales were originated, developed, and kept, a rich review of the historical development of Philippine folktales was conducted by Eugenio (1985). All these accounted tales have originated a long time ago and were repeatedly been analyzed or compiled. However, despite the influx of unaccounted narratives and stories from the locality, majority are still undocumented. When people are not informed of their local history, they will have no sense of community identity and pride as well as lesser response to current issues. This paper partly addresses this gap by documenting a local history and discusses the process of its crafting, grounding, and establishing acceptability.

Since the legend relates to a local historical event, this research aims to make the local community share ownership of the legend. This means to ground the narrative to the culture of the community. A concept, belief, or assumption could be grounded if it is rooted within their cultural consciousness (Le Bail, 2021; Clark & Brennan, 1991). According to Kashima (2014), anything that is grounded shares the same meaning among its members. People sharing a common identity share a common understanding of their physical and non-physical world, hence a common social ground is very important in establishing meaning and understanding (Le Bail, et.al., 2021, p.7).

Legend, a form of folklore details and organizes life's events arranged on a determined structure and time (Kim, 2015). One important characteristic of stories is that they give wisdom and inspiration, thus people need to know the stories of their nation, race, or locality. Usually obtained in schools, stories are the most popular forms of transmitting knowledge. The lack of localized and locally-produced materials in schools is a manifestation of a great loss in aspects of history or knowledge.

Kashima (2014 p 83-84) explained the process of grounding for meaning: An event happens in a particular time and place and where there is communication and a level of understanding and accepting that takes place for that particular instance. This is repeatedly done, and through this repeated iterative process of establishing meaning, that concept or idea becomes a shared part of culture and identity of the people involved.

Four components were identified by Kashima (2014, p 83-84) in social grounding: 1) **joint activity** where parties identify the same goals, establish cooperation, support, and coordination and identified roles to perform; 2) **sufficient understanding** of one another where one person understands what the other mean and vice versa; 3) **mutuality** where participants express mutual understanding of one another; and 4) **common ground** where participants share the same set of meanings that is mutually known, presupposed, believed or taken for granted.

Meanings in this sense become mutually accepted and shared. Common ground becomes a collective identity and is a collective representation of the group. Grounding the narrative to the culture of the locality could make the legend part of the patrimony of the local people, however this could become a challenge for writers in making the different plots as close as possible to the culture of the people for the narrative represents the peoples' identity. Griffith (2017, p.394) theorizes that anything socially constructed must be grounded in social reality.

Another challenge to writers is following the conventions in plotting like documenting, structuring or recreating, evoking fictional world, editing, accommodating modifications and ending the legend. Documentation involves writers to dig facts, balancing authenticity, fantasy and entertainment. Very different and contradicting facts collected from different sources can pause as challenge as the writer carries the burden of establishing meaningful understanding. Second, issues of representation, make

us think about how well we can represent the lived experience of self and others in a believable way. In short, the people where the legend come from should closely identify themselves with the legend.

Grounding is structuring the conventions of the plot and stories according to the people's understanding. According to Kim (2015), stories reflect relationships, power, and domination. When the organized narrated events are arranged on a determined structure and time (Kim, 2015) they connect community members. Another convention to observe in fiction writing is evoking a fictional world where the writer adds more details, in such a way that the reader gets involved in the storyworld—thus participating in the creation of the story, even if only through his imagination. In digging facts, Hynes advises a balance between factual accuracy and imagination (Hynes, 2014, p. 152).

In editing the narrative, Jones (2004) proposed to begin with a purpose, communication, author's responsibility, and review. Modifications will be introduced to accommodate the local situation such as intermingling with the principles of writing fiction and approaches to researching fiction. This ensures acceptability. Modifications to accommodate local situations in different cultures and in contemporary times could then follow (Harrison, 2016). This is a trial-and-error work until one achieves satisfaction (Hynes, 2014), thus rendering a believable and satisfying end. It is important to note a balance between accuracy and imagination and to never compromise authenticity and integrity that intermingles with the principles of writing fiction (Hynes, 2014). In crafting legends, authors (must) see the significance of the event to the lives of the local community.

Several studies show the wide acceptability of locally produced materials for their cultural appropriacy (Kaiser, 2023) and didactic function (Berg & Persson, 2023). These include the study of Conrad (2013) in documenting a local history through digital storytelling to teach how to develop stories; Jacobson and Larsen (2014) in the uses of ethnographic fiction as a tool in creative writing; Putri and Wijaya (2019) in experimenting writing of local legends to improve the writing skills of Indonesian students; Kusmana et.al (2020) in developing local materials for teaching English; Florentino (2014) in integrating local literature to teach English; and Calingasan, De Lima and Vicedo (2019) in validating the uses of Big Books in terms of readability, visual appeal, and appropriateness—all gained significant results.

Other studies dealt with the improvement of reading performance when reading localized materials and folklore (Mantra, 2018; Mahabadi, 2013; Ocbian, 2015; Suryani, et.al, 2021), and exploring the many uses of stories and storytelling. Nordensvard & Ketola (2021) for example, analyzed the use of a populist narrative to deal with a wicked problem in society such as climate change issue.

As a tool in creative writing, literature and stories hold various purposes: Weih (2005) observed that learners exposed to reading literatures were guided in writing stories themselves and slowly integrated elements of narratives in their writings while Frank (in Kim, 2015) used the techniques of fiction writing like evoking conversation, mood and setting derived from facts. Likewise, Kilbourne (in Kim, 2015) legitimated the writing of novel in a graduate coursework by starting to collect data in a narrative inquiry.

Grounding could indicate which versions of different works have legally originated in a particular place. There could be numerous representations of a legendary figure. Andayani and Jupronio (2019) found that representations of only one legendary figure could be different and numerous in different genres such as myth, legend and popular culture. Similarly, Marques (2014 p.13) collected different versions of a local legend of Portugal about a Moorish girl. Those legends underwent a process of "patrimonialization" in some towns, eventually becoming a part of an important identity element of those towns as they are used in storytelling in school events and also as themes in the fine arts and film industry.

A bigger continent like America might have difficulty identifying its distinctiveness in literary work. Bronner (2018) traced how American folklore grew and became socially grounded. Knowing how the

Americans originated from Europe, thus bringing with them the European consciousness, he felt the need to examine whether a uniquely American literary culture was distinct from Europe and he did. At first, he characterized American humanistic thought as democratic, vernacular, and incipient. While other Americanists resisted this gritty frontier experience and wanted to follow their European romantic roots, a guide was forwarded showing not only an “oral tradition” but a tapestry of diverse customs, beliefs, knowledge, stories, manners, dialects, expressions, and usages peculiar to a community, acknowledging every community of their own. Finally, American folklore was characterized as 1) a myriad of different situations in social life coming from native and indigenous roots; 2) the old world forced in the development of regional places and the nation; and 3) the everyday and ceremonial life processes.

This research aimed describe the process of crafting a local history into a legend, locating its ground in the community through validation and acceptability. In this globalized age, there is a dearth of local literature that both entertains and educates the young. The story could help inculcate local values and culture to the young. The rewritten local story that is laden with cultural history may encourage others, too, to write local stories in the locality. The story may even help readers realize how values and forms change over time or how different or similar are heroes and events of other people, communities or countries were.

2. METHOD

This research describes the process of crafting, grounding, and establishing the acceptability of a locally-crafted legend from local history. The qualitative aspect of the research employed the narrative technique in investigating the lived experiences of the participants. In using narrative research, events were carefully selected, analyzed and reorganized by storytellers to interpret the world and experience in it (Salmons, 2023). The quantitative aspect, descriptive research that used a questionnaire in collecting data.

Two sources were utilized to obtain the historical information for the narrative: first, 2 local history books for the town and province respectively, and church pamphlets. The second source was from the interview conducted. The semi-structured interview instrument form was used to collect the bulk of information about the historical event. This was tried out among 5 locals—2 elders and 3 middle-aged individuals until the researcher was satisfied with the interview form.

The 2nd instrument was a questionnaire used for validating the written narrative, employing the Likert Scale. Its original 15 questions were trimmed down to 9 after the try-out. In addition, the questionnaire also solicited words and phrases that asked the informants to identify themselves with the legend.

Participants of this study were of two types: 1) informants and 2) respondents. Only 13 informants were purposely selected due to their knowledge of the historical person—the subject of the legend. Automatically, they also became respondents of the study. Five out of 13 were direct descendants of the historical person in approximately 5th and 6th generations. The informants are composed of: 10 Senior Citizens whose ages are 86, 84, 82, 79, 77, 76, 73, 71, 67 and, 60; and 3 Public Schools Teachers with ages 53, 43 and 40, coming from the 2 adjacent towns. They freely agreed to provide information and signed a consent form. It took almost two months for the researcher to dig the facts. The 2nd type of participants was composed of 48 Public School Teachers from the two towns chosen at random; 2 College Professors; 33 college students majoring in English in the locality; 1 Barangay Official, 1 Parish Priest of the town, 4 municipal employees; and 1 Public Official. They too, agreed to sign a consent form. Overall, there were 103 respondents for the questionnaire. The data extracted from the

interviews, historical books, and field notes became the basis for constructing the legend. The written legend was presented back to the respondents for validation.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

This part of the paper shows how the local historical event is translated into a written legend and validated by the respondents for grounding and acceptability. Results of the empirical data yielded an overall high acceptability of the crafted legend.

The narratives from the informants, coupled with historical documents, became the basis of the crafting of the historical legend. The informants related the story of a man who possessed many qualities, but foremost were his strength and bravery. Combined with his extraordinary size, he was able to move a 250 kilo Spanish bell up the tower single-handedly. This made the man famous, and his fame was written even in the 2 reference history books.

He was considered the most reliable fighter in the tribe fighting against the fierce, invading native Ifugao tribes. These *Ifugaos* used to attack the village and behead people as an offering for their ceremony. He was considered as “*maingel*” in the tribe, a native “*Iloko*” term meaning “having the qualities of bravery, strength and valor combined. He also had extraordinary powers when fighting, fishing, or astride his favorite horse.

As for the acceptability and grounding of the crafted legend, the Table 1 shows the results of the questions asked.

Table 1 Result of Grounding and Acceptability of Structure

Criteria	Mean
Grounding	4.73
Structure	4.76
Over-all Acceptability and Grounding	4.75

The Table 1 the result of the administered grounding and acceptability of the structure and content of the legend. There were four questions answered by the respondents: their (reader’s) understanding of the narrative (\bar{x} 4.82); understanding of the concepts and vocabulary used (\bar{x} 4.63); agreeing whether concepts and vocabulary used come from the local culture; (\bar{x} 4.94) and; determining sense of belongingness (\bar{x} 4.56). The grounding yielded a total mean of 4.73.

As for the structure, five questions were also answered: faithfulness of content, i.e. important events actually happened in the local history of the town (\bar{x} 4.70); creating a feeling of personal identification or belongingness (\bar{x} 4.71); maintaining a balance between factual accuracy and imagination (\bar{x} 4.83); clear representation of characters, setting, and events (\bar{x} 4.82); and satisfaction with the outcome of the legend (\bar{x} 4.75). The total mean is 4.76. The overall Acceptability for Structure and Grounding is 4.75 described as Highly Acceptable.

The interview and validation revealed existence of places frequented by those in history that are still present in the locality. These material cultures are the church, bell, river, ethnic groups, the two towns and sitios. Non-material culture and practices were also mentioned such as the concept of Mengal (an indigenous term for leader recognized as brave and powerful), or “*maingel*” in Ilokano vernacular created different responses, but nonetheless agreed as part of their culture, angelus, rituals like *gakit* and beheading practices of natives. The virtue of “*maingel*” recognized as very important characteristics or ideal for the indigenous leaders which is admired and aspired for by the members.

Two towns cover the setting of the legend—Alicia and *Angadanan*. In the community setting of *Angadanan*, a festival is repeatedly celebrated. Held as a festival, the townspeople annually re-enact this historic event. Upon reading the narrative, respondents would say: “This is what we do in the Gakit

Festival”; “now I understand why we are doing this in the fiesta”, etc. The town also showcases this festival to a bigger venue, the provincial capital (termed as “*Bambanti*”). The respondents said: “So this is the mighty person displayed in our booths at the Provincial Bambanti Festival” or “this is what we show in our provincial dance”. Some respondents even admit this practice in school “we use to dramatize this in high school”, etc. These experiences repeatedly performed by the local community helped in establishing grounding and acceptability and although performed in different ways, it gave them a feeling of belongingness as they came to read and understand the legend. As for the structure of the legend, all respondents agreed on the faithfulness of contents – i.e. events actually happened in history (bell, names of the two towns and the movement of administration, the presence of ethnic groups (*Ifugaos*, *Gaddangs*), etc.) They would say: “I often hear the story of the Ifugaos”, “yes, Gavino, he was my great, great grandfather and he moved the bell up the tower”, “my mom used to tell that there was a “*maingel*” (Sheriff) in *Angadanan*”, etc.

3.2 Discussion

The high acceptability and grounding of the narrative is due primarily to what Hynes (2014) mentioned as closeness to social reality. There is a shared understanding of the meaning of the legend through the carefully crafted plot, concepts and vocabulary – all resembling the historical event (Kashima, 2014; Kim, 2014; Le Bail, 2021; Clark & Brennan, 1991). The mimesis (re-creation) said Aristotle, leads the creator to imitate the life of the subject into the world -- one that carries potential truth by weaving the past with the present (Kim, 2015). This result has been expected because the story has been constantly heard in occasions where legends are mentioned. The grounding formally makes the legend part of the patrimony of the local people, its authenticity established by social grounding, making the different plots as close as possible to the culture of the people, for the narrative represents their identity. This makes the legend authentic, one that belongs to the community.

Teacher-respondents gladly accepted the story and reported its usefulness in the curriculum, saying that the written narrative addresses the lack of local materials called for by the curriculum. This material is now ready for use to engage students with the desired cultural values, character, and morality, similar to the validation of collected folklore conducted by Kusmana (2020), and (Mahabadi (2013). Since the historical event happened in the community involved, it is considered grounded.

The translation of the historical event to a crafted legend is highly acceptable to the respondents. The general comment obtained a total satisfaction regarding the parts as well as the totality of the story. The sources of information leading to the facts about the historical person of the locality, the arrangement of events, up to the validation of the narrative were very satisfying to all. They were able to relate to the story as a heritage of the local community.

4. CONCLUSION

This study described the process of transforming a local history into a written form that could bring consciousness and a sense of belongingness to the community; however, this study has limitations as well. Due to the limited time and resources, adjacent towns were not explored. The written narrative could have been widely sourced and hence richer. The narrative’s effectiveness in informing and educating the young was also not explored. The storyteller or researcher must provide experiences, making them realize its importance. Key to grounding is understanding, relating oneself and accepting the narrative form.

Findings of this research suggest that a locally crafted legend detailing a true-to-life history can be highly accepted by the local community. It is through these narratives that the young are informed, may come to appreciate their local culture and realize the importance of the wealth of their

communities. They will also come to learn the origins or sources of their beliefs and practices; however, it is recommended that more investigations are needed to document narratives of nearby towns. It is also recommended that this narrative be integrated to History and Character Education subjects in upper elementary or high schools, a true test of its effectiveness and a way to realize the rootedness of their culture or why they do what they do.

A local event could become a useful tool in preserving the history of a community by translating this to a narrative form, in this sense the narrative becomes a part of the wealth of the community, due to its grounding and acceptance. Part of grounding is having the members of the community identify themselves with the narrative. A local story like this one could complement the dearth of local literature that transmits values and culture, especially to the young. It could be recommended as part of the readings in schools.

Many historical events are happening in local communities; hence this paper also recommends the need for more storytellers to capture these events into narratives. In the long run, they could be used to transmit cultural values and to educate the young. Readers of history-based legends might come to realize how values and culture might change over time or how different or similar the heroes and events of other people or localities are. What drives these changes could become an interesting point to investigate.

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