



ECHOES FROM THE SEA AND SIDE: SAN ESTEBAN'S FOLK NARRATIVES

Marvin M. Taer¹, Kelvin C. Villanueva²

¹Department of Education, Philippines (Student, Saint Louis College, La Union, Philippines)

²Faculty, Saint Louis College, La Union, Philippines

Email Correspondence: marvin.taer@deped.gov.ph, villanuevak@slc-sflu.edu.ph

Abstract

This study examined the oral traditions of San Esteban, Ilocos Sur to uncover how folk narratives reflect cultural and social values. Addressing gaps in local folklore research, it used qualitative methods and content analysis to interpret 17 memorates shared by cultural bearers aged 50 and above. Conducted through narrative interviews in coastal barangays, stories were documented. Four key themes emerged: belief in supernatural beings, survival knowledge, storytelling, and spirituality. The findings affirm that these narratives are vital to cultural identity and continuity, recommending their preservation and integration into education to sustain San Esteban's heritage.

Keywords: *Conventional Content Analysis, Culture, Folklores, Memorates, Oral Tradition*

INTRODUCTION

In an era where globalization threatens to erode local identities, preserving and understanding oral folklore remains essential. Folklore reflects a community's cultural identity through myths, legends, and stories that pass down traditions, beliefs, and customs, preserving language, symbols, and practices. As a cultural repository, it safeguards identity across generations.

Coined by W.J. Thoms (1846), “folklore” merges “folk” (people) and “lore” (knowledge), emphasizing community-shared wisdom (Ghosh & Mullick, 2018). Beyond mere stories, folklore archives cultural expressions linked to a community's way of life (Dundes, 1984), encompassing verbal, behavioral, and ritual dimensions (Bandyopadhyay, 2012). Dundes (1989) classified folklore into myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, and superstitions, all transmitting values and worldview. Oral literature, a subset of folklore, focuses solely on spoken forms like narratives and proverbs.



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Myths explain natural or cultural origins through sacred, supernatural narratives (Bascom, 1965). Legends are historically rooted, often localized, and believed true by both teller and audience (Dégh, 2001). Folktales entertain and instruct with imaginative plots. Memorates—first-person accounts of supernatural experiences—add a personalized layer. Introduced by von Sydow (1934), memorates localize communal beliefs, blending personal testimony with tradition. Scholars like Honko (1964), Dégh & Vázsonyi (1975), and Bennett (1999) underscore their ethnographic, sociocultural, and psychological value. In Philippine contexts, memorates about beings like *engkanto* or *kapre* reflect the fusion of indigenous and Christian beliefs (Odal-Devora, 2000; Cannell, 1999), and express how individuals internalize culture, emotion, and morality.

Central to folklore is oral tradition—recognized by UNESCO as intangible heritage—comprising tales, proverbs, riddles, and songs (Domingo et al., 2022). These spoken forms transmit identity and values but face disruption from technological change and diminishing interest among the youth (Blench & Campos, 2010; Famoso, 2021). Yet folklore adapts to reflect social, political, and environmental dynamics, often serving as a vehicle for moral education (Mangaldan et al., 2023; Stavrou, 2015; Enriquez, 2019; Guzman, 2013).

Cultural values define a community's identity through tradition, while social values guide interpersonal norms (Giddens, 2001; Schwartz, 1999). Filipino folklore, shaped by geography and colonial history, preserves these values in narratives that offer explanations for the unknown (Valdez & Moyano, 2021). Pre-colonial folk literature, later adapted through colonial periods, reflects resilience and cultural synthesis (Ortega, 2017). Though Filipino folklore has been studied, there remains a gap in content analysis, especially in underrepresented regions like San Esteban, Ilocos Sur (Mangaldan et al., 2023; Famoso, 2021).

Folklore offers insight into collective memory, binding communities through shared experiences and transmitting moral and ecological wisdom, as seen in both Philippine and Indonesian contexts (Murdock, 1945; Nawla Education, 2024; Sawita et al., 2023). Integrating folklore into education enhances cultural literacy, particularly through digital platforms (Cintya, 2023; Aruta & Paceaño, 2022; Ramirez & Lee, 2023). Globalization poses risks to traditional knowledge, but also offers digital avenues for revitalization (Wibisono & Kartika, 2023). Filipino folklore, as illustrated in the works of Aguilar and Castro (2018) and

the Aswang Project (2023), reveals the interplay between regional stories and national identity.

This study focused on the oral traditions of San Esteban, Ilocos Sur, a coastal community whose folklore reflects environmental consciousness, cultural identity, and social values. Guided by the question, “*How do cultural and social values reflect the folk narratives of San Esteban, Ilocos Sur?*” the research addressed a gap in documentation and contributes to Filipino folklore scholarship by highlighting narratives often overlooked in mainstream studies. Through content analysis, it revealed how these folk stories transmit ancestral wisdom and foster communal cohesion. Ultimately, this research affirms folklore’s enduring role in preserving identity, values, and tradition. By documenting San Esteban’s narratives, it protects an important facet of the Philippines’ intangible heritage and emphasizes folklore’s relevance in both local contexts and the broader discourse of cultural preservation.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This qualitative study employed conventional content analysis to explore the cultural and societal values embedded in San Esteban’s folklore. Suitable for topics with limited theoretical foundations, this method allowed categories to emerge inductively from the data (Kyngas & Vanhanen, 1999; Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). The researcher immersed in the narratives to allow insights and meanings to arise naturally, consistent with Mayring’s (2000) inductive category development.

Participants

The research was conducted in the coastal barangays of Apatot, Bateria, Villa Quirino, and San Pablo in San Esteban, Ilocos Sur—a site rich in oral tradition but with largely undocumented folklore. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) born and raised in San Esteban; (b) bona fide residents of the selected barangays; (c) aged 50 or older; and (d) recognized as cultural bearers within the community. Their status as oral tradition keepers, passed down through generations, affirmed their role as authentic and credible narrators of local folklore.

Data Measures and Gathering Procedure

Narrative interviews were used to gather authentic, firsthand accounts. Open-ended questions guided the storytelling while preserving its organic form. Data collection involved

informed consent and the ethical engagement of cultural elders. To ensure accuracy and consistency, Reliability through Iterative Storytelling was used, where narrators retold their stories across sessions to detect variations. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and returned to participants for member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), reinforcing narrative credibility.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the Saint Louis Code of Research Ethics, upholding respect, integrity, and responsible conduct. Participants were fully informed, assured of confidentiality, and voluntarily engaged. Validation processes, including member checking and peer review by a local resident and an external validator, ensured credibility and minimized researcher bias. Reflexivity and cultural sensitivity were maintained throughout. All data remained confidential and were used solely for academic purposes, with plagiarism checks (Turnitin) conducted to ensure originality ensuring originality with a 1% threshold.

Data Analysis

Conventional content analysis enabled themes to emerge directly from the transcribed narratives, without imposing preconceived categories (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). The process followed the five steps of Hsieh and Shannon (2005): (1) immersion in the data; (2) highlighting key thoughts; (3) deriving codes inductively; (4) grouping codes into categories; and (5) forming overarching themes. This approach allowed for the extraction of core cultural values and beliefs expressed in the folk narratives. Sample adequacy was achieved through thematic saturation, with 10–15 interviews providing sufficient data richness (Morse, 2000; Guest et al., 2006; Ramos, 2019).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the major thematic findings derived from the analysis of seventeen (17) folk narratives from San Esteban, Ilocos Sur, with a specific focus on coastal barangays—Apatot, Bateria, San Pablo, and Villa Quirino. Guided by conventional content analysis, this section organizes the findings into four (4) key themes: Affirming the Existence of Supernatural Beings and Sacred Spaces through Sea and Land Oral Narratives, Preserving Survival Knowledge through Sea and Land Oral Narratives, Sustaining Oral Tradition through Storytelling, and Expressing Spirituality in Response to the Supernatural. Each theme is supported by narrative excerpts and their translations, demonstrating how these stories

continue to guide the values, practices, and identity of the San Esteban community across generations. Collectively, they show how the folk narratives serve as cautionary tales, moral guides, and cultural anchors in a world shaped by both the visible and the invisible.

Figure 1. Tabular Data of Themes Derived from Codes and Categories

Codes	Category	Theme
<p>“...istoryaen na met nga nagkita da dajay girlfriend na nga balasang,... damagen mi ti nagan na, ibaga na met nga Parsela” (“... he told us that he met his girlfriend, a young woman,...he said it was Parsela (mystical being).”), “Ket dejay nga bangar... adda aggigyan idjay...” (“And that bangar tree... someone lives there...”), “Keh nakitak ajay-jay baybay jay boundary ti kwa ti Bateria...shokoy suna.” (“And I saw at the beach, at the boundary of Bateria... he must be a merman.”), “...adda nakita da nga dagijy tallo nga natatayag nga kwa nga kasla tattao ngem ti panagkuna da katattaotan” (“...they saw three tall figures that looked like people but were believed to be supernatural beings”), “...adda man dajay kapre toyen ah nga umararubayan ti tingtinga ti rabiin” kuna ni father na” (“...there really is again the tree giant that roams around at night, his father said.”), “...linukatan na ta tawa na ke, nakita na ta nagdakkal nga mata” (“...he opened his window, and saw a pair of very large eyes.”), “...keno adda aggigyan dita” kunada kanyami, isu dajay hanmi, hankam napnapan jayen idin ta inbaga da ta nakaskasdaaw dajay salamagi...” (“...and they said someone lives there,” they told us — so we never went there again because they said that salamagi tree, was frightening.”), “...data bato dita...adu ti mangmangeg ko ‘agkakantyon da dita uneg ti bato’ kunana kasla aggitgitara agkakantyon da agkakanta da...” (“...that rock over there... I often hear, ‘they’re singing inside the rock,’ it sounds like a guitar — they’re singing, making music...”), “...idi gay atek ti tumapog bigla met nga adda nanggunun dyay bittaogen nga awn met ti angin...” (“...as I was preparing to go fish with my net, suddenly the bittaog tree shook even though there was no wind...”), “no apay nga kasdiy nga nagawan, ket naybaga da nga kasla foliken kayat na nga saw en mangi mangilimimo iti tao” (“...they said that what happened might have been the work of a foliken — a spirit that wants to play tricks on humans.”), “...adda naguni nga kasla billit ngem napigsa ti uni na ket...kayat nak nga sippigen...insanggak dediy tarapang ko ken silaw ko kanyana.”</p>	<p>Mysterious Beings and Phenomena and Sacred Spaces</p>	<p>Affirming the Existence of Supernatural Beings and Sacred Spaces through Sea and Land Oral Narratives</p>

(“... there was a loud sound of a bird.. it wanted to peck me so I shielded my spear and flashlight toward it”),
“...*adda nakita na nga nagdakkal nga lalaki nga agsigsigarilyo...*”
 (“...he saw a large man smoking...”),
“...*nagawidak nakakitaak ti maysa nga sirena ti kabatbatuan, ti bado na kulay green..*”
 (“...when I got home, I realized I had seen a mermaid by the rocks — her dress was green...”),
“*Tattan di kwaen mi dagijay kwa... kwaen mi dayjay arisiryes, apay adda met buok nga nakakawikaw...*”
 (“Now when we take those shells... when we gather the shells, why is there hair tangled in them...?”),
“...*daydiay mutya nga naggapo diay bantay nga napan dijay baybay*”
 (“..... that mystical gem came from the mountain and ended up at the sea.”),
“...*adda dijay kweba ti kwa kandela nga nakasindi idi kwan makita mi nga kasta idi kitaen mi manen jay mapan ko asitgan, idi kwan nagawan...*”
 (“...in that cave, there was a candle lit at the time — we saw it, but when we looked again just as I was about to approach, it was already gone...”)
“*Nakita da met nga kwa magmagna idjay kasiit siitan keh nagmayat met pinnagna na, hanmet masiitan*”
 (“They saw him walking through the thorny grass, and it moved so gracefully—it didn’t even get pricked.”),
“...*biglaan ti paka kwa mi, pinaka tribonada mi sunga nakitak ajay nga nilalang*”
 (“It happened suddenly, we were hit by a strong wind and heavy rain, just as I saw that creature.”),
“...*dagijy katattaogan nga kunada di kwan idi insabwag da dayta nga tabukol napasakbayan dayjay, dayjay kwa kadwa na, tattan idi kasta nga kwan... nag piggereren dayjay kadwa nan...*”
 (“Those spirits they talked about—when they threw that stuff used for fishing, it hit the other one, then his companion started shaking.”),
“*pagamwan adda met permi nga naka langlangsi “apay anya dajay insan” kunak kanyana “naglangsi sabsabali” ...nakigtot kami ta...nagdakkelan nga tao nga dotdutanen*”
 (“then something strange smelled so fishy. “Why is that, cousin?” I asked him. “It smells like something different”... We got scared because it turned out to be a big, hairy person.”),
“...*pagamwan ke naigganan mi jay kayo ti salamagi ke “litog litog litog litog” kunana jay uneg sika, nakigtot kami taray, napan kam sirok jay balay ti babbaket ken lallakay...*”
 (“...and then we’d hear from the salamagi tree a sound going “litog litog litog litog” from inside, and we got scared and ran to take shelter in the old couple’s house.”),

“*Sunga agpakada kami latta basta lumabas kami dijay ta sigun kenni father ko, tapno hankay madangran*”

Ancestral Teachings and
Protective Beliefs

Preserving Survival
Knowledge through

<p>(“We always whisper or honk when passing by so that we won’t be harmed...”), “...<i>haan nak kayat patan-awen ni angel baka matug-aw ka, kunana kaniyak</i> “ (“...uncle doesn't want to let me see it because he said I might get frightened”), “... <i>makadalapos kay dita, keno adda aggigyan dita, kunada kanyami...</i> ” (“...“you might disturb or offend the spirits there,” they told us...”), “... <i>haanmo flashlightan keh baka makitam ta rupa da, kunana...</i> ” (“...“don’t shine your flashlight there because you might see their face,” he said...”), “...<i>sigun ti istorya lakay, baka sika nga mapan agkalap, ke sikan to ti mabales didyay...</i> ” (“...according to the old man’s story, you might be the one to be punished...”), “...<i>hankam napnapan jayen idin ta inbaga da...</i> ” (“...we didn’t go there anymore because that was their advice...”), “...<i>hanmo dildillawen dagita datdatlag..., kuna da</i> (“...they said don’t mock those mysterious lights...”), “...<i>winarningan na kami...</i> ” (“...we were warned...”), “...<i>aramiden yo latta daytoy...</i> ” (“...always do this...”), “...<i>hankay mapmapan...</i> ” (“...don’t go...”), “...<i>nagpa kasla banawen...</i> ” (“he went to consult a folk healer”), “...<i>malas kunada...</i> ” (“...they said it brings bad luck...”)</p>	<p>Sea and Land Oral Narratives</p>
<p>“...<i>iti istorya dagiti nagannak na...</i> ” (“...his parents’ story...”), “...<i>adda pay maysa a nga maistoryak...</i> ” (“...there’s still another one I can share...”), “...<i>inyis istoryak met kadakwada...</i> ” (“...I also told them the story...”), “...<i>datoy nga istorya, apo, ket naggapo kenni tatang ko...</i> ” (“...this story came from my father...”), “...<i>kunkunana dajay lakay...</i> ” (“...that old man said...”), “...<i>sigun kenni father ko...</i> ” (“...according to my father...”), “... <i>adda man dajay kapre toyen ah nga umararubayan ti tingtinga ti rabiin</i> ”..., <i>kuna ni father na</i> (“...“there really is again the tree giant that roams around at night,” his father said...”) “...<i>istorya dagijay nagannak kanyana ken ni father ko...</i> ” (“...a story from his parents and my father...”), “<i>dajay ti istorya dagijay babbaket ken uliteg ko</i> ” (“...that’s a story from my grandmother and aunt...”), “...<i>sigun ti istorya daydi lakay mi...</i> ” (“...according to the story of our elder...”)</p>	<p>Family and Intergenerational Oral Transmission</p> <p>Sustaining Oral Tradition through Oral Narratives</p>
<p>“...<i>sunga kaasi ti Apo Diyos ke awan met impadteng ko...</i> ” (“...because of the mercy of the Lord God, I was not harmed...”), “<i>Ket kaasi ni Apo Dios, pimmanaw metten. Idi maalak ti riknak, nagawidak metten</i> ”</p>	

<p>(“And by the mercy of the Lord God, he left already. And when I got enough courage, I went home already.”), <i>“nakakitaak ti maysa nga sirena ti kabatbatuan, ti bado na kulay green, into nu makitak ay Apo jusko kaasyan nakami”</i> (“I saw a mermaid of the rocks, her dress was green, if ever I see her, oh Lord Jesus have mercy on us.”), <i>“Apo iturong nak kadi jay balay mi hannak kadi apo baybay-an”</i> (“Lord, please guide me to our house; don’t abandon me, Lord.”), <i>“...ay Apo nya ngata dagituyen nga, Diyos ko pakawanen nak Apo kasyan na kami kunak,”</i> (“Oh Lord, what are those? My God forgive me Lord have mercy on us, I said.”), <i>“...isu nga nagdaldalangin nak kenni Apo nga mapan kami makimisa nga kasta ti ikarkararag ko.”</i> (“That’s why I prayed to the Lord that we may go attend mass, that is my prayer.”)</p>	<p>Divine Mercy and Protection and Spiritual Guidance</p>	<p>Expressing Spirituality in Response to the Supernatural</p>
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Figure 1 shows the tabular data of themes derived from codes and categories from the documented folk narratives

1.1 Affirming the Existence of Supernatural Beings and Sacred Spaces through Sea and Land Oral Narratives

This theme emerges from the folk narratives as a reflection of how the sea and land are perceived not only as natural spaces but also as sacred and mysterious places inhabited by supernatural beings. This belief has been passed down across generations though it is a personal encounter or “memorate”. One example is the line, “...istoryaen na met nga nagkita da dajay girlfriend na nga balasang,... damagen mi ti nagan na, ibaga na met nga Parsela” (... he told us that he met his girlfriend, a young woman,...he said it was Parsela (mystical being). Another example is, “Keh nakitak ajay-jay baybay jay boundary ti kwa ti Bateria... No kwa kuma, no tao kuma, awan ti tao nga apan jay baybay nga apan agpana no han nga suna keh shokoy suna.” (And I saw at the beach, at the boundary of Bateria’s property... If it were someone, a real person, no one goes to that beach to fish unless it’s him — so he must be a merman.). Similarly, “...nagawidak nakakitaak ti maysa nga sirena ti kabatbatuan, ti bado na kulay green..” (...when I got home, I realized I had seen a mermaid by the rocks — her dress was green...). The sea is also believed to be inhabited by spirits, as shown in “...adda nakita da nga dagijy tallo nga natatayag nga kwa nga kasla tattao ngem ti panangkuna da katattaotan” (...they saw three tall figures that looked like people but were believed to be spirits). Even land-based beings like the *kapre* are part of the spiritual

landscape: “...adda man dajay kapre toyen ah nga umararubayan ti tingtinga ti rabiin” kuna ni father na” (...there really is again the tree giant that roams around at night, his father said.)

1.2 Preserving Survival Knowledge through Sea and Land Oral Narratives

This theme reveals how the environment—both sea and land—is perceived as full of risks, requiring vigilance and ancestral guidance. Elders issue warnings to prevent harm, especially from unseen entities. A common precaution is: “Sunga agpakada kami latta basta lumabas kami dijay ta sigun kenni father ko, tapno hankay madangran, tapno awan ti dumdumteng, awan mapabpabasol” (We always whisper or honk when passing by so that we won’t be harmed, cursed, or blamed). The fear of *datdatlag* (ghost lights) is also real: “Hanak nga agdildillaw... ta nu sigun ti istorya daydi lakay mi hanmo dildillawen dagita datdatlag kuna da...” (I don’t mock them because my grandfather said not to mock those ghost lights). Another expression that supports this theme is found in the statement, “...hankon a sir nga itoloyen ti apan agpakaten ta malas kunada idi tataengmi sunga daydi nga kanito nagawidakon” (I didn’t continue fishing because they said it was bad luck, so I just went home). Furthermore, this is also manifested in the line, “Aramiden yo latta daytoy, kuna ni father ko, sunga kasjay latta ti ar-aramiden mi” (Just do what our father told us to do; that’s what we always follow).

1.3 Sustaining Oral Tradition through Storytelling

This theme “underscores the role of oral storytelling in preserving San Esteban’s spiritual and environmental connections. Stories are passed down through generations and serve as repositories of community values, memory, and identity. This is seen in the line, “Iti istorya dagijay nagannak kanyana ken ni father ko...” (The story of his parents and of my father...), and in “Datoy nga istorya apo ket naggapo kenni tatang ko” (This story came from my father). Even casual remarks like “Adda pay maysa a nga maistoryak...” (I have another story to tell...) indicate a culture steeped in oral tradition. This theme is also manifested in the line “Adda man dajay kapre toyen ah nga umararubayan ti tingtinga ti rabiin,” kuna ni father na (the tree giant is here again that circles at night,” his father said). More so, transmission can also be reflected in the line “Dajay ti istorya dagijay babbaket ken uliteg ko” (That’s a story from my grandmother and uncle).

1.4 Expressing Spirituality in Response to the Supernatural

This theme explores how individuals turn to faith and divine protection when confronted with supernatural beings or mysterious, unexplainable experiences. The people

express pleas for mercy, and prayers for guidance, illustrating how religion becomes a source of strength, protection, and refuge. This is evident in the line, "...sunga kaasi ni Apo Diyos ke awan met impadteng ko..." (...because of the mercy of the Lord God, I was not harmed...) Similarly, "Ket kaasi ni Apo Dios, pimmanaw metten..." (And by the mercy of the Lord God, he left already...). These show how faith is used during terrifying moments. Moreover, other lines reveal how prayer and invocation of God's name serve as spontaneous responses to fear or mystery and this can be seen in the lines, "nakakitaak ti maysa nga sirena... ay Apo jusko kaasyan nakami" (I saw a mermaid... oh Lord Jesus have mercy on us), and "Apo iturong nak kadi jay balay mi..." (Lord, please guide me to our house...).

Meanwhile, the following discuss how the folk narratives of San Esteban, Ilocos Sur, affirm deeply rooted beliefs in supernatural beings and sacred spaces, preserve vital survival knowledge, sustain oral traditions, and express spirituality in response to the unknown.

1.5 Affirming the Existence of Supernatural Beings and Sacred Spaces through Sea and Land Oral Narratives

The folk stories of San Esteban, Ilocos Sur, reveal a deeply rooted belief in supernatural beings such as Parsela, Shokoy, Sirena, and Kapre, and sacred natural sites like the Bangar, Salamagi, and Bittaog trees. These narratives are more than myths; they represent a worldview where nature is sacred, inhabited by spirits deserving respect and protection. Such beliefs influence community behavior—fishermen avoid spirit-guarded areas, rituals are performed before entering sacred sites, and certain trees remain untouched, illustrating a cultural ethic that promotes environmental stewardship and harmonious coexistence with the natural and spiritual worlds.

This aligns with Castro (2022) and Guillermo (2021), who argue that indigenous ecological knowledge embedded in folklore regulates human-environment interaction, viewing nature as a shared realm of humans and spirits. Schwartz (1999) and Truskanov and Prat (2018) emphasize how cultural values transmitted orally sustain environmental respect across generations. Dy's (2020) concept of *pakikipagkapwa* reflects the community's interconnectedness with nature, while Esteban (2021) highlights folklore as social and moral regulation reinforcing humility and respect. Despite modern challenges (Casanova, 2021), San Esteban's continued storytelling preserves intangible cultural heritage, affirming the community's identity and cultural memory in line with UNESCO (2003).

1.6 Preserving Survival Knowledge through Sea and Land Oral Narratives

San Esteban's folk narratives embody a cultural system combining spiritual beliefs, ancestral wisdom, and communal practices essential for survival. Fishermen's avoidance of spirit-protected areas demonstrates environmental management rooted in spiritual respect. Storytelling during communal activities passes survival strategies, moral values, and cautionary lessons, reinforcing social cohesion and collective responsibility.

This theme supports the research focus by showing how folk narratives carry social values that foster harmony with nature and each other. Sacred places are off-limits due to supernatural guardians, illustrating a worldview where nature is sacred, as described by Makhmudova (2022). Elders, acting as custodians of practical and spiritual knowledge, regulate community behavior and social order, echoing Giddens (2001) and Schwartz (1999) on the role of cultural values in maintaining cohesion.

The transmission of ecological wisdom and social norms through storytelling, highlighted by Truskanov and Prat (2018) and Nizar et al. (2023), counters erosion from globalization (Casanova, 2021; Onrubia, 2022). Philippine folklore studies (Aguilar & Castro, 2018; Tamayo, 2023) support the integration of spirituality and environment into daily survival. Elders embody moral exemplars reinforcing values like *pakikipagkapwa* and *bayanihan* (Dy, 1994; Esteban, 2015), linking folklore, elder authority, and community values. UNESCO-IBE (2009) and Hadlos (2024) emphasize the educational importance of such culturally rooted knowledge for sustaining identity and pride.

1.7 Sustaining Oral Tradition through Storytelling

In San Esteban, oral storytelling sustains cultural values, guides behavior, and strengthens identity. Stories shared during fishing, family gatherings, or elder-child talks teach respect for nature and caution through narratives of beings like the Shokoy and Sirena, and sacred trees such as Bangar. These tales promote environmental care and spiritual respect as unwritten moral codes passed down through generations.

Oral tradition is thus a vital system of knowledge and conduct, ensuring community survival and cohesion. This transmission process corresponds to Truskanov and Prat's (2018) view of traditions enduring through interpersonal sharing, and Giddens' (2001) concept of storytelling fostering social cohesion. Despite pressures from modernization (Casanova, 2021; Onrubia, 2022), the persistence of these narratives attests to their embeddedness in local consciousness (Esteban, 2015).

The practice resembles Filipino sacred oral commitments (*panata*) like the *Pasyon* (Domingo, Capili, & Reyes, 2022), blending faith and cultural continuity. Reverence for natural elements reflects Filipino values of *pakikipagkapwa* and *bayanihan* (Dy, 1994), supporting Valdez and Moyano's (2021) argument that folklore is both moral compass and identity foundation. Through this, San Esteban's narratives fulfill UNESCO's (2009) concept of "education for cultural continuity" and align with DepEd's call for localized learning (DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016), preserving voices and heritage for future generations.

1.8 Expressing Spirituality in Response to the Supernatural

San Esteban's folk narratives demonstrate how spirituality provides strength and guidance when facing supernatural phenomena. Encounters with beings like sirena, kapre, or tree spirits prompt prayer, offerings (*pag-aalay*), and consultations with *albularyo*, reflecting a balance between physical and spiritual realms. These responses arise from faith and cultural responsibility rather than mere fear.

Communal rituals and shared prayers during crises reflect Filipino values of *bayanihan*, reinforcing social bonds and spiritual solidarity. Studies by Domingo et al. (2022) and Tabuena (2021) show how religious rituals and oral tradition preserve identity and resilience, while Soriano (2020) describes folklore's role in providing moral grounding amid uncertainty. Esteban et al. (2011) highlight humility and healing lessons embedded in supernatural tales.

CONCLUSION

This study addressed the pressing risk of folklore erosion in San Esteban, Ilocos Sur, where the continuity of oral traditions is threatened by modernization and generational shifts. These traditions—once central to community life—are now at risk of being lost, diminishing the cultural memory and identity they uphold. Guided by the question, "*How do cultural and social values reflect the folk narratives of San Esteban, Ilocos Sur?*", the research identified four key themes: affirming the existence of supernatural beings and sacred spaces through sea and land oral narratives, preserving survival knowledge, sustaining oral tradition through storytelling, and expressing spirituality in response to the supernatural. These themes reveal that folk narratives serve as living expressions of the community's values, environmental awareness, belief systems, and collective resilience.

Given these findings, the study emphasizes the need for deliberate preservation efforts. Educators, cultural leaders, and local advocates play a crucial role in sustaining these narratives through storytelling activities, heritage programs, and community-based education. These efforts must prioritize intergenerational dialogue and cultural participation to ensure that the lessons, wisdom, and identity embedded in the narratives are not lost. Ultimately, this study contributes to the preservation of San Esteban's intangible heritage by affirming the cultural value of its oral narratives and reinforcing their relevance in strengthening identity and community in a rapidly changing world.

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