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AN ANTHOLOGY OF ORAL LITERATURE FROM THE WILDERNESS OF MT. HAMIGUITAN—PHILIPPINES: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT
Oral narratives reveal deeply embedded indigenous connections within the community, environments, and supernatural traditions. It is a living record how locals have interacted with the mountain and enabled to produce its local literature and history passed down since old times. The stories also depict values, belief systems, and ecological consciousness of the community. The study suggests the need for preserving oral literature as one of the means of maintaining both cultural identity and biodiversity for generations to come.
KEYWORDS: *Oral Narratives, Mt. Hamiguitan World Heritage Site, Narrative Inquiry, Cultural Identity, Local Literature in Mindanao*

INTRODUCTION
An anthology of Philippine literature is a collection of selected works that represent the voices and genres of the nation, which usually consists of poems, short stories, essays, plays, and excerpts of novels. However, there is still a scarcity of local literature resources for young learners, as put by Pattalitan & Valerio (2016), which can reduce the productivity and survival of literary communities, as noted by Afdholy et. al (2020). In this study, the focus is to document oral narratives of forest dwellers in Mt. Hamiguitan in the province of Davao Oriental. The anthology is a compilation of culture-based narratives aimed at preserving the stories and origin of the mountain as world heritage site.

This qualitative inquiry contributes to the limited literature database in the oral literary landscape in Mt. Hamiguitan. The results of this study may inspire local government policymakers in the education sector and academicians to utilize the local literary materials as tools for teaching through formal and non-formal education, to understand and appreciate our own culture, and to invigorate our heritage for future generations. This may be a basis for contextualized resource materials for students and literary scholars exploring oral literature in Mindanao.

METHODOLOGY
In qualitative research, the researcher collects and interprets the data. Narrative research is one of the approaches within qualitative inquiry. It involves collecting and analyzing the stories or life experiences of one or more individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach engages with participants, understanding their perspectives, and interpreting their experiences within the context of their social and cultural environment in Mt. Hamiguitan. The goal is to provide narratives that are rich and reflective about the mountain from the mouths of the forest dwellers.

RESULTS
The Narratives of Forest Dwellers in Exploring Mt. Hamiguitan—Philippines

Classification of Oral Literature	Title of the Story	Description
Personal Narratives	The Path Before Tourism in Mt. Hamiguitan	This narrative captures the pre-tourism situations developed in Mt. Hamiguitan. The community in Tumalite was small and faced challenges like difficult roads, lack of electricity until 1987.
	The Dwarfed Tree	The Dwarfed Tree tells the story of a group of twelve hunters who discovered the bonsai-like trees of Mt. Hamiguitan.

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	Attention of the Media and Local Tourists	The discovery of the hidden sea and the bonsai-like trees of Mt. Hamiguitan gained media attention, leading to increased tourism.
	The Discoverers of Mt. Hamiguitan	The discovery of Mt. Hamiguitan in 1987 by a group of local hunters uncovered areas like the Bonsai Field and hidden sea.
Folktales	The Maysadok and the Little Monkeys	The mountain called Maysadok got its name from a ladle-sized dry patch left after a flood.
	The Elders with Large Ear Holes	This story recounts the interactions between the narrator's mixed Bisaya and Mandaya family with the elder Nong Isma, who witnessed the natives with large ear piercings.
	Uncle Santos Guimare and the Great Python	Uncle Santos, a hunter, once encountered a giant python while hunting wild boar.
	Tiboy and the Eel	Two weeks after a major flood, Tiboy encountered a large eel *(kasili)* in a shallow pool while crossing the Tumalite River.
Myths	Ang Amag-amag	A mysterious white figure seen at night in Tinagong Dagat, resembling a person, was eventually discovered to be bioluminescent lichens called "Amag-amag," glowing brightly in the darkness.
	Mga Tingog sa Dumaguok	In Dumaguok, despite its isolation, mysterious radio sounds and voices can be heard at night, accompanied by the scent of soap and the sound of water.
	Ang Agta sa Puente	In Puente, locals hear mysterious disco sounds and voices around a large balete tree, believed to be inhabited by a supernatural being called Agta.
	Ang mga Suetas	According to the elders, the Suetas are a group of people with half-immortality, appearing normal but invisible to others.
	Ang Bukid nga Mobagting	The mountain known as Bagting got its name from the mysterious ringing of a bell that locals could hear every day at 3:00 PM and 8:00 PM, but never saw. This phenomenon dates back to the 1970s when a chapel was built in the area.
	Ang Simbahan nga Bato	In a recurring dream, the narrator discovers a stone church after leading a group through a flood, only to later receive religious statues at home, leaving her puzzled about the church's real location.
	Ang Propesiya sa Dakong Baha	In a prophetic dream, the narrator saw a great flood and warned others to prepare, which came true a few days later, confirming her fears of impending disaster.

DISCUSSION

Personal Narratives

There were various narratives from my participants during my actual interviews with them. Indeed, they were very meticulous in sharing their individual stories about Mt. Hamiguitan. In this discussion, I want to disclose that all the oral narratives from my participants were transcribed or written down as raw material. This means that I followed the process of recording the oral narratives, then listened to each one, and wrote them down without alterations of their stories.

In these narratives, it is clear that the participants' statements were made in their local or regional language—the Binisaya language. This type of regional language is commonly used by people in the province of Davao Oriental or even by many people on the island of Mindanao. The importance of using regional languages for preserving cultural heritage is well-documented. For instance, Panague et al. (2021) explore the methods and efforts to preserve the Binukid language, highlighting the positive attitudes of speakers towards their language and the challenges faced in maintaining its use. Similarly, Alejan et al. (2021) discuss the significance of maintaining and revitalizing indigenous languages to prevent endangerment and ensure the continued transmission of cultural heritage.

Folktales

Folktales are a critical aspect of cultural heritage, capturing the traditions, values, and wisdom of a community. The recent study by Tsuji (2022) on the mouse deer as a trickster in Philippine folktales highlights the use of animal characters to convey cultural narratives. Similarly, the tiny monkeys in this folktale serve as symbols of the natural world's unpredictable and potentially dangerous aspects, reflecting the community's relationship with their environment.

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The Elders with Large Ear Holes describes the cultural practices and societal norms of the Mandaya people, particularly their initial reaction to external influences and eventual adaptation. The study by Bermas (2021) underscores the importance of understanding local traditions and cultural practices. The narrative of Nong Isma and the elders with large ear piercings highlights the traditional customs and the community's cautious approach to modernization.

Uncle Santos Guimare and the Great Python is a gripping tale that underscores themes of bravery, survival, and the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. According to Eslit (2023), such tale often arises from a community's need to articulate their experiences and relationship with their environment. Marks (2016) points out that the inclusion of supernatural elements in legends often serves to deepen the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the story, connecting the physical struggle with a broader, metaphysical context.

In the tale of Tiboy and the Eel encounters following a flood showcases courage and the enduring fight, against natures might that resonates with experiences. This story echoes a theme to the legend by underscoring the significance of oral tradition to document pivotal moments and individual acts of heroism. According to Eslit (2023) this tale plays a role by upholding values and historical milestones, for future generations to inherit and cherish over time.

Myths

Myths are an essential part of human culture, creating stories that explain natural events, moral values, and the origins of the world. Passed down through generations, these tales often feature gods, supernatural beings, and heroes that reflect the beliefs and ideals of a society. This suggests that there are local mythological figures in our communities that are not yet widely recognized. These myths are neither taught in schools nor included in curricula. This gap in teaching mythology in schools is supported by Capellan (2024) in his study "PAHIMAKAS: Uncovering the Unspoken of Mythological Creatures." He states that myths, such as supernatural stories, are a medium of cultural aspects that encompass systems, ideologies, and shared memories. These stories are part of our heritage and fundamental to our social traditions. However, they have not been given significant attention in universities, where Greek and Roman mythology are more commonly taught.

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