

Post Graduate School Project:

Visayan Folklore

Conducted by REV. FR. RUDOLPH RAHMANN, S.V.D., Dean

About the Collecting of Folktales

I wish to extend my gratitude to the students whose worthy efforts have initiated the collection of folktales. Folktales are, as Stith Thompson says (*The Folktale*, New York: The Dryden Press, 1951, p. 406), "an important part of human culture." This is eminently true of the Philippines which is so rich in myths, fairy tales, local legends, animal tales, riddles, etc. Some valuable collections of Filipino folktales exist already, but there is a great need for more systematic researches. The first condition for such a scientific study is, of course, an extensive collection of folktales. San Carlos with its several thousand students from all parts of the Central and Southern Philippines can contribute much in this respect. Students who take an interest in collecting tales are kindly requested to pay attention to the following points:

1. State exactly who related the tale (the teller of a folktale, of a folk custom, etc., is called an informant); sex, age, occupation, original home, occupation, etc. As to the original home, it is e.g. important to mention whether an informant who is now living in Mindanao, migrated there from some part of the Visayas and remembers the tale from the time when he or she still lived in the original home. Such a tale would therefore not be considered as a story of Mindanao but e.g. of Bohol, or Leyte, or as the case may be.
2. Thompson writes in the book mentioned (p. 408) that "elderly or at least middle-aged persons have nearly always yielded the best folktales."
3. If you know of any professional story-teller, obtain as many tales as you possibly can from him.
4. Write the tale down in the language or dialect in which it is told. If you yourself do not master that language or dialect sufficiently well, try to get somebody who will do the writing for you.
5. Often you may induce a reluctant story-teller to open his mouth, if you tell a story to him or her first.
6. It is hoped that hitherto unknown tales or new versions of known tales, collected by the students of San Carlos, will be published in due time. Each collector will be given proper credit.

RUD. RAHMANN, SVD

A FISHERMAN once lived with his wife and son in some secluded spot along the primitive palmy shores of Cebu.

Little did anyone foresee that on that desolate place, would appear the Holy Child. His image carved by a mysterious hand upon a chunk of wood.

This chunk of balite wood, blackened by the embers that kept it alive, was a thing of value in this native household. The fisherman's family obtained their much-needed fire from it.

One night, the couple went to sea to fish and their son, Gono stayed home because he was still too young for the hazards outside. Then it rained. It rained hard and pitilessly as if to test the courage of Gono. Indeed, overcome by worry and anxiety for the safety of his father and mother, Gono arouse

They searched for him throughout until their bare feet ached and their eyes reddened with the strain. But there was no sign of Gono.

The days passed. The bereaved couple had given up hope of ever seeing their son again.

Then, it came. The fisherman was making his eyes wander across the shore one afternoon when he caught sight of a very familiar chunk of wood. He hurried to pick it up. A shout of amazement leaped to his throat. It was the same chunk of wood that they possessed.

But how did it get there? And why has it now altered its form? Prominently the couple had made out the form of a tiny human face neatly carved on it. Whose was it? Surely, their son was the one who must have carried it with him to light his way. Can this be their son? But what a miracle is

A Legend of the Sto. Niño Image

from his place of rest and, arming himself with the burning chunk of wood, he prodded his way to the shore. There he stood and waited for the safe return of his parents.

The angry waves heaved and rushed headlong. Time passed. There was still no sign of the couple. Finally, Gono heard a call for help from the inky darkness that enveloped the sea in front of him. It was unmistakably that of his parents. Unable to bear the anxiety any longer, Gono strode out into the sea to go to the side of his parents. One powerful wave stood and stooped to pick him and haul him into the deadly core of the briny deep.

The following morning, the sun peeped out in all its grandeur announcing the rebirth of the calm. The nature was again rested in tranquility. But not the fisherman and his wife. They had lost their beloved son.

this? Who caused this mysterious and blessed happening?

The husband and the wife had only to fall on their knees to obtain the answer from the welcoming smile of the heavens above them.

They then believed that Gono was not their son. He was the son of an all too loving God who had been kind to them always. And now he had sent them this symbol of His grace.

That black image carved out of the chunk of wood became the guardian of the couple, their neighbors, the people from the other islands around them and also of the religious men from foreign lands who came and saw it and believed that it was a man that has descended to ease their sorrows, to cure their ailments, to nurture the crops in their fields that they may survive in gratitude to God and in humble servitude to Him for all the years to come.