

A Folklore Study of Lady in White and Hamorawon Spring in Borongan City, Eastern Samar

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the cultural, spiritual, and social significance of the Lady in White and its relationship with Hamorawon Spring in Borongan City, Eastern Samar. It also assessed how the local narrative shapes community beliefs, healing traditions, and cultural identity. The researchers used a modified Research Questionnaire for Eastern Samar Myths to document the narrative's origin, physical characteristics, cultural meaning, and functions. The study followed a modified ADDE framework Analysis, Design, Development, and Evaluation to guide the development of a research-based graphic narrative based on the gathered data. The findings showed that residents widely perceived the Lady in White as a miraculous figure associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary and with healing and blessings at Hamorawon Spring. The narrative also influenced devotional practices, including participation in novenas and Masses and visits to the site for guidance and healing. It further encouraged respect for the spring and the protection of cultural and spiritual traditions. The developed graphic narrative was evaluated using a modified DepEd Region III Nueva Ecija Evaluation Rating Sheet for Storybooks and Big Books. Factor 1 received a reported overall grand mean of 3.8, while Factor 2 received 3.9; both were interpreted as acceptable with minimal revision. The parameter ratings ranged from Satisfactory to Excellent, indicating that the graphic narrative was an acceptable and culturally sensitive educational resource that may support the preservation and promotion of local folklore.

Keywords: Hamorawon Spring, qualitative research, Lady in White, multimedia, folklore

INTRODUCTION

Legends provide communities with connections to the places and events from which narratives emerged. Unlike entirely fictional narratives, legends may contain historical elements connected to significant events, notable individuals, or lived experiences that become embedded in collective cultural memory. As stories pass across generations, they may change into versions that are more appealing, relatable, and easier to remember (Romeo B. Telesforo, 2025). Cultural belief systems also commonly include spirits, deities, and sacred beings associated with natural elements such as mountains and rivers while narratives have remained part of human cultural expression across generations. (Nabiyeva, D., & Abduramanova, D.2024).

In the Philippines, folklore reflects the cultural identity, traditions, and beliefs of different communities. It includes myths, legends, folktales, and supernatural beings such as the aswang and diwata, whose stories vary by location. These narratives help communities explain natural phenomena, illness, and misfortune while preserving their cultural values and traditions (Casibual, 2022). Within this context, the present study focuses on Hamorawon Spring, a natural freshwater spring in Eastern Samar, and its association with the Lady in White, who is believed to have blessed the water and to relate to healing at the site (Robredillo, 2017).

Local government and tourism accounts describe Hamorawon Spring as being located within Hamorawon Park. These accounts state that the water is believed to be miraculous and that apparitions of a woman in white, often associated with the patron of Borongan, have been reported at the site. They also note that access to the source has recently been restricted because of changes in the park area (Province of Eastern Samar, 2025). One account affirms that Borongan was a small settlement called Guiborongani in 1600 and that its present name was

associated with the dense fog that frequently covered the area. Borongan is also described as having natural attractions such as beaches, forests, streams, waterfalls, and caves (Philippines Cities, 2017).

Hamorawon Spring, also known as Tilang, is a natural freshwater spring located near a large acacia tree within Hamorawon Park. Its water reportedly flows through underground channels and discharges into the Lo-om River. Residents believe that spring has healing powers, and local accounts pointed out that people bathe in its water in the hope of recovering from illness. Another local belief holds that visitors who swim in the spring may eventually marry a Boronganon. The site later developed into a park with Spanish era stone structures and became a resting place for residents and visitors (NatureWatch of Eastern Samar, 2013).

Older residents of Borongan recount that, before the spring was enclosed as a cave like structure, a Lady in White was seen bathing in the water. According to the narrative, she disappeared when noticed by passersby, leaving an ylang-ylang scent and wet footprints leading toward the nearby cathedral. The account further states that the clothing of “baby Mary” was wet. The narrative associates bathing after the apparition with healing, recovery from illness, and finding a future spouse in Borongan (A Tale of Faith and Fable, 2020). (Saad et al., 2024) emphasized the significance of digital platforms in restoring endangered oral traditions, and digitalization that can improve access to oral traditions while also changing their nuances.

Despite these discussions, academic research on how local stories shape social, cultural, and spiritual life, inform beliefs about healing and visits to sacred sites, and support community identity remains limited. This study therefore sought to document, analyze, and interpret the significance of the Lady in White and the Hamorawon Spring miracle in Borongan City and to place the narrative within regional traditions of spirit stories and water cosmologies. Specifically, the study aimed to: (1) document and analyze the cultural, spiritual, and social significance of the Lady in White and the Hamorawon Spring miracle; (2) transform the gathered information into a graphic narrative; and (3) evaluate the developed material using the DepEd Region III Nueva Ecija Evaluation Rating Sheet for Storybooks and Big Books.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a qualitative design to examine the cultural, spiritual, and social significance of the Lady in White and the Hamorawon Spring miracle in Borongan City, Eastern Samar. It also followed a modified ADDE framework, consisting of Analysis, Design, Development, and Evaluation, to guide the production and assessment of the graphic narrative.

During the Analysis phase, the researchers collected and organized community accounts. During the Design phase, the findings were translated into concept sketches, visual plans, and narrative elements. During the Development phase, the researchers produced and refined the graphic narrative. During the Evaluation phase, teacher-evaluators assessed the acceptability and quality of the completed material. The interview data were analyzed thematically, while evaluator ratings were summarized using weighted mean.

Research locale

This study was conducted in Borongan City, a coastal component city and the provincial capital of Eastern Samar. The city has a land area of 475.00 square kilometers, or 183.40 square miles, representing 10.29% of Eastern Samar’s total area. According to the 2020 Census, its population was 71,961, representing 15.08% of Eastern Samar’s population and 1.58% of the population of Eastern Visayas. Based on these figures, the population density was 151 inhabitants per square kilometer, or 392 inhabitants per square mile (Phil Atlas, 2026).

Research respondent and Evaluators

The respondents included local residents of Borongan City, Eastern Samar. They were selected through purposive sampling based on their familiarity with the cultural narrative and their ability to provide relevant

information about the Lady in White and Hamorawon Spring. Table 1 presents the respondent groups, their roles, and the phases in which they participated.

Table 1. Respondents' Profile

Respondent Type	Number	Role in the Study	Phase Involved
Local elders	3	Provided myth narratives and cultural context	Analysis, Design, and Development
Community members	5	Clarified story elements and symbolism	Analysis
Selected respondents	3	Validated character design and narratives	Design and Development

The developed material was evaluated by ten teachers whose highest educational attainment was college graduates, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Evaluators' Profile

Highest Educational Attainment	Profession	Number
College graduate	Teachers	10

Analysis Phase

The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with respondents who had knowledge of the Lady in White and Hamorawon Spring. And used modified open-ended questions adapted from the Research Questionnaire for Eastern Samar Myths and contextualized the instrument for community-based inquiry. This method enabled the researchers to gather detailed information and deepen their understanding of the context and emerging themes (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012) The researchers organized the interview information and applied thematic analysis to identify key points. The narrative transcripts were grouped according to themes such as cultural knowledge, devotional practices, and spiritual significance.

Design phase

After the interviews, the researchers created concept sketches and illustrations based on the information gathered during the Analysis phase. Ibis Paint and Clip Studio were used as the primary platforms for producing the visual representations. The researchers created several illustrations and incorporated feedback from local respondents to validate the accuracy of the concepts. During the interviews, the local elders were also asked about the appearance of the Lady in White and Hamorawon Spring to support culturally respectful and accurate visual representation.

Development phase

After planning and design, the researchers produced graphic narrative using multimedia art and digital illustration techniques. The character, setting, script, and storyboard developed during the Design phase were translated into digital form using Clip Studio, Ibis Paint, and Microsoft Word. The researchers refined the Lady in White character and the Hamorawon Spring setting based on the narratives and descriptions gathered from respondents. Feedback from the research adviser was considered to improve visual clarity and cultural accuracy.

Evaluation phase

The completed graphic narrative was evaluated by ten teacher-evaluators using a modified DepEd Region III Nueva Ecija Evaluation Rating Sheet for Storybooks and Big Books. The instrument provided uniform criteria for assessing the acceptability and quality of the material. The weighted mean was used to summarize the ratings, while qualitative feedback supported the refinement and validation of the final output.

Table 3. Descriptive Rating and Interpretation

Scale	Mean Range	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
5	4.21-5.00	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards
4	3.41-4.20	Very Satisfactory	Acceptable with minimal revisions
3	2.61-3.40	Satisfactory	Acceptable with moderate revisions
2	1.81-2.60	Fair	Needs major revision
1	1.00-1.80	Poor	Not acceptable

Ethical Considerations

This multimedia research project followed ethical standards during data gathering, content validation, and expert evaluation. Informed consent was obtained from all validators before participation. They were informed of the study's objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were observed. Institutional records and contextual information used to guide content development were examined only in summarized form, and no personally identifiable information was included. Evaluators' comments and ratings were treated confidentially and reported only in aggregated form.

All digital and printed materials generated during validation, including scripts, storyboards, and multimedia outputs, were securely stored and accessed only by the researchers. After the study, the materials were archived or disposed of responsibly in accordance with institutional guidelines. The study sought to minimize risk and support positive educational and cultural outcomes by promoting cultural awareness, ethical representation, and educational value. Written permission from the appropriate academic authorities was secured before the validation activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the data gathered during the Analysis phase using the modified Research Questionnaire for Eastern Samar Myths. The instrument was used to document the narrative's origin, physical characteristics, cultural meaning, and functions before its adaptation into a graphic narrative.

The findings showed that local residents commonly viewed the Lady in White as a miraculous figure associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Most respondents described the figure as having a beautiful face, long black hair, and a long white dress. Her appearance was one of the first details commonly mentioned in the participants' narratives. Respondents also associated the Lady in White with the miraculous healing believed to occur at Hamorawon Spring. They reported that she was seen near the water and disappeared when people approached. Participants described practices intended to show respect for the site, including prohibitions against washing laundry or throwing garbage near the spring. These practices show how cultural beliefs were connected with the respondents' spiritual practices and respect for sacred space. Some respondents also reported participating in novenas and Masses before the main festival, during which the community gathered for collective prayer. Respondents described the spring as a place where they sought guidance, reflected, and held themselves morally accountable. Several also expressed calmness, reassurance, and a personal connection with the spring and its narrative. These accounts indicate that the Lady in White narrative continues to provide spiritual meaning and cultural connection for some members of the community.

Overall, the findings show that the Lady in White narrative contributes to the preservation of local knowledge, cultural identity, and spiritual traditions in Borongan City.

The data were gathered using the Research Questionnaire for Eastern Samar Myths: A Research-Based Digital Storytelling Project. The questionnaire was designed to document the authentic origin, physical characteristics,

cultural meaning, and narrative functions of local myths before story adaptation.

Table 4. Questionnaire Sections and Focus

Section	Focus
A	Origin and Historical Background
B	Physical and Supernatural Description
C	Strengths, Powers, and Abilities
D	Behavior, Morality, and Intent
E	Rituals, Beliefs, and Taboos
F	Cultural Function and Symbolism
G	Modern Relevance and Continuity

The questions were informed by descriptive ethnography, narrative sustainability, cultural ethnography, Campbell's myth functions, narrative ethics and cultural symbolism, Propp's morphology of the folktale, mythological character analysis, and folklore documentation guides.

Table 5. Thematic Summary of Interview Results

Thematic Category	Dominant Findings	Design Implication
Origin and History	The myth is closely linked to Hamorawon Spring.	The setting is anchored in Hamorawon Spring.
Physical Description	Beautiful face, long black hair, and a long white dress.	White, soft gray, and visual elements associated with spirituality and purity.
Powers	Believed to have blessed the spring with miraculous healing.	Sacred environment and divine glow.
Morality	Reflection and a sense of calmness.	Soft neutral tones.
Rituals and Taboos	Prohibition against washing laundry and throwing garbage near the spring.	Visual symbolism of respect for the site.
Cultural Function	Teaches culture, identity, and values.	Cultural message.
Modern Relevance	Some people continue to believe in the Lady in White.	Off-white or pale gray tones.



Figure 1. Concept sketch of the Lady in White based on participants' descriptions.

Participants described the figure as having a beautiful face, long black hair, and a long white dress. When narrating the story, they commonly emphasized her appearance and her resemblance to the Blessed Virgin Mary.



Figure 2. Illustration of the Lady in White blessing the spring with miraculous healing.

Respondents affirmed that the Lady in White was believed to be associated with miraculous healing at Hamorawon Spring. They also stated that she appeared near the water and disappeared when people approached.

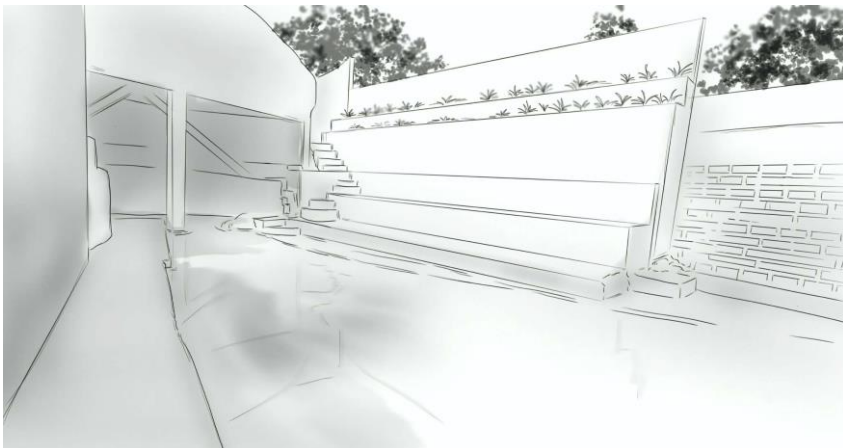


Figure 3. Concept sketch of Hamorawon Spring as a place associated with healing.

Respondents frequently identified the site as a place where they sought guidance, reflected, and held themselves morally accountable. Many also expressed calmness, reassurance, and a personal connection with the spring and its narrative.

The Development phase involved the production and refinement of the visual output based on the concepts created during the Design phase. Using Ibis Paint, the researchers digitally illustrated the Lady in White character and the Hamorawon Spring setting based on the narratives and descriptions gathered from respondents and the literature cited in the paper. The illustrations focused on the Lady in White's long black hair, beautiful face, and long white dress, as well as the respondents' personal connection with the spring and its narrative.

The researchers developed the plot and story using Microsoft Word, where the illustrations and narration were assembled. The concept sketches were translated into a finalized character design, and several revisions were made to keep the visual features consistent with the cultural descriptions gathered during the interviews. Feedback from the research adviser was also considered to improve visual clarity and cultural accuracy.

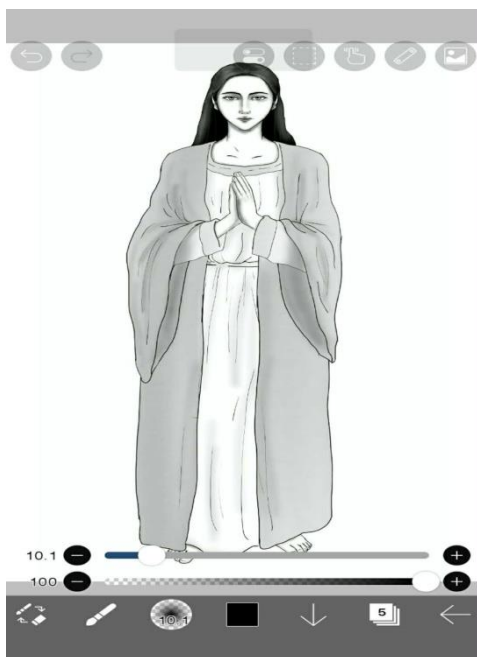


Figure 4. Final character design of the Lady in White created using Ibis Paint.

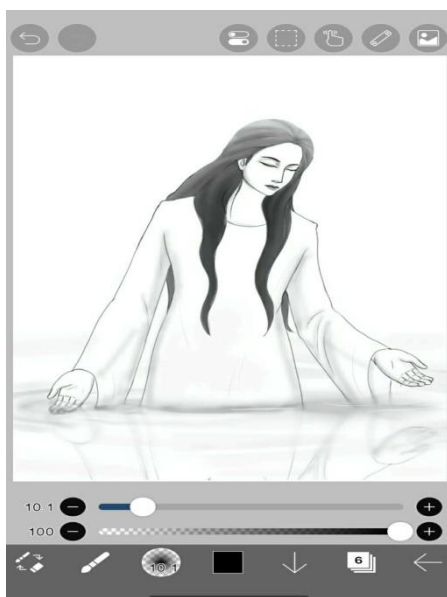


Figure 5. Cover-page illustration created using Ibis Paint.

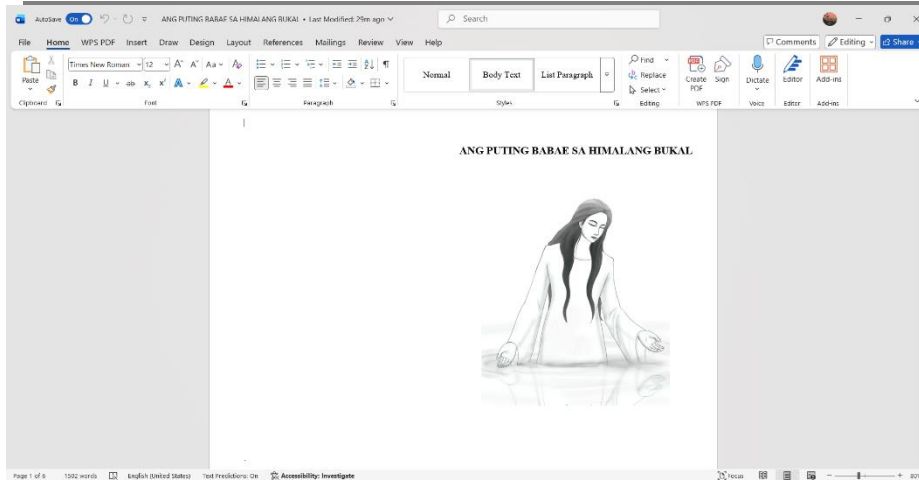


Figure 6. Assembly of the graphic narrative using Microsoft Word.

Evaluation Results

During the Evaluation phase, the researchers used the modified DepEd Region III Nueva Ecija Evaluation Rating Sheet for Storybooks and Big Books. After the material was developed, the evaluator ratings were summarized to determine the level of acceptability and the revisions required.

Table 6. Factor 1 Evaluation Results

Parameter	Grand Mean	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
Story	3.9	Very Satisfactory	Acceptable with minimal revision
Sociocultural Sensitivity	4.6	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards
Development Aspect	3.7	Very Satisfactory	Acceptable with minimal revision
Plot/Storyline	3.9	Very Satisfactory	Acceptable with minimal revision
Characters	3.9	Very Satisfactory	Acceptable with minimal revision
Visual	3.6	Very Satisfactory	Acceptable with minimal revision
Language	3.3	Satisfactory	Acceptable with moderate revisions
Grammar	2.8	Satisfactory	Acceptable with moderate revisions

Table 6 presents Factor 1 evaluation of the graphic narrative in terms of story, sociocultural sensitivity, development aspect, plot/storyline, characters, visual presentation, language, and grammar. The parameter means ranged from 2.8 to 4.6.

Sociocultural Sensitivity received the highest grand mean of 4.6, which was rated Excellent and interpreted as highly acceptable and meeting all required standards. Story, Plot/Storyline, and Characters each received 3.9, while Development Aspect received 3.7 and Visual received 3.6. These parameters were rated Very Satisfactory and interpreted as acceptable with minimal revisions.

Language received a grand mean of 3.3, while Grammar received the lowest grand mean of 2.8. Both were rated Satisfactory and interpreted as acceptable with moderate revisions. These results indicate that the narrative was culturally appropriate and generally acceptable but required further improvement in language and grammar.

Table 7. Factor 2 Evaluation Results

Parameter	Grand Mean	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
Prints	3.6	Very Satisfactory	Acceptable with minimal revision
Parameter	Grand Mean	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
Book Design and Layout	3.5	Very Satisfactory	Acceptable with minimal revision
Paper and Binding	4.6	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards

Table 7 presents the Factor 2 evaluation of the physical quality and design of the material. Prints received a grand mean of 3.6, while Book Design and Layout received 3.5. Both were rated Very Satisfactory and interpreted as acceptable with minimal revisions. These ratings indicate that the print quality, organization, and layout were generally acceptable but could still be refined.

Paper and Binding received the highest grand mean of 4.6, which was rated Excellent and interpreted as highly acceptable and meeting all required standards. Overall, the Factor 2 results indicate that the physical presentation of the graphic narrative was acceptable, with the strongest rating given to paper and binding.

Table 8. Overall Evaluation of Factors 1 and 2

Factor	Reported Grand Mean	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
1	3.8	Very Satisfactory	Acceptable with minimal revision
2	3.9	Very Satisfactory	Acceptable with minimal revision

Table 8 presents the reported overall evaluation results for Factors 1 and 2. Factor 1 had a reported grand mean of 3.8, while Factor 2 had a grand mean of 3.9. Both were rated Very Satisfactory and interpreted as acceptable with minimal revision. These results indicate that the graphic narrative required minor improvements to enhance its overall quality.

CONCLUSION

The researchers documented and analyzed the cultural, spiritual, and social significance of the Lady in White and the Hamorawon Spring miracle. The findings were translated into a graphic narrative to present the local narrative in an engaging and visually accessible format while supporting the preservation of the cultural story.

The evaluation showed that the developed graphic narrative was acceptable across the assessed parameters. For Factor 1, the parameter means ranged from 2.8 to 4.6, with ratings from Satisfactory to Excellent. Sociocultural Sensitivity received the highest rating, while Language and Grammar received the lowest ratings and required moderate revisions. For Factor 2, the parameter ranged from 3.5 to 4.6. Prints and Book Design and Layout were acceptable with minimal revisions, while Paper and Binding met all required standards.

The reported overall means for Factors 1 and 2 were 3.8 and 3.9, respectively, and both were interpreted as acceptable with minimal revision. These results indicate that the developed graphic narrative was culturally relevant and generally acceptable as an educational resource, although further refinement was needed.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and evaluation results, the study recommends reproducing and distributing the material to elementary and secondary schools across Eastern Samar. This can help promote cultural awareness among younger generations.

The material should also be adapted into digital formats, such as short animated films, interactive games, and other multimedia resources. These formats can improve accessibility and increase engagement among young people who are familiar with digital technology.

Further research and documentation should focus on lesser-known and undocumented local creatures and myths. These efforts can help preserve traditional knowledge that is gradually disappearing. They can also support the creation of a regional folklore archive that may serve as a reference for future ethnographic studies.

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