

Echoes of the Forest: A Narrative Study of the Aghoy

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to document the Aghoy myth in Lawaan, Eastern Samar, and develop a digital storytelling material based on the gathered cultural information. The research focused on collecting stories, accounts, and cultural knowledge about the Aghoy and transforming these into a narrative-based digital art material. The study employed a qualitative research design guided by a modified ADDIE framework, particularly the Analysis, Design, Development, and Evaluation phases. During the Analysis phase, qualitative interviews were conducted with ten respondents aged 50 years and above who were selected through criterion-based purposive sampling. An adapted researcher-developed questionnaire was used to gather information about the Aghoy's origin, physical description, supernatural abilities, behavior, cultural significance, and associated taboos. The collected data were analyzed to identify common themes and descriptions related to the myth.

The results showed that the Aghoy is commonly believed to inhabit trees and forests and is often described as a small, human-like being with supernatural abilities, such as shapeshifting, invisibility and the ability to teleport. The myth was also found to reflect cultural values related to respect for nature, traditional beliefs, and appropriate behavior in the forest. Based on these findings, a digital storytelling material titled *The Whistle in the Forest* was developed and evaluated using a modified evaluation tool based on the DepEd Region III guidelines for storybooks and big books. The evaluation results showed that the material met the established criteria for narrative quality, sociocultural sensitivity, visual design, creativity, and technical execution.

Keywords: Aghoy, Lawaan, Eastern Samar, Multimedia Research, Qualitative Research, Philippine folklore, ADDIE Model, Digital Storytelling

INTRODUCTION

Historically, legendary beings and folklore have significantly shaped a community's culture, morals, and social interactions. Folklore, like tales of the supernatural, serves as a medium for cultural aspects, including belief systems, ideologies, and shared memories (Capellan, 2024). Cultural folklore and other beliefs, including those about mythical or spirit creatures, can directly influence human attitudes and behaviors toward the natural world, such as whether people protect or persecute certain animals, illustrating how deeply ingrained cultural beliefs can shape perspectives and social actions. (Landim, et al., 2024). One of the distinctly unique things about the act of producing art of any form is that it allows the individual to construct something that is either fictional or exists within the realm of faith and then, by some extension, make it tangible. This act of creation is extraordinary in that it is ingrained within human nature, regardless of outside influence; storytelling, artwork, and folklore are all things that are found in every culture, uninhibited by spatial separation and the passage of time (Hanes, 2023). Digital storytelling becomes a bridge between generations, connecting elders with a younger, digitally immersed audience. The adaptability of folklore allows creators to experiment with narrative structures, fostering a living tradition that evolves with each digital adaptation. Movies like 'Thor' utilize digital storytelling techniques to modernize and visually enhance classical myths, making them accessible to contemporary audiences. In this digital renaissance, these iconic narratives not only survive but thrive, adapting and resonating with a global audience. The convergence of mythology, folklore, and Digital Humanities in film and television, including examples like 'The Sandman' and 'Grimm', marks a captivating fusion of ancient wisdom and modern technology (Samuel, 2024).

Lawaan is a municipality located in the province of Eastern Samar. In this locality, there are mythical creatures that local elders have frequently mentioned, one of which is Aghoy. The term comes from the word “panaghoy” in Waray-waray, which means to whistle (Ramos, 1990, p. 38). This story has been widely spread in the town, and has also become a center of family evening stories. But as time goes by, when technology was widely spread, especially in the town of Lawaan, these stories about Aghoy have been neglected. The researchers came up with an idea to develop a material that preserves and retells the story of the Aghoy, one of the Lawaan myths, through digital art. This study aims to: (1) To gather and document stories, accounts, and cultural knowledge related to the Aghoy; (2) To develop a digital art material based on the information gathered about Aghoy; (3) To evaluate the developed material using the modified evaluation tool of DepEd Region III, Nueva Ecija, Evaluating Rating Sheet for Storybooks and Big Books.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design focused on collecting and understanding stories about the Aghoy. Interviews were conducted with individuals who live in Lawaan to gather their accounts and experiences regarding the Aghoy. These stories served as the primary source of data for the study.

The study followed a modified ADDIE framework consisting of the Analysis, Design, Development, and Evaluation phases. In the Analysis phase, the collected stories were reviewed to identify common similarities, themes, and ideas regarding the Aghoy’s appearance, behavior, and nature. This helped the researchers understand how the Aghoy is perceived and experienced by members of the community.

The results of the analysis guided the Design and Development phases, in which the collected stories were transformed into a narrative-based multimedia output. In the Evaluation phase, the final output was assessed to ensure that was clear, accurate, and respectful of the respondents’ stories and cultural perspectives. This research design was chosen because it enabled the researchers to develop a deeper understanding of the Aghoy through the stories shared by the respondents and to present these narratives in a culturally appropriate manner.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in Lawaan, Eastern Samar, Philippines. Lawaan is a coastal municipality located in the province of Eastern Samar, Philippines. It has a land area of approximately 162.56 square kilometers and a population of 13,003 people, based on the 2020 Census (Retrieved from <https://www.philatlas.com>).

Lawaan was chosen as the research locale because stories about local myths, including the Aghoy, are still shared within the community. Long-time residents were considered likely to be familiar with these stories because they have been passed down through oral storytelling. This made Lawaan a suitable location for selecting respondents who had knowledge of the Aghoy myth.

Research Respondents

The respondents of this study consisted of ten (10) elders aged 50 years old and above who were long-time residents of Lawaan, Eastern Samar and were knowledgeable about the Aghoy folklore. The researchers used a criterion-based purposive sampling to select participants who met the established inclusion criteria. This sampling approach is appropriate because the study requires respondents who possess relevant knowledge and experiences concerning the Aghoy and its associated beliefs, practices, and narratives.

The inclusion criteria used require participants to: (1) be 50 years old or above, (2) be a resident of Lawaan, Eastern Samar, (3) have sufficient familiarity with the Aghoy folklore, and (4) voluntarily agree to participate in the study. Respondents who did not meet these criteria were not included in the final sample.

Respondents Profile

The respondents consisted of elders aged 50 years old and above, as they are more likely to have knowledge of

the Aghoy and its associated oral traditions. From this group, 10 elders were selected using a criterion-based purposive sampling. This sampling method ensured that the selected participants met the established criteria and are capable of providing relevant information about the Aghoy. A related study on the oral traditions of San Esteban, Ilocos Sur, interviewed cultural bearers aged 50 years and older, demonstrating the relevance of older community members as sources of traditional knowledge (Miravalles, 2025).

Table 1: Research Respondents

Respondent Type	Number	Role in the Study	Phase Involved
Cultural Informants / Elders	10	Provide myth narratives and cultural context	Analysis, Design, Development

Evaluators Profile

The evaluators for this study consisted of one principal with a master's degree and nine teachers with bachelor's degrees. The evaluators were selected based on their professional experience in education and their familiarity with evaluating instructional and educational materials. The group consisted of one principal with a master's degree and nine teachers with bachelor's degrees. Their role was to assess the developed digital storytelling material in terms of content, narrative quality, sociocultural sensitivity, visual presentation, language, and technical aspects using the modified Evaluation Rating Sheet for Storybooks and Big Books.

Table 2: Research Evaluator

Highest Educational Attainment	Profession	Number
Master's degree college graduate	Principals	1
Bachelor degree College graduate	Teachers	9

Analysis Phase

During this phase, the researchers planned how the study would be conducted. The researchers identified the information needed about the Aghoy and determined how this information would be collected. They also defined the research problem, selected the appropriate respondents, and prepared the necessary tools for gathering data about the Aghoy myth.

Qualitative interviews were used as the primary method of data collection. The researchers selected respondents aged 50 years and above from Lawaan, Eastern Samar, using criterion-based purposive sampling. An interview guide was also prepared to ensure that the questions were clear, organized, and focused on the Aghoy's appearance, behavior, nature, and cultural significance in the community. After the interviews, the responses were transcribed and reviewed repeatedly by the researchers to become familiar with the data. Initial codes were assigned to statements describing recurring characteristics, behaviors, beliefs, environmental associations, and cultural meanings related to the Aghoy. Similar codes were then grouped into broader categories, from which the major themes were developed. The researchers compared responses across participants to identify recurring patterns as well as differences in their accounts. To improve consistency, the researchers reviewed the coded responses and themes together and checked whether each theme was supported by multiple participant responses. Contradictory or differing responses were retained and reported rather than excluded, since variations are considered part of the oral nature of the Aghoy tradition.

The researchers also reviewed related literature about the Aghoy myth to guide the development of the interview questions. Through this process, the researchers adapted and modified existing questions based on the *Research Questionnaire for Eastern Samar Myths: A Research-Based Digital Storytelling Project*. The analysis of the collected data helped the researchers identify important narrative elements to focus on, such as characters, setting, actions, conflicts, and lessons of the myth. These findings served as the basis for the succeeding Design and Development phases of the study.

Design Phase

After analyzing the interview data, the researchers used the gathered information about the Aghoy, including its characteristics, environment, habitat, and the community's descriptions and beliefs, as references for the design process. The researchers developed a short narrative based on the collected stories to serve as the foundation for the visual development of the multimedia output. Initial sketches and thumbnails were then created using Clip Studio Paint.

The design process consisted of three main components: (1) character design, (2) prop and accessory design, and (3) environment design.

First, character design began with thumbnail sketches to explore the characters' forms, silhouettes, and personalities. Thumbnailing allowed the researchers to quickly visualize and compare different concepts before selecting and refining the most appropriate design. After selecting a suitable concept, the researchers created detailed sketches focusing on the characters' facial features, body structure, proportions, and anatomy. The designs reflected the characteristics and personalities described by the respondents. Clothing and other visual details were also incorporated to support the characters' roles, backgrounds, and functions within the story.

Second, prop and accessory design involved creating objects and accessories that contributed to the characters' identities and supported the narrative. These elements helped communicate the characters' roles, personalities, and experiences within the story. The design of the props and accessories was based on the characters' backgrounds, the environment in which they lived, and the cultural information gathered from the respondents.

Third, environment design focused on world-building by creating the settings and living spaces in which the story took place. The researchers created thumbnail sketches to explore composition, mood, atmosphere, and structure before developing more detailed environment designs. Information gathered from the interviews regarding the Aghoy's habitat, particularly its association with forests and trees, served as a basis for developing the environments.

Character, environment, and prop design are essential elements of visual storytelling in films, games, and animation because they help audiences engage with the story world and its inhabitants. According to Crudu and the MoldStud Research Team (2025), visual design elements such as character silhouettes, atmospheric environments, and narrative props contribute to user interaction and immersion while enhancing emotional engagement and narrative clarity. These elements were therefore incorporated into the design process to ensure that the multimedia output effectively communicated the narrative and remained grounded in the information gathered from the respondents.

Development Phase

The Development Phase focused on creating the digital material based on the approved designs from the Design Phase. During this phase, the researchers transformed the approved concepts into a complete and polished digital output while ensuring that the visual and narrative elements remained consistent with the information gathered during the study.

The researchers began by creating clean line art for the characters, props, accessories, and environments. After completing the line art, appropriate colors, tones, and saturation were applied to establish the mood of the story and reflect the forest setting associated with the Aghoy. Additional visual details were then incorporated to enhance the quality, depth, and overall appearance of the illustrations.

To meet the evaluation criteria, the researchers carefully planned and monitored each part of the development process. Narrative quality was maintained by following the results of the interviews and ensuring a clear and coherent story flow based on the respondents' accounts. Cultural fidelity and sensitivity were considered by remaining grounded in the descriptions, behaviors, beliefs, and values reported by the respondents..

The visual design and illustrations focused on clarity, consistency, and atmosphere. Creativity and originality were demonstrated through the development of distinctive character designs, visual elements, and scene compositions while preserving the core elements of the Aghoy myth. Technical execution was addressed through the use of appropriate digital illustration techniques, clean and consistent visuals, proper detailing, and balanced composition. These processes helped ensure that the final digital output was visually engaging while remaining grounded in the cultural information gathered from the respondents.

Evaluation Phase

In the Evaluation Phase, the researchers assessed the quality, accuracy, and overall effectiveness of the multimedia output. During this phase, the researchers reviewed the final output to ensure that it accurately represented the stories shared by the respondents and remained faithful to the cultural beliefs and information associated with the Aghoy.

The researchers used a modified *Evaluation Rating Sheet for Storybooks and Big Books* from the Department of Education–Nueva Ecija to assess the clarity, consistency, content, and technical aspects of the multimedia output. Feedback and recommendations from the evaluators were also considered to identify areas for improvement. The evaluation helped ensure that the final multimedia output was clear, culturally respectful, visually appropriate, and aligned with the stories, beliefs, and experiences shared by the community before it was finalized.

Data Analysis

During the data analysis phase, the researchers used a modified rating scale based on the DepEd–Nueva Ecija *Evaluation Rating Sheet for Storybooks and Big Books* to assess the developed material. The instrument was used to evaluate the clarity of the storyline, cultural sensitivity, and overall visual and technical quality of the output. The evaluation results served as the basis for determining the quality, effectiveness, and suitability of the developed material.

Table 3: Rating Scale Based on the DepEd–Nueva Ecija Evaluation Rating Sheet for Story Books and Big Books

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 revisions
1	1.00 – 1.80	Poor	Not acceptable

Ethical Considerations

This multimedia research project adhered to established ethical standards throughout the processes of data gathering, content development, validation, and expert evaluation. Informed consent was obtained from all ten elder respondents before the interviews were conducted. The researchers explained the purpose of the study, the nature of the interview, the intended use of the information they provided, and their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without consequences. The respondents were also informed that their stories, beliefs, and descriptions of the Aghoy would be used as the cultural basis for developing the digital storytelling material.

Informed consent was also obtained from all evaluators before their participation in the evaluation of the developed material. They were informed of the objectives and procedures of the evaluation, as well as their right to withdraw from participation without consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed throughout the study. The names and other personally identifiable information of the ten elder respondents were not disclosed in the presentation of the findings. Respondents were identified using anonymized labels when their statements were presented in the Results and

Discussion. Evaluators' comments and ratings were likewise treated confidentially and reported in aggregated form to prevent individual attribution.

Because the study documented community-based traditional knowledge, the researchers recognized the importance of treating the Aghoy narratives with respect and cultural sensitivity. The stories and beliefs shared by the elder respondents were treated as community cultural knowledge rather than as information created or owned solely by the researchers. The respondents were informed that their narratives would be documented, interpreted, and adapted as part of the digital storytelling project, and their permission was obtained for their shared accounts to be used for these research and educational purposes. The researchers avoided presenting a single respondent's account as the definitive version of the Aghoy and instead considered recurring themes and variations across the interviews. This approach allowed differences in the oral tradition to be acknowledged while maintaining respect for the community's beliefs and perspectives.

The researchers also took measures to ensure that the developed material represented the Aghoy respectfully. Character designs, narrative elements, supernatural characteristics, environmental settings, and cultural practices were based on recurring information gathered from the respondents. The researchers avoided intentionally altering the cultural meaning of the narratives for purposes unrelated to the study. The digital material was developed as a research-based interpretation of the community narratives rather than as a claim to represent a single or universally accepted version of the Aghoy tradition.

All digital and printed materials generated during the research and validation processes—including interview records, scripts, storyboards, and multimedia outputs—were securely stored and accessed only by the researchers. Upon completion of the study, materials were archived or disposed of responsibly in accordance with institutional guidelines.

The study upheld the principle of beneficence by ensuring that the research activities minimized potential risks and supported positive educational and cultural outcomes. The primary purpose of the project was to document, preserve, and present the Aghoy narrative through a multimedia format while promoting cultural awareness and respectful representation. Prior coordination and written permission from appropriate academic authorities were secured before the conduct of the research and validation activities to ensure compliance with institutional and ethical research requirements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 4. Thematic Sections

Section	Focus
A	Origin and Historical Background
B	Physical and Supernatural Description
C	Strengths, Powers, and Abilities
D	Weaknesses and Limitations
E	Behavior, Morality, and Intent
F	Cultural Function and Symbolism
G	Rituals, Beliefs, and Taboos
H	Variations and Multiple Versions
I	Modern Relevance and Continuity
J	Guidance for Story Adaptation

The analysis presented in Table 5 reveals that the Aghoy myth is closely associated with spiritual symbolism, moral instruction, and forest-related beliefs. The character's visual design, narrative tone, and setting were directly influenced by the information gathered from the respondents, particularly their descriptions of the Aghoy's appearance and behavior. Elements such as its supernatural abilities, weaknesses, and associated taboos were incorporated into key narrative events and symbolic actions. The adaptation guidelines presented in the

table helped ensure that essential cultural traits were retained while allowing flexibility in the development of narrative details.

Table 5. Thematic Summary of Interview Results on the Aghoy Myth

Thematic Category	Dominant Findings	Design Implication
Origin & History	Linked to forests and oral traditions	Forest-based setting
Physical Description	Small, human-like, shape-shifting	Subtle, human-like design
Powers	Shapeshifting, invisibility, control trees	Mysterious movement, night scenes
Weaknesses	Prayer, fire, holy objects	Conflict elements
Morality	Neutral, punishes disrespect	Moral-driven narrative
Cultural Function	Teaches respect for nature	Core story message
Rituals & Taboos	No whistling, no cutting trees	Symbolic actions
Variations	Slight differences by storyteller	Flexible narrative details
Modern Relevance	Elders believe, youth less engaged	Modern storytelling approach
Adaptation Guidance	Core traits must remain	Cultural design limits

The findings revealed that the Aghoy myth in Lawaan, Eastern Samar, is primarily transmitted through oral storytelling and is closely associated with forests, trees, and community beliefs about appropriate behavior. Most respondents reported that they first heard about the Aghoy during childhood from parents, elders, farmers, neighbors, or other community members. For example, one respondent recalled, “when I was a kid, my dad used to tell me stories about aghoy,” while another stated that the story was commonly told by “the elders.” Another respondent identified themselves as one of the storytellers in the community. These responses suggest that the Aghoy is not simply a fictional character encountered through entertainment but forms part of an intergenerational oral tradition in which knowledge is transferred through family and community relationships. This finding is consistent with studies of Philippine folklore that describe oral narratives as important means of transmitting cultural values, social norms, and community knowledge across generations (Sugue & Reyes, 2022).

The respondents also consistently connected the Aghoy with forests and trees. Several described the myth as originating from or being associated with the forest, while one respondent explained that the Aghoy “live in tall trees.” This strong relationship between the supernatural being and the natural environment is significant because it suggests that the forest is not merely the setting of the myth but an important part of its cultural meaning. Similar observations have been reported in Philippine folklore research. Rios (2022), in a study of folklore in a farming community in Argao, Cebu, found that local beliefs and narratives concerning the natural environment express how communities perceive, value, and interact with their surroundings. In this respect, the Aghoy narrative demonstrates a similar relationship between folklore and place: beliefs about a supernatural being are connected to particular environmental spaces and help communicate expectations about how people should behave within those spaces.

The physical descriptions of the Aghoy showed several recurring characteristics but also demonstrated variation among storytellers. Respondents generally described the Aghoy as small and human-like. Specific descriptions included long hair and red eyes, dark skin, a pointed or large nose, large ears, and golden hair. One respondent described it as “small like a child, long hair and red eyes,” while another described it as “small people, golden hair, pointed nose.” These similarities provided a general visual foundation for the character design; however, the differences in specific physical features indicate that there was no single completely standardized appearance shared by all respondents. This is important in interpreting cultural representation because the researchers were documenting a living oral tradition rather than reproducing a fixed written character description.

The respondents likewise differed in their descriptions of the Aghoy’s nature and morality. Some considered it a good or helpful spirit, while others described it as a bad or evil spirit. One respondent characterized the Aghoy as “neutral,” another described it as “a good spirit who help people,” while another identified it as “bad spirits.” These contrasting accounts suggest that the Aghoy cannot be classified simply as either a benevolent or malevolent creature. Instead, its behavior appears to depend partly on human actions and circumstances. This

interpretation is supported by other responses indicating that the Aghoy may be friendly toward people who behave in the forest but hostile toward those who behave improperly. Therefore, the findings suggest that morality is a flexible feature of the Aghoy narrative, with the creature functioning as a supernatural figure that responds to human behavior.

The supernatural abilities attributed to the Aghoy further reinforced its connection with the forest and nighttime. Respondents identified shapeshifting, invisibility, teleportation, mind influence, tree and root control, and the ability to locate lost objects among its reported abilities. One respondent stated that the Aghoy could “control the trunks and roots of the trees,” while another said that it could “disappear and teleport.” Another respondent reported that the creature could find lost things. Most respondents also associated the Aghoy’s greatest power with nighttime or the full moon. These findings correspond with the broader characterization of supernatural beings in Philippine folklore, where mythical creatures are frequently situated within narratives involving unseen forces, mystery, and unusual encounters. Ramos (1990), for example, documented numerous Philippine mythical beings associated with nighttime and supernatural encounters.

At the same time, the present findings extend this general folklore pattern by showing how the Aghoy is specifically understood within the local context of Lawaan. Rather than presenting the Aghoy only as a frightening supernatural creature, the respondents connected its powers to trees, the forest, children, and community behavior. This makes the Aghoy distinctive in the context of the present study because its supernatural characteristics are closely integrated with local environmental beliefs.

The weaknesses and protective practices also reflected a combination of supernatural belief and behavioral guidance. Respondents mentioned holy objects, fire, prayers, loud noises, bright places, crowded areas, and rain as possible weaknesses or deterrents, although some respondents stated that the Aghoy had no known weakness. One respondent stated that the Aghoy was “scared to things that are holy,” while another said that it was afraid when “the trees are lit on fire.” Respondents also commonly advised people to avoid entering the forest at night and to avoid whistling or imitating the Aghoy’s whistle. These differences demonstrate that some details of the myth are not consistently shared among all storytellers. Therefore, these elements should be understood as reported community beliefs rather than as fixed or universally accepted rules of the Aghoy myth.

The taboo surrounding whistling was particularly prominent in the interviews. Several respondents stated that people should not whistle at night because it could attract or anger the Aghoy. One respondent explained that ignoring this belief could cause a person to “get lost in the forest,” while others stated that the Aghoy would become angry or come after the person. These accounts demonstrate the functional role of the myth in discouraging behavior considered unsafe or inappropriate. The story therefore operates not only as entertainment but also as a form of informal behavioral instruction. This observation is consistent with Philippine folklore scholarship that recognizes folk narratives as mechanisms for communicating norms, values, and social expectations (Sugue & Reyes, 2022).

The environmental dimension of the Aghoy myth was particularly evident in the respondents’ descriptions of what angers the creature and what actions gain its favor. Respondents mentioned cutting down trees, imitating its whistle, and throwing fire at it as actions that could anger the Aghoy. In contrast, respecting the forest and avoiding harmful behavior were associated with gaining its favor or avoiding punishment. One respondent summarized the lesson as “protect the forest specially the trees,” while another stated that the myth teaches “obedience towards parents and to care towards trees.” These responses indicate that the Aghoy functions as a symbolic guardian of the forest. Its supernatural punishment can be interpreted as a narrative mechanism for reinforcing environmental responsibility.

This environmental function is comparable to findings from other Philippine folklore studies. Rios (2022) found that folklore concerning the natural environment can preserve community knowledge about landscapes and express cultural values concerning the relationship between people and nature. The Aghoy findings demonstrate a similar pattern, although the specific supernatural figure and beliefs are locally distinct. The comparison suggests that the environmental meaning found in the Aghoy narrative is not isolated from broader Philippine folklore traditions; rather, it represents a local expression of a recurring relationship between folklore, place, and environmental behavior.

The interviews also provided evidence of changing levels of engagement with the myth across generations. Several respondents stated that elders and other community members still believe in the Aghoy, while younger people were described as less interested or less concerned about it. One respondent stated that younger people “don’t really care that much,” while another simply said that they “don’t care.” At the same time, some respondents believed that the myth should continue to be told to preserve it or to warn people, whereas others believed that it no longer needed to be continued. This mixed response is important because it shows that cultural continuity should not be assumed simply because the myth remains known among older residents.

The decline in younger generations’ interest is also consistent with broader observations about the transmission of Philippine folklore. Sugue and Reyes (2022) noted concerns regarding the continued recognition and preservation of Philippine mythology and proposed greater integration of these narratives into educational contexts. Similarly, Rios (2022) observed that local folklore connected to the natural environment may become less understood or discontinued among younger generations. The present findings therefore support the researchers’ decision to use digital storytelling as a possible means of presenting the Aghoy to younger audiences. However, the results do not establish that digital media alone will preserve the tradition; rather, they suggest that digital storytelling can serve as one additional medium through which the documented narratives can be introduced and remembered.

The findings demonstrate that the Aghoy myth performs several cultural functions within the community. It provides an explanation for unusual experiences, communicates warnings about nighttime and forest behavior, reinforces respect for elders, and expresses values concerning the protection of trees and the natural environment. The myth also demonstrates the characteristics of an oral tradition because certain details vary between respondents while its major themes remain recognizable. This distinction is important: cultural preservation does not necessarily require preserving every narrative detail exactly as reported by one storyteller. Instead, the major recurring themes identified across respondents provide a more reliable basis for adaptation, while differences should be acknowledged as part of the tradition itself.



Figure 1. Initial sketches of the Aghoy

Figure 1 presents the initial character concept designs of the Aghoy based on the interview findings gathered from the respondents. The illustrations reflect the common descriptions provided by the elders, portraying the Aghoy as a small, human-like being with subtle supernatural features. The designs emphasize simplicity and natural elements to reflect the respondents’ descriptions of the Aghoy as a forest-dwelling being.

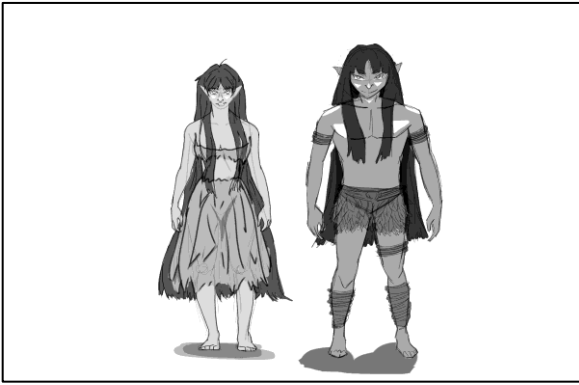


Figure 2. Sketches for the Aghoy's human form

Figure 2 presents the concept sketches of the Aghoy in its human form, based on the descriptions provided by the interview respondents. The sketches portray the Aghoy as a human-like figure that is often described as attractive in appearance. Despite taking on a human form, the Aghoy retains distinctive features, such as long ears and a pointed nose, while maintaining simple details to avoid an overly monstrous appearance. The clothing is designed using vines and leaves to emphasize the Aghoy's connection to the forest and its portrayal as a forest-dwelling being.

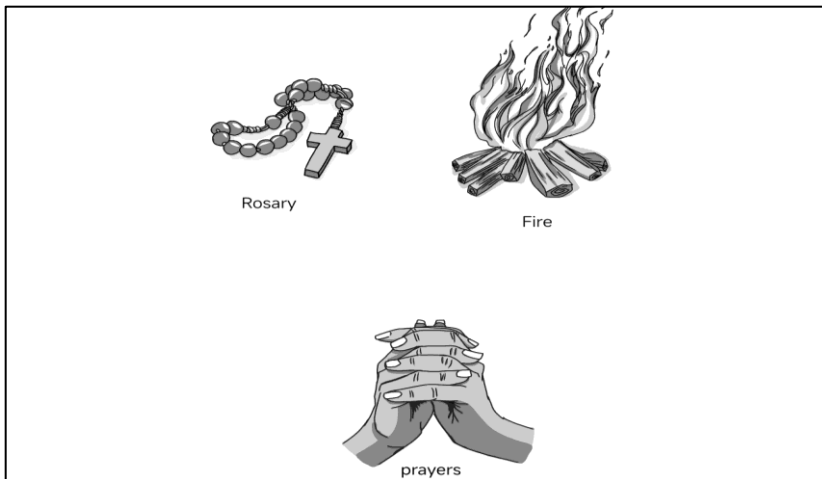


Figure 3. Sketches of the weakness of aghoy

Figure three shows the common weaknesses of the aghoy mentioned by the respondents, such as fire, prayers, and holy objects like a rosary. According to the interviews, these are believed to protect people from the aghoy and help drive it away or weaken its presence in the forest.

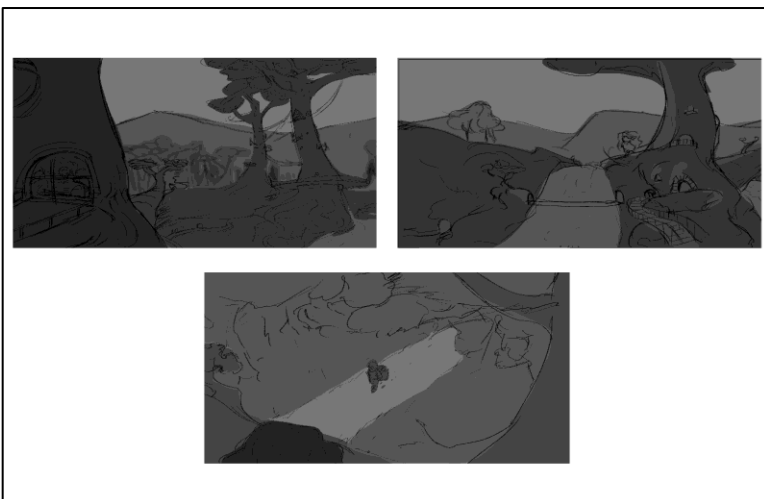


Figure 4. Sketches for the environments

Figure 4 presents the forest environment where the Aghoy is believed to live. The setting was based on the respondents' descriptions, which associated the Aghoy with trees, dense forests, and quiet natural spaces. Dark tones and natural elements were used to convey the mysterious atmosphere of the forest and emphasize the Aghoy's connection to nature and isolation.

During the Development Phase, the researchers created the digital material based on the approved designs developed during the Design Phase. The researchers planned and organized the process of transforming the concepts into a complete and polished digital output. During the illustration process, the researchers refined the approved concepts by creating clean line art and adding details to improve the clarity, focus, and overall visual quality of the illustrations.

To match the mood of the story and reflect the forest setting associated with the Aghoy, appropriate colors and saturation were applied to the illustrations. The visual design and illustrations focused on clarity, consistency, and atmosphere. The researchers' creativity and originality were expressed through distinctive character designs and scene compositions while maintaining the core elements of the Aghoy myth.

To ensure that the digital material met the criteria of the evaluation tool, the researchers carefully planned and monitored each part of the Development Phase. The narrative was developed based on the interview results, with the story flow reflecting the experiences and accounts shared by the respondents. Cultural accuracy and sensitivity were maintained by remaining faithful to the descriptions, behaviors, beliefs, and values associated with the Aghoy that were gathered during the data collection process.



Figure 5. Character line art

Figure five shows the clean line art of the character Aghoy. This illustration is based on the data gathered, featuring its facial features such as long hair, big ears, a pointy nose, and a straw hat.

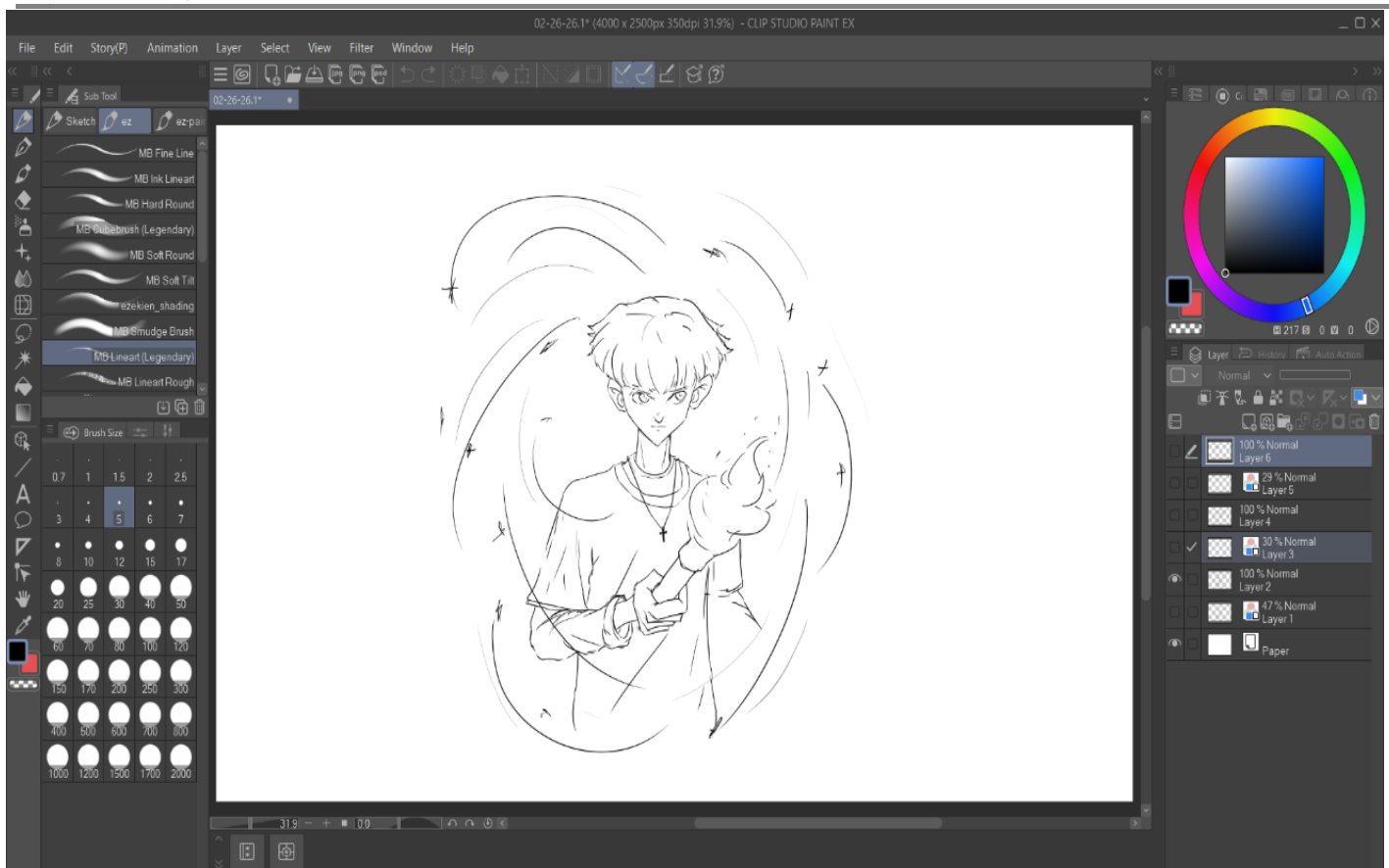


Figure 6. Aghoy's weakness

Figure 6 presents a man holding a torch and a rosary. The illustration represents two of the weaknesses of the Aghoy identified from the interview findings: fire and devotional objects, particularly the rosary. These elements were incorporated into the scene to visually represent the protective measures believed by respondents to help protect people from the Aghoy.

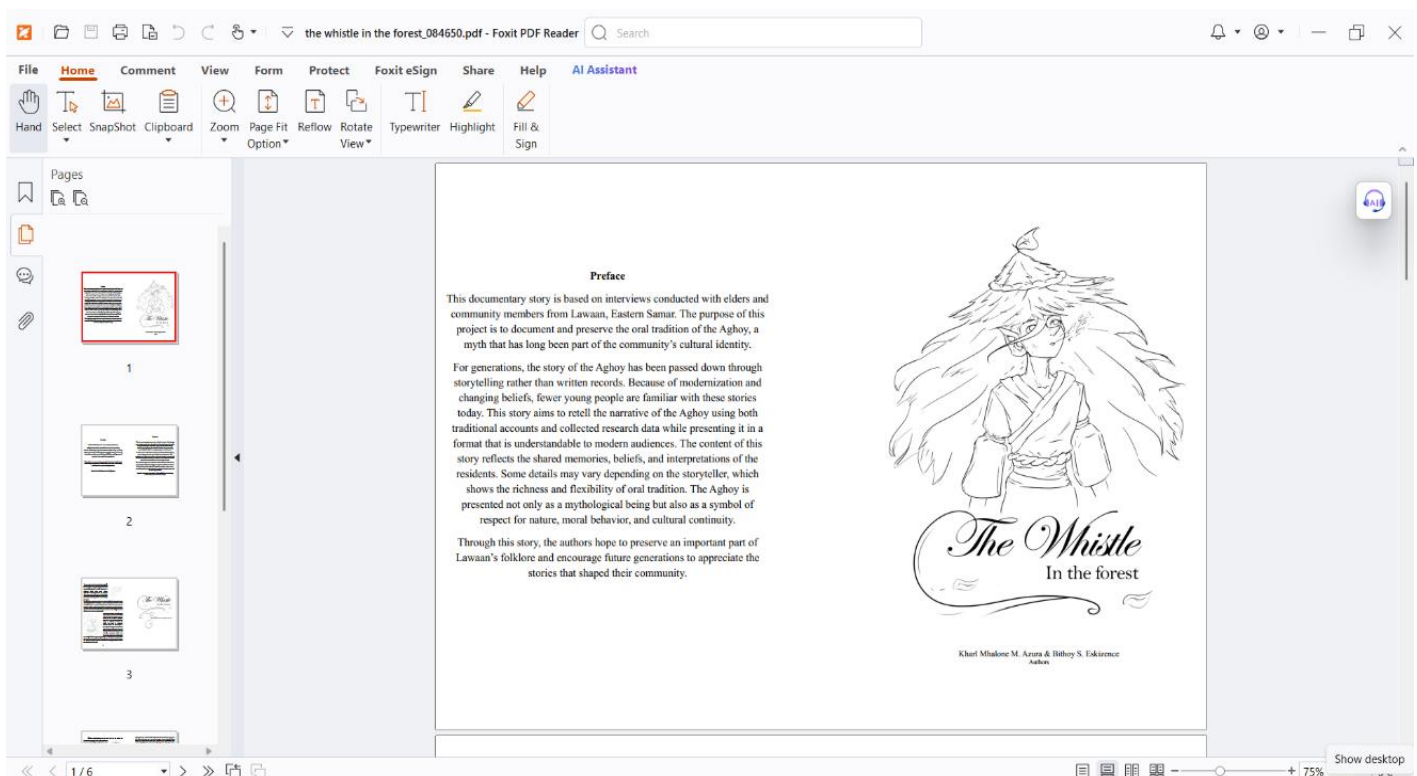


Figure 7. The storybook

Figure seven shows the cover page of the developed digital material. Featuring the Aghoy on the cover page, acting as the face of the storybook to attract readers, and to introduce the content. Also shown is the title “The Whistle in the Forest”.

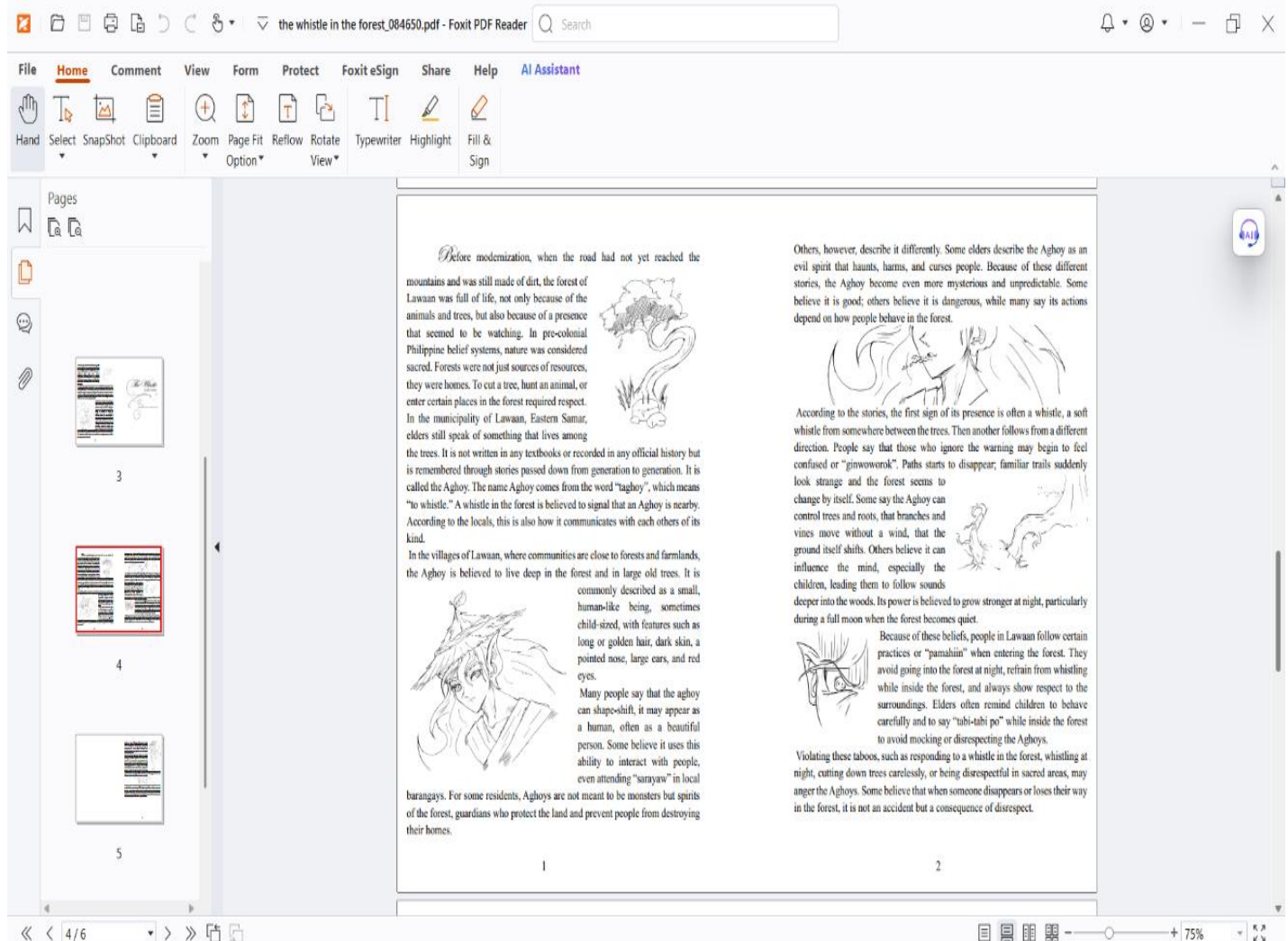


Figure 8. The content

Figure 8 presents the main body of the story, featuring the characters, accessories, and environment illustrations that contribute to a richer and more immersive storytelling experience. The illustration also depicts the Aghoy’s interactions with the human characters, helping communicate the narrative and the relationship between the Aghoy and the community.

Evaluation Phase

During the Evaluation Phase, the researchers assessed the quality and accuracy of the developed multimedia output. The final output was reviewed to ensure that it accurately represented the stories shared by the respondents and remained faithful to the cultural beliefs and information associated with the Aghoy.

A modified *Evaluation Rating Sheet for Storybooks and Big Books* from the Department of Education–Nueva Ecija was used to assess the final output, particularly its narrative clarity, content, and technical aspects. The digital material was also evaluated for its cultural appropriateness and consistency with the experiences and stories shared by the respondents.

The evaluators assessed the developed digital material, and the results showed that all evaluation parameters received highly acceptable ratings. The high scores provide evidence that the evaluators considered the developed material strong in areas such as story, sociocultural sensitivity, characters, visuals, language, layout,

and technical presentation. However, these results should not be interpreted as definitive proof of cultural accuracy. Cultural accuracy is a broader concept than evaluator acceptability, particularly because the evaluation group consisted of only ten individuals: one principal with a master's degree and nine teachers with bachelor's degrees. The evaluators were therefore able to assess the material using the established evaluation instrument, but they did not represent all members of the Lawaan community or all possible cultural bearers of the Aghoy tradition

Table 6. Factor One

Parameter	Grand Mean	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
Story	4.8	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards
Sociocultural Sensitivity	4.8	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards
Development Aspect	4.8	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards
Plot/Storyline	4.8	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards
Characters	4.9	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards
Visuals	4.8	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards
Language	4.9	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards
Grammar	4.7	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards

Table 6 presents the evaluation results for Factor 1, which covers the content-related aspects of the digital storytelling material. All parameters received an Excellent descriptive rating, with grand means ranging from 4.7 to 4.9. These results indicate that the evaluators considered the material highly acceptable in terms of story, sociocultural sensitivity, development, plot/storyline, characters, visuals, language, and grammar.

Table 7. Factor two

Parameter	Grand Mean	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
Prints	4.7	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards
Book Design and Layout	4.8	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards
Paper and Binding	4.7	Excellent	Highly acceptable; meets all required standards

Table 7 presents the evaluation results for Factor 2, which covers the format and technical aspects of the digital storytelling material. All three parameters which are printing, book design and layout, and paper and binding received an Excellent descriptive rating, with grand means ranging from 4.7 to 4.8. These results indicate that the developed material met the established criteria for format and technical quality.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully achieved its objectives by documenting stories and beliefs about the Aghoy and developing a digital storytelling material based on the information gathered from the community. Through qualitative interviews with elders and long-time residents of Lawaan, Eastern Samar, the researchers collected valuable accounts regarding the Aghoy's appearance, behavior, abilities, habitat, and cultural significance.

The findings revealed that the Aghoy is commonly associated with trees and deep forests and is often described as a small, human-like being with supernatural abilities such as shapeshifting, invisibility, and teleportation. The collected stories also reflected important cultural beliefs concerning respect for nature, respect for elders, and observance of certain forest-related taboos. These findings demonstrate that the Aghoy myth serves not only as a supernatural narrative but also as a means of communicating values and behavioral guidance within the community.

Using the information gathered from the respondents, the researchers developed a digital storytelling material entitled *The Whistle in the Forest*. Through the modified ADDIE framework, the collected data were analyzed to identify recurring themes, descriptions, and cultural elements. These findings served as the basis for developing the narrative, character designs, props, and environment. This process helped ensure that the final

output remained grounded in the respondents' accounts and represented the Aghoy in a culturally respectful manner while allowing the myth to be presented through a creative digital medium.

The developed digital material was evaluated using a modified *Evaluation Rating Sheet for Storybooks and Big Books* from the Department of Education–Nueva Ecija. Factor 1, which assessed the content, received a grand mean of **4.8**, interpreted as Excellent, while Factor 2, which assessed the format and technical aspects, received a grand mean of **4.7**, also interpreted as Excellent. The evaluation results indicate that the developed digital material was highly acceptable according to the established criteria. However, because the evaluation involved only ten evaluators, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of the material's acceptability and quality rather than as definitive proof of cultural accuracy.

The study demonstrates that documenting local folklore and transforming it into digital storytelling material can contribute to the preservation and promotion of cultural knowledge. The development of *The Whistle in the Forest* provides a creative means of presenting the Aghoy myth while maintaining its essential cultural elements. Through the combination of cultural documentation and digital media, traditional stories such as the Aghoy myth can be preserved, shared, and appreciated by future generations.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researchers recommend the following:

- (1) To encourage researchers to further conduct studies about the creature Aghoy, in order to gather more detailed stories, interpretations, and cultural knowledge from different communities, which may help strengthen the documentation and preservation of this story that may gradually disappear over time.
- (2) Creating more digital materials, such as animations or comics, based on the information about the Aghoy. Making the story more engaging and accessible, especially for young audiences, while it remains respectful and accurate.
- (3) Utilizing the developed digital material as a learning material in teaching local literature, culture, and folklore. Combining these digital materials in learning environments can help students appreciate local beliefs and mythological creatures. Its clear narrative and cultural sensitivity with local experiences make it suitable for use in educational and learning activities to promote local myths, such as the Aghoy.

Conflict of Interest

This study did not receive funding from any individuals or organizations.

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