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*Epic Tales of the Philippines: Tribal Lore of Filipinos.* Edited by Artemio R. Guillermo.  
Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America. 248 pp. ISBN: 0-76182491X

This is a collection of stories and oral traditions from the Philippines. The stories told illustrate the cultural values that are consistent throughout the Philippines. These aspects of culture are imperative for the understanding and acquisition of Filipino language skills. This text would provide a complementary base for beginning Filipino language learners. There are twenty-one different short stories that are all geographically and ethnically specific as labeled by the corresponding sub-titles. Each tale reflects the edifying notions of community, warfare, honor, familial relations, gender roles and normative social actions.

The act of storytelling is an intricate part of many Filipino cultures. This is an attribute that many second language learners miss out on. While the compilation of oral literature composed in this book is no replacement for actual storytelling, it still is able to convey the social significance of oral tradition. Through descriptive detail Guillermo creates imagery that provides a background setting for momentous events. Most of the stories maintain a mythological sense of time and space, yet each tale is specific to a different region and reflects the variations and differences found in each accompanying locale.

This book features an exceptionally helpful summation of each story and its cultural significance (210-218). Language learners would be able to access this information before reading to provide added context to stories that can, at times, be difficult to grasp. Each summation notes the significant traits of the culture from which the tale comes. The story summaries also compare and contrast a tale to others in the book. Having this information allows the reader to note significant variations or commonalities between cultural attributes. This section also provides ethnographic information about the stories acquisition. The sources for the stories are as varied as the stories themselves. It is noted which stories have been written down and in what texts they can be found. It is also made known what the stories have endured and survive in the culture up to present day.

Historic events, such as colonial shifts, are addressed in this section as well. While these events may be absent from the tales, it is necessary to note their impact on the people who told these stories traditionally. Along with impacts such as colonialism other important shifts are noted. In the story of Idarpatra (115-120), there are specific details that are obviously influenced by the strong Moro presence in the Southern Region. The summation explains that the Islamic merchants who established a strong Muslim population throughout the area of Southern Mindanao influence this particular story. The summation goes on to explain the cultural significance the Moro population has had on story telling as a whole. This is also important to the beginning language learner who may wonder why there is such variation between languages throughout the islands of the Philippines.

After the summation of stories, the editor presents a glossary of names he has compiled. This section is in alphabetical order and features a pronunciation guide. This is most helpful to the beginning language learner who may find the long and polysyllabic names difficult to understand. The author also allows the reader to acquire new words from the languages of the culture from which the tale comes by giving in text explanations of non-English words. For instance, the story of Aponitolao (25-33) focuses on *biyo*. The author is careful to place an explanation of this word (sweet juicy oranges) immediately following its appearance in the text.

The characters in the story serve a function that is common in pan-cultural portrayals of myths. They are commonly idealized actors that embody the essence of their worth. These characters stress common values of loyalty, virtue, faith and a sense of obligation to the community. The stories can be used as reference for “traditional” ways to view such significant community events as death, weddings, courtships, harvests and births.

This book is fun to read and would add a sense of cultural relativity to language acquisition. The guided summations present perspective for each individual story. The origin of each story is also helpful if one is interested in learning the components of the heritage of each area. They vary widely, encompassing tales from the Kalinga Highlands to the Moro populations of Southern-most tip of Mindanao.

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