

Da Bathala Code

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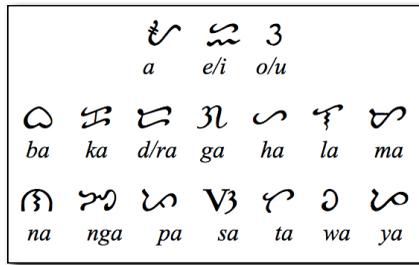


Da Bathala Code

Part 1: Do baybayin letters hold hidden meanings?

For many people, their first acquaintance with the old Filipino script known as *baybayin* is like discovering a magic code that can unlock ancient secrets, as in so many fantasy movies. At least, that's what it was like for me. For many of us, who only know the Roman alphabet, the letters do look strange and exotic, and it is often this mysterious quality that attracts us to the script.

However, baybayin writing is more significant – or at least, it should be – because it is not part of a mere fantasy; it is the heritage of the Filipino people. After centuries of being regarded as little more than savages under the Spanish regime, then as backward “little brown brothers” under the Americans, most Filipinos are proud, and rightly so, when they discover that their pre-colonial ancestors were, in fact, highly literate.



This is the most common style of baybayin writing shown in some school history books. It was designed for a Spanish printing press in the early 1600s. Some baybayin enthusiasts unknowingly use fonts like this to divine hidden meanings in the letter shapes, unaware that the shapes have been modified and influenced by the Roman alphabet. Note the distinctive V and 3 used for the letter SA.

For some baybayin enthusiasts, however, this is not enough. A few Internet web sites promote theories that baybayin letters have deeper, mysterious meanings beyond being just graphic representations of the spoken word. Until recently, the lack of easy access to comprehensive factual information about baybayin writing has allowed several authors to embellish the known facts with alleged revelations of spiritual meanings held within the shapes of baybayin characters.

Bathala and the baybayin

The promoters of this idea – that there are hidden meanings in the shapes of baybayin letters – usually start their revelations with the word *bathala* (pronounced *bat-hala*), which is the name of the pre-colonial Tagalog god of creation. In baybayin writing, *Bathala* looks like this:

		
<i>ba</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>la</i>

The very nature of God is supposedly revealed in its baybayin spelling with the concepts of femininity, masculinity, creation and divine inspiration all contained in the shapes of the letters. The  (*ba*) is said to represent the female aspect of creation because it is the first letter in the Tagalog word *babae* (woman) and its shape is supposed to mimic the genitals of a woman. Similarly, the  (*la*) represents the male aspect because *lalaki* (man) starts with the letter *L*, which, apparently, is penis-shaped. These two concepts are united by the letter  (*ha*), which represents the divine breath (*hininga*) or wind (*hangin*) that gives life to the spirits of women and men. If the letter  (*ta*) is erroneously inserted into the baybayin spelling of *Bathala*, it symbolizes a spark or a bolt of lightning from God that ignites the human spirit – or something like that.

Like Dan Brown’s best-selling novel and blockbuster movie with a similar title, this “Bathala Code,” as I like to call it, is very enticing, pretty far-fetched and uses dubious scholarship to dress up what is basically a fantasy. The details can vary widely since each believer often likes to insert his or her own alleged discoveries based on superficial observations of unrelated religions and New Age philosophies.

Most Bathala Code believers, however, share at least two major assumptions in their theory. The first assumption is that the supposed Bathala-baybayin connection was a spiritual belief held by all pre-colonial Filipinos, even though it is based on three Tagalog words and the name of a deity that only the Tagalogs and Zambals worshiped as their creator god.¹ The other assumption, of course, is the very premise that baybayin letter shapes are really pictures that have meanings beyond the sounds they represent.

Letters as pictures

But are the shapes meaningless? It’s safe to say that almost all non-pictographic writing systems in the world have origins that can be traced back to predecessors that were pictographic. Our Roman letter *A*, for instance, is said to have descended from an Egyptian hieroglyph that was a picture of an ox. It doesn’t look much like an ox today and it’s not even used to spell “ox” in English – nor should it because our alphabet is not an invention of the English or even the ancient Romans. The current shapes of our letters are the result of an evolutionary process that took thousands of years and involved several intermediate writing systems and spoken languages including Latin, Ancient Greek, Etruscan, Phoenician, two Middle Eastern alphabets and a simplified form of the original Egyptian hieroglyphs.² But, the letter *A* just means “*A*” to us now. Similarly, predecessors of baybayin letters might have once had pictographic meanings, but they certainly had no relationship with any Tagalog words.

What if Tagalog people really designed the baybayin?

Many pictographic interpretations rely on very specific details of how baybayin letters are drawn, but these details can vary greatly, or even disappear, depending on which specimen of baybayin writing is examined. The letter \bigcirc (ba) for example was often written as an ordinary circle. The Ƨ (la) often had straight lines and looked like a *T*. The modern Bathala theories are not based on interpretations of the way that the people of Luzon or the Visayas actually wrote five centuries ago. Most of the common historic styles of the baybayin that we know today were actually typefaces that were originally designed for Spanish printing presses. Nobody knows exactly what the earliest baybayin looked like because the oldest surviving specimen was made on a Spanish printing press in 1593. It begs the question, how do Bathala Code believers know that they are interpreting the correct shapes?

Even if the baybayin letter shapes that we know today were 100% faithful to a pre-colonial Tagalog model, there is no evidence that the Tagalog designers based them on the things we might think they did. For example, the letter \bigcirc could stand for *bato* (stone) as well as for *babae* or any of a hundred other *B*-words. Even if we grant that the letters of Bathala look vaguely like a vagina, the wind and a penis, is this really any more significant than noticing that dog spelled backwards is god?

While it is highly improbable that the words *babae*, *hangin* and *lalaki* were derived from Bathala, it is even more absurd to claim that Bathala was formed from those Tagalog words since the name Bathala is derived from the Indian Sanskrit word *bhattara*, meaning “lord,”³ which has derivatives in many languages throughout India, Malaysia and Indonesia.

On a more practical level – if some pre-colonial people in the Philippines really did design the baybayin with a profound metaphysical meaning in mind for every single letter shape, then why did they not also think of a way to write consonants without vowels? Even the word *bathala* must lose the letter *T* in its baybayin spelling – otherwise it would be mispronounced as *ba-ta-ha-la*. This “lone consonant” problem is one of the best clues (along with some anecdotal evidence ⁴) that the baybayin was imported to the Philippines and not invented there. Had the Roman alphabet not come along so soon, it is quite likely that Filipinos would have eventually adapted the baybayin better for their own languages. Since the baybayin script and the word *bathala* did not originate in the Philippines, there is no reason to believe that the letter shapes should be based on any Tagalog words.

What is the documentary evidence?

Early colonial Spanish authors wrote quite a bit about the baybayin. They learned to write it and they used it to print books that would serve to convert Filipinos to Christianity. They also studied the religions of all the various language and ethnic groups under their control and they knew the names of the local deities. None of these things were kept secret from the Spanish religious orders and yet, they never reported anything about special meanings in the shapes of the baybayin letters. Certainly, if any Spanish friar had thought for a second that he was duped into drawing “smutty” pictures in his religious texts, there would have been hell to pay. Perhaps the wholesale burning of all baybayin documents would have really happened – but that is another common fallacy about the baybayin. ⁵

So where did all these alleged revelations about Bathala and the baybayin come from? We’ll talk about some of the contributors to this “Bathala Code” and meet its creator in the next three parts of this series.

three that either came together to form *Bathala*, or were derived from *Bathala*. Conflicting theories about every other letter of the baybayin script have also been conjured from these improbable assumptions.

Whose idea was this, anyway?

So where did these purported revelations about Bathala and the baybayin come from and who is promoting them today? Although none of the current authors who cover the subject on the Internet cite an ultimate source for their information, their inspiration is most likely a coil-bound manual by the composer Bayani Mendoza de Leon, *Baybayin, The Ancient Script of the Philippines*.⁶ It is currently the easiest book to find that contains these ideas, although it is more about de Leon's own modernized baybayin than it is about the ancient script. Several phrases from it appear without citation at Mary Ann Ubaldo's *Urduja.com*,⁷ which was probably the earliest web site to promote the supposed spiritual aspects of baybayin writing.

Perla Daly, another Bathala Code believer who has influenced some baybayin enthusiasts, credits Ubaldo for her epiphany and has added her own embellishments to support her New Age theories about Filipino spirituality in an on-line document, *Bahala Meditations*.⁸

Although Bayani de Leon is apparently the current source of these mystical theories, he did not invent them. In the preface to his manual, de Leon enthusiastically quoted from a 1972 article by Guillermo Tolentino, which he described as "an eye-opening exposition on the pictographic significance of each character in the Filipino ancient script." In total, he presented Tolentino's "illuminating insights" for ten of the 17 letters of the baybayin.⁹ So how did Tolentino discover these secrets of the baybayin?

Guillermo Tolentino

Guillermo Tolentino was a National Artist for Sculpture who passed away in 1976. He was famous for such works as the Bonifacio Monument in Caloocan, Metro Manila and the Oblation statue, symbol of the University of the Philippines. Among his many talents and interests, he was also considered a baybayin expert. He first published his ideas about hidden meanings in baybayin letters in his 1937 book, *Ang Wika at Baybayinig Tagalog* (The Tagalog Language and Baybayin). Here, Tolentino expounded on diverse subjects ranging from astronomy to zoology in order to advance his belief in the superiority of the Tagalog language and culture.

For Tolentino, finding Tagalog words like *babae*, *hangin* and *lalaki* inside a Sanskrit-derived word like *bathala*, or claiming that they were the basis of letter shapes in an imported script, was not a logical problem at all because he believed that Tagalog culture predated most civilizations in Asia and the world. According to him, the Tagalog language and its script did not share a common source with any other culture, nor did it borrow from any other culture because Tagalog was 2000 years older than Sanskrit and it was the source of this ancient, sacred language of India, as well as most of the other languages of Southeast Asia.¹⁰ This would have made Tagalog about 5,500 years old and possibly the oldest living language in the world.

Tolentino made incredible claims like this throughout his book, supporting them with misused quotes from sources both reliable and dubious. Many of his theories were based on nothing more than coincidental similarities between Tagalog words and foreign words. In one attempt to demonstrate the far reaching influence of the Tagalog language, he casually maligned an entire nation:

Even the name of that island Madagascar is a stupid corruption (pagagong tawag) of the correct Tagalog “magdaragat” (mariner), and because of a natural fondness for drinking alcohol, the people are usually drunk (mga lasing), thus [they are called] Malagasi. ¹¹

In some cases, Tolentino didn’t even bother to dig for phoney evidence. To explain the origin of baybayin writing, he simply conjured a fable about a Tagalog poet named Katalon who invented the script so that he could give his poems to Bai, the most beautiful lady in his town – in the year 600 BCE! ¹²

Spooky source of information

One source of Tolentino’s absurd theories, which he did not mention in his 1937 book, was the supernatural. He was an avid practitioner of the occult and one of the founders of the *Unión Espiritista Cristiana de Filipinas Inc.* He often hosted meetings of the group in his home, which included, faith healing, speaking in tongues and séances. On at least one occasion, he tapped this spooky source for information about the ancient script.

In the early 1960s, the National Museum of the Philippines asked Tolentino to decipher the writing on a pot discovered in Calatagan, Batangas. Nobody could figure out the meaning of its possibly pre-colonial inscription but Tolentino managed to divine its secret. When asked how he did it, he said that he contacted the spirit of the long-departed potter in a séance and simply asked him what he wrote on the now-famous Calatagan Pot. ¹³ Needless to say, Tolentino’s interpretation was ignored and that inscription is still considered undeciphered to this day.

Guillermo Tolentino invented meanings for all the baybayin letters, but even with his supernatural connections, he was not the first to “discover” the Bathala Code. In his introduction to

that section of the book, Tolentino revealed that he had no real source for most of his information, but he did acknowledge the originator of the Bathala-baybayin notion. He wrote:

...why the shapes [of the letters] became like that, not even one historian, linguist or palaeographer has been able to give a certain or even superficial explanation. Nobody has even been able to write about the meaning and form that was imitated by the various shapes of the letters of the Tagalog baybayin other than the late Pedro A. Paterno and Lope K. Santos. Even these two gentlemen described nothing except B H L of Bathala, by the former, and U H A, or the cry of a new-born child, by the latter. That's it – just three letters from each and nothing more. To put it simply, where the previous writers finished is where we begin with other things that are connected but hidden from the awareness of the general public. ¹⁴

In the next part of this series, we'll meet the real inventor of the Bathala Code – the notorious Pedro Alexandro Molo Agustin Paterno y de Vera Ignacio, Maguinoo [Lord] Paterno.

BIGKAS	HGA	WA	PA	YA	DA-BA	HA	GA	SA	KA	MA	TA	LA	HA	BA	O-U	E-I	A
TAGALOG																	
KAWI (HUWAD SA TAGALOG)																	
MGA PINAGBUHATANG HUGIS																	
PANTINGIG AT KATINING NA DULOT NG HUGIS	ALINGAWGAW	HANGGAHAN	PUNOY UGAT	PAGPAKITA SA GALAY NG KAMAY	LANDAS	SANOTINAKPAN	LINA ANG GAWA SA SALITA	PASUNIT, SUTSOT HINGONG DALIBAS	KAKAMBAL-KAUGMAY KALADIAN, KAAWAY	MANANGYARIHAN	TALINO, TALSİK	PAGKA-LALAKE	KIDLAT, BAJOYO HANGIT	PAGKA-SABAE	MANCHA, TANONG	ILAW, TINIG, TUDIG	PAGIYAK, PAGTUTOL, SIMULA NG BUHAY

Tolentino's chart showing his "original meanings" of all the baybayin letters – from Ang Wika at Baybaying Tagalog



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Da Bathala Code

Part 3: Pedro Paterno's Grand Illusion

In this series of articles we have been talking about something I call the *Bathala Code*. This is the idea that the old Filipino writing system, called the *baybayin*, contains secret meanings hidden in the shapes of its characters – meanings beyond just the sounds that they represent. Even though there is no evidence to support this theory, a few people today are adopting it as the basis of what they call a “rediscovery” of ancient Filipino spirituality. The Bathala Code is not a new idea but, as we’ll see, it is by no means an ancient one, either.



Pedro Paterno, the originator of the Bathala-baybayin notion, 1906 photo.

As we saw last time, the sculptor and spiritualist Guillermo Tolentino invented more bogus meanings for baybayin letters than anyone else, back in 1937. He credited two other men for what he considered to be only minor contributions to his interpretations. One of them was his contemporary, Lope K.

Santos, who was a highly respected writer and author of the first official grammar of the national language. Santos speculated on the word *uha* (cry of a newborn baby) as the basis for the shapes of the letters 3 (u), ∞ (ha) and Ƨ (a). However, neither Tolentino nor Santos could claim to have discovered the Bathala Code. They merely embellished the ideas of another pseudo-ethnographer from a generation before them – Pedro Paterno.

Pedro Paterno

Fifty years before Tolentino wrote his *Ang Wika at Baybaying Tagalog*, Pedro Paterno wrote *La antigua civilización tagalog* in 1887,¹⁵ followed by several other books on Filipino ethnology. These were hardly a small influence on Tolentino's far-fetched theories; they were probably some of his main inspirations, if not his virtual blueprint. Like Tolentino, Paterno tried to legitimize some really outrageous claims with questionable scholarship and outright fabrications, as we'll see, but more than that, he himself played a prominent role during a crucial period of Philippine history. He is a fascinating character who deserves much more scrutiny than is possible in this series of articles. For more information about the infamous political career of Pedro Paterno, I recommend the book *Brains of the Nation*¹⁶ by Resil Mojares.

Inventing a religion

Although Paterno was the originator of the Bathala-baybayin notion, it was not the main focus of *La antigua civilización tagalog*. Like many Filipino writers of his time, his aim was to show that Filipinos were capable of taking part in the governing of their own country under Spanish rule. But unlike the other Propagandists, as they were called, Paterno was a

conservative Catholic and an ardent supporter of the Spanish regime. He saw Christianity as the highest form of religion and Spain as the embodiment of the highest form of culture and civilization. Through his improbable analysis of history and language, he tried to prove that, even before Spain made first contact in the 1500s, the ancient Tagalogs were already “Spaniards at heart,” as the historian John Schumacher phrased it in his book *The Making of a Nation*.¹⁷ What’s more, they even practiced an organized religion that was practically Christianity but with another name. Paterno called this religion *Tagalismo* and *Bathalismo*, and it had everything from a creation myth very much like the Garden of Eden story to elements such as priests, bishops, Holy Communion, Confession, a Holy Trinity, a virgin birth and a prophet named Anac Hala who was the son of the creator Bathala.

To support his incredible claims, Paterno would ferret out obscure words, like *bathala*, and often break them down to their basic syllables and letters. He would make irrelevant comparisons and emphasize chance similarities of these elements with words, concepts and personalities from other civilizations around the world – just as Guillermo Tolentino would do half a century later. Resil Mojares showed throughout his essay how Paterno would freely distort facts and selectively mine his sources, ignoring anything that did not fit his theories.

And, of course, Paterno would also just “make up stuff.” While Tolentino had his baseless origin story for the baybayin script, Paterno had one for his Bathalismo religion. In Paterno’s story – which he said an “ancient Tagalog” had told him – a virgin named Daga was impregnated by a ray of sunlight. When her father discovered the pregnancy, he angrily wrote her name in the baybayin script and inserted the “male” letter Ɔ

(la), changing her name to Dalaga and thus creating the Tagalog word meaning “young unmarried woman.” Dalaga gave birth to a son who began to perform miracles at the age of 12, thus founding the religion of Bathalismo. ¹⁸

The Bathala Code

The baybayin script was an integral part of Paterno’s grand illusion of Bathalismo. He said, “In this story or tradition of the word *dalaga* we see the foundation of Bathalismo.” ¹⁹ And it was also here in *La antigua civilización tagalog* that Paterno laid out the very premise of the Bathala Code:

The word baybayin comes from baibai or babai, or babae, which means female or generator, represented by the figure ∩, an imitation of the external shape of the female genital organ, just as the character Ƨ corresponding to the Latin letter L, is a sign of lalaque (male) and is a drawing or copy of the male sexual organ. ²⁰

In the Tagalog script, the H is written imitating the zigzag ray that, loosed from high Heaven, illuminates the dark Earth, thus: ∞. ²¹

Now then; in the Old Tagalog writing of the name of God, ∩∞Ƨ, it is observed that the first letter ∩, symbolizing the Woman, and the third Ƨ symbolizing Man, are united by ∞ the light, spirit, symbol of God. ²²

The signs ∩Ƨ of female and male, united by ∞, the symbol of light, form the name of God ∩∞Ƨ (Bathala), which means Generator or Creator of all that exists in the Universe. ²³

This is the ultimate source of the Bathala-baybayin connection, which believers claim is a link to the ancient wisdom of their distant pre-colonial ancestors – but it was all simply fabricated by Pedro Paterno in 1887.

Even from its beginnings we can see the inconsistencies of the theory emerging. Where Paterno saw a bolt of lightning in the letter \curvearrowright (ha), Tolentino chose to see the wind. Even Paterno contradicted himself elsewhere in his book by saying that \curvearrowright (ha) represented “the breath of life” and that \curvearrowleft (la) was a variation of *ra*, which in the name Bathala, alluded to none other than Ra, the sun-god of ancient Egypt! It just goes to show that when fantasy replaces reason, we can see anything we want in random shapes and find mystical connections anywhere.

In the final part of our series on the Bathala Code, we’ll hear what some of Pedro Paterno’s contemporaries, like Jose Rizal, thought of his outlandish theories, and how Paterno defended them.



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Da Bathala Code

Part 4: Paterno and his critics



Pedro Paterno was the originator of the Bathala Code



Jose Rizal thought Paterno was "loopy," but he didn't say it in words



T.H. Pardo de Tavera was one of Paterno's harshest critics

In the previous article of this series we met Pedro Paterno, the man who originated the notion that there are hidden meanings in the shapes of the letters of the old Filipino baybayin script, specifically, in the letters that spell *Bathala*, the name of the ancient Tagalog god of creation.

Paterno was a self-styled renaissance man. He wrote fiction, poetry, stage plays and operas. He was educated in philosophy and theology, and he held a doctorate in law. He also wrote several books on Filipino ethnology, including *La antigua civilización tagalog*, the book in which he first imagined the Bathala-baybayin connection, which some people today misconstrue as a real part of ancient Filipino spirituality. But, as we saw last time, his research methods were quite eccentric, to put it mildly.

Paterno's critics

By today's standards of scholarship, Pedro Paterno would probably flunk a legitimate history course and his ideas about the ancient Philippines were not taken seriously in his own time, either. Jose Rizal, no less, wrote the following in a letter to his friend, the ethnologist Ferdinand Blumentritt:

*In regard to the work of my countryman P.A. Paterno on Bathalà, I tell you, pay no attention to it; P.A. Paterno is like this: [here Rizal drew a line with a series of loops]. I can find no word for it, but only a sign like this: [more loops].*²⁴

*Was dem Werke meines Landmanns
P. A. Paterno über Bathala betrifft, so
sage ich Ihnen, denken Sie nicht daran;
P. A. Paterno ist ein so 
ich finde kein Wort dazu, nur ein
Zeichen so *

Excerpt from Rizal's letter to Blumentritt, handwritten in German

If there were any doubt about what Rizal meant, some of his contemporaries were much more direct about the “loopy” Paterno. Resil Mojares quoted some of them in his book *Brains of the Nation*:

T.H. Pardo de Tavera regarded Paterno's scholarship with scorn. He called him a plagiarist, and “vulgar imposter” who made false claims about his sources and advertised non-existent books among his works. He dismissed Antigua Civilizacion as “a work of pure fantasy full of extraneous and incredible

assertions.” He judged Los Itas a book of “buffooneries” and Cristianismo en la Antigua Civilizacion Tagalog a piece of work “full of surprises for history, science and reason!” ...While acknowledging the labor that went into Paterno’s books, [Wenceslao Retana] rejected their arguments as “the dreamy fantasy of a poet” devoid of all “scientific value.”²⁵

Paterno’s defence

In an 1892 issue of *La Solidaridad*, Paterno defended his imagined pre-colonial religion, which he called Bathalismo, by saying, in essence, that his critics had not done their homework:

Some have taken the interpretations I give of Bathala as products of my imagination and that I, according to them, wish to inject into simple letters entire phrases of profound ideas. However, such critics, no matter how respectable they are, doubtless ignore the primitive oriental languages and, in this instance, the Tagalog language, in the roots of which are preserved, on the whole, the purity of the elements of the most ancient ones; or perhaps the first words of the language of man, elements religiously preserved by generations of Tagalogs.²⁶

Pedro Paterno was not trained in linguistics or philology and, according to Resil Mojares, he could not even speak Tagalog passably. According to Paterno, the Tagalogs had “religiously preserved” elements of the most ancient languages in the world and yet, in the 1880s, the name Bathala, which he was interpreting, was virtually unknown to all but a few scholars. In Rizal’s letter to Blumentritt, quoted earlier, Rizal said that he “was surprised that no Tagalog knew about the word Bathala” and that “the word Bathala might also have disappeared on account of the Christian religion.”²⁷

If Filipino scholars of Paterno's time ignored his evidence, it was simply because it was so obviously absurd. Since then, generations of historians, linguists, anthropologists, archaeologists and other scientists have done much more research, refined their techniques and, in the process, discredited many theories that were once thought to be true. None of them ever found a scrap of evidence that happened to support Paterno's preposterous claims.

What did ancient Filipinos really believe?

This is not to say that pre-colonial Filipinos had no religious traditions and mythologies of their own. In fact, they had many more deities and myths than Paterno imagined in his pseudo-Christian, Tagalog-centric fantasies of the land he called *Luzonica*, which was his name for the ancient Philippines. (He also believed that he himself belonged to the nobility of this ancient kingdom.) In reality, pre-colonial Filipinos were mainly animists, meaning that they believed certain trees, rocks, animals and natural phenomena possessed souls and they revered them as gods. The names of these gods varied from place to place but only the Tagalogs and the Zambals recognized a creator god named *Bathala*, while the approximate counterpart in the Visayas was known as *Laon*.²⁸

As in other cultures around the world, many pre-colonial Filipinos also worshipped the sun, as Paterno claimed. However, this is not a unique belief. The sun is probably the most obvious thing in nature to worship. As such, this hardly qualifies as a Filipino connection to Ra, the ancient Egyptian sun god, as Paterno had claimed. A good overview of pre-colonial beliefs can be found in William H. Scott's *Barangay, Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society*.

Ancient connections

It is true that at least one far-away ancient civilization – other than China – did have some influence on pre-colonial Filipino culture. Many words found in the languages of the Philippines, such as *bathala* and *diwata* (meaning god and goddess), were derived from the Sanskrit language of India. However, these words were likely brought to the Philippines through trade contacts with Malays, and not brought directly from India. Hinduism was one of the religions practiced in the Malay Archipelago before the population began to convert to Islam in the 13th and 14th centuries.

It is also likely that the baybayin writing system was derived from Indian writing but like the Sanskrit loan words, it was not a direct import. It came to the Philippines via the writing systems of the Malay Archipelago. (See my online article, *Baybayin, the Ancient Script of the Philippines.*)

Even so, the Indian influence on ancient Philippine society might have been deeper than even Pedro Paterno realized. The discovery of the *Laguna Copperplate Inscription* in the late 1980s revealed a language that might have been spoken in Luzon in the year 900 CE, which had many more Sanskrit words than modern Philippine languages have. It is not known how widespread this language was and, unfortunately for Paterno, the inscription was not written in the baybayin script, which in his imagination illustrated the essence of Bathala. It was written in the Kavi script of Java, which not only pre-dated the baybayin, but was also more technically advanced than the baybayin. (See *The Beginning of Philippine History.*)

Inventing history

Inventing history is not unique in the Philippines. All nations have at least a few manufactured legends that their citizens believe to be true. Pedro Paterno might simply have been the first in the long line of modern Filipino pseudo-historians who still try to remedy the loss of so much of their own culture during the Spanish era by inventing a glorious ancient past for the Philippines, rather than doing serious research. Understandably, regional and national pride plays an important part in their efforts and one common element in these inventions is to draw as many connections as possible to other ancient civilizations, as though this somehow validates Filipino culture and heritage. However, this kind of invented history is unnecessary because legitimate scholars and scientists continue to uncover the truly unique heritage of the diverse cultures that make up the Philippines today. Pre-colonial Filipinos did have a rich spiritual heritage but, for the most part, they kept it alive through oral traditions. Eventually, it was recorded in Spanish-authored chronicles and dictionaries (biased as they were), but it was not hidden in the shapes of baybayin letters.

These and other articles by Paul Morrow can be found at www.pilipino-express.com. Also visit [Sarisari](#) etc. for more about Filipino history and language and find the author on [Facebook](#).

Sources & Notes

- 1 Scott, William Henry. *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society*. Quezon City. ADMU Press 1994 p. 252
Included among their [the Zambals'] deities, perhaps because of Tagalog influence, was Bathala Mey Kapal, "whose false genealogies and fabulous deeds they celebrated in certain tunes and verses like hymns." (San Nicolás, 1664, 420)
- 2 Sacks, David. *Letter Perfect: The Marvelous History of Our Alphabet from A to Z*. Broadway Books, New York, 2003
- 3 See SpokenSanskrit.de: [bhaṭṭāra](#) भट्टार meaning noble lord.
- 4 Alcina, Francisco Ignacio. *Historia de las islas e indios de Bisayas*, 1668 3:35-37. Victor Baltazar transcription. University of Chicago Philippine Studies Program 1962. In W.H. Scott *Barangay*, 1994.
From these Borneans the Tagalogs learned their characters, and from them the Visayans, so they call them Moro characters or letters because the Moros taught them...
- 5 Morrow, Paul. *Ang Baybayin: The Ancient Script of the Philippines*. 1999, revised 2002 www.mts.net/~pmorrow/bayeng1.htm#lost
- 6 de Leon, Bayani Mendoza. *Baybayin, the Ancient Script of the Philippines: A Concise Manual*. 1992
- 7 Ubaldo, Mary Ann. *Baybayin's Eye-Opening Exposition*.
<http://urduja.com/exposition/eyesopen.html>
- 8 Daly, Perla Paredes. *Bahala Meditation, A Personal Renewal of Filipino Spiritual Practice*. Originally published 06.27.03 at www.babaylan.com.
<http://www.babaylan.com/old-Bahalameditations-pdaly-excerpts.pdf>
- 9 de Leon, Bayani Mendoza. 1992 p. ix, x

- 10 Tolentino, Guillermo. *Ang Wika at Baybaying Tagalog*. 1937. p. 57
- 11 *Ibid* p. 67
Maging ang ngalang Madagaskar ng pulong yaon ay pagagong tawag sa matuwid na Tagalog na MAGDARAGAT, at ang mga tao dahil sa katutubong hilig sa pag-inom ng alak ay parating MGA LASING kata't MALAGASI. [English translation by P. Morrow.]
- 12 *Ibid*. p.92
- 13 Ocampo, Ambeth R. "Tolentino and the Calatagan Pot," *Inquirer.net*. April 27, 2007.
http://opinion.inquirer.net/inquireropinion/columns/view/20070427-62752/Tolentino_and_the_Calatagan_Pot
- 14 Tolentino, Guillermo E. 1937. p.73
...kung bakit naging gayon ang mga hugis ay wala isa mang mananalaysay, dalubwika o dalubtitik ang nakapagsabi ng tiyak o pahapyaw mang paliwanag. Wala rin naman nakasulat ng tungkol sa diwa at hubog na pinagtularan ng iba't ibang hugis ng mga titik ng BAYBAYING TAGALOG maliban sa nasirang Pedro A. Paterno at Lope K. Santos. Maging ang dalawang Ginoong ito'y wala rin namang nailarawan maliban sa B H L ng Bathala noong una at ang U H A o uha ng bata ang ikalawa. Ano pa't tigatlong titik lamang sila at wala na. Sa isang sabi'y kung saan nagwakas ang mga naunang nagsisulat ay doon naman kami nagsimula ng ibang bagay na karugtong nguni't lingid pa sa kaalaman ng madla. [English translation by P. Morrow]
- 15 Paterno, Pedro A. *La antigua civilización tagálog*. 1887. Second edition as *La antigua civilización de Filipinas*, Manila, 1915.
- 16 Mojares, Resil B. *Brains of the Nation: Pedro Paterno, T.H. Pardo de Tavera, Isabelo de los Reyes and the production of modern knowledge*. Quezon City. Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006

- 17 Schumacher, John N. *The Making of a Nation: essays on nineteenth-century Filipino nationalism*. Quezon City, ADMU 1991. p. 107
- 18 Paterno, Pedro A. 1915. pp. 106 & 107
- 19 *Ibid* p. 107
En este cuento ó tradición de la palabra dalaga vemos la fundación del Bathalismo.
- 20 *Ibid.* p. 259
La palabra baybayin viene de baibai, ó babai, ó babae, ... que significa hembra ó generadora, presentada por la figura ∞ imitación de la forma exterior del órgano genital femenino, así como el carácter f correspondiente á la letra latina L, es signo de lalaque (macho) ... y es dibujo ó copia del órgano sexual del varón.
- 21 *Ibid.* p. 33
En la escritura tagálog, la H se escribe imitando el zic-zac del rayo que, desprendiéndose del alto Cielo, ilumina la oscuridad del la Tierra, así: ∞
- 22 *Ibid* p. 34
Ahora bien; en la antigua escritura tagala del nombre de Dios ∞f se observa que la primera letra ∞ que simboliza á la Mujer, y la tercera f simbolizando al Hombre, están unidas por ∞ luz, espíritu, símbolo de Dios.
- 23 *Ibid* p. 259 footnote (3)
Los dos signos ∞f de hembra y macho, unidos por ∞ símbolo de la luz, forma el nombre de Dios. ∞f (Bathala) que significa Generador ó Creador de todo lo que existe en el Universo.
- 24 Rizal, Jose. "Rizal, Berlin, 29 March 1887." *The Rizal Blumentritt Correspondence, Volume I, 1886-1889* National Historical Institute, 1992. p. 70. Original handwriting reproduced on unnumbered pages between pp. 65 & 67.
- 25 Mojares, Resil B. 2006. p. 15.
- 26 Paterno, Pedro A. quote from *La Solidaridad IV* p. 517 taken from Mojares, Resil B. 2006. p. 54

- 27 Rizal, National Historical Institute, 1992. p. 69.
- 28 Chirino, Pedro. *Relación de las Islas Filipinas. The Philippines in 1600*, Historical Conservation Society. [Publication]. Manila,: Historical Conservation Society; Bookmark, exclusive distributor, 1969. p. 60
Entre los cuales hacen principal y superior de todos: á quien los Tagalos llaman Bathala Mei-Capal, que quiere decir el dios fabricante, ó hacedor; y los Bisayas Laon, que denota antigüedad.
p.296
Among [their gods] they hold one to be the greatest and above all the others, called by the Tagalog Bathala Mei-Capal, meaning the creator or maker god, and by the Bisayas Laon, which denotes antiquity.