EL RENASCIMENTO: UNVEILING THE METAPHORICAL MEANING OF BATHALA

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Abstract

The author attempts to unravel the tenets of modernism versus the tenets of postmodernism and how the principles of the latter become popular especially with the onset of post colonial studies. This paper explores the effects of the proliferation of postmodernist paradigm that led to the creation of various indigenization movements to those societies which were once colonized like the Philippines. It mainly highlights the revival of the ancient Filipino system of belief on Bathala (Bahala), the ancient Filipino Supreme God through the interpretation of the symbols of Baybayin, the ancient Filipino system of writing. This paper finally addresses the need for a discourse on the renaissance of the precolonial culture in the Philippines particularly in the field of religion. Thus, by uncovering the meaning of Bathala, this author believes that the present Filipino generation will be able to understand and appreciate the roots of their spirituality.

Key Words: Bathala or Bahala, Bahala na, Baybayin, religion and spirituality, modernism, postmodernism, indigenization, indigenization movement

Introduction

We live in an era where secular rationality, the main legacy of the 17th and 18th century Enlightenment is being questioned. The "truth" as we know it is no longer consider as "truth". There is no such thing as absolute or objective truth as claimed by the modernists but only relative or subjective truth since truth is only a human construct. Truth for the postmodernists is determined only by people's experiences through interactions with the environment.

Postmodernists argue that modernity, which had once been viewed as instrumental in liberating the individual from unreasonable dogmas, traditions, and authority has become a source of repression through its own creations: technology, bureaucracy, consumerism, and materialism (Perry, 1993: 481-482). They contend that the Western tradition which has been regarded as a great and creative human achievement is filled with gender, class, and racial bias. As to the way postmodernists see it, Western modernity is characterized as merely a male, white, Eurocentric interpretation of things. Postmodernists point to the modern West's historic abuses such as slavery, imperialism, racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, class exploitation, and the ravaging of the environment. They accuse westerners of marginalizing the poor, women, and people of color whom they have viewed as the "other" – of arrogantly exalting Western values and achievements, and of belittling and even destroying indigenous peoples and cultures of the world.

Challenging the applicability of Western concepts and finding Western civilization as imperfect and one-sided, some critics and writers seek a higher wisdom in non-Western traditions – African, Asian, Middle Eastern or Native American and later make researches on indigenous cultural forms. The advocates of indigenization argue that Eurocentric premises have conquered the social sciences and in turn, helped to secure and perpetuate a Western-dominated

world order. Indigenization theorists attack the treasured assumptions and principles of Western philosophy such as objective reason, humanism, the idea of progress, culture-transcending knowledge, and the radical dualism between religion and science. Instead, they maintain that social scientists in the Third World should produce and use concepts and theories rooted in indigenous intellectual traditions, historical experiences, and cultural practices to understand the genuine worldviews, socio-historical contexts, and scholarship of their people (Boroujerdi, 2004: 30-31).

This paper explores the effects of the proliferation of postmodernist paradigm that led to the creation of various indigenization movements to those societies which were once colonized like the Philippines. It mainly highlights the revival of the ancient Filipino system of belief on Bathala (Bahala), the ancient Filipino Supreme God through the interpretation of the symbols of Baybayin, the ancient Filipino system of writing. This trend of going back to Philippine precolonial culture only shows that proponents of knowledge indigenization or the indigenization movement itself in this country is gaining its momentum. This paper finally addresses the need for a discourse on the renaissance of the precolonial culture in the Philippines particularly in the field of religion. Thus, by uncovering the meaning of Bathala (Bahala), this author believes that the present Filipino generation will be able to understand and appreciate the roots of their spirituality.

Indigenization as an Alternative Paradigm

It was during the post-World War era that the calls of the Third World thinkers for knowledge indigenization came to fight and assert their political independence and cultural authenticity. Advocates of indigenization argued that “intellectual decolonization” must accompany political liberation in order for the Third World countries to rise up and remedy the

colonial mentality which is considered a dreadful effect of Western imperialism. Boroujerdi (2004: 32), asserts that the rise of "Third Worldism" which started in the mid-1950's, strengthened the calls for cultural authenticity because imitation and surrender to Western culture and values were considered as deceptive modes of existence. Hence, the concept of "decolonization" in many national histories and historiographies began and became the rallying defensive school of thought of the ones colonized societies.

Indigenization gained particular momentum during the 1970's when various African, Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern intellectuals reacted to the dominance of Western culture and social sciences as the only relevant and valid models. The proponents of knowledge indigenization questioned the totalizing master narrative of Western modernity which is based on an East-West binary construction and the disguised partiality of Western science. These intellectuals sought to narrate their respective societies' historical trajectories by developing a new set of conceptual vocabulary rooted in their own local conditions, needs, practices, and problems – yet obviously mediated through their exposure to the West (Boroujerdi, 2004: 33-34).

The Indigenization Movement and the Social Sciences in the Philippines

Indigenization in the Philippines which is now having an impact on the academe, government, and non-government cultural associations is a product of a long historical process. Following its colonial experience, the country passed through a process of self-examination during the early 1970's, a period of political and social unrest during the dictatorial regime of President Ferdinand Marcos. Within the climate of political restraint, the more vocal nationalist social scientists (especially the Filipino Anthropologists) and writers risked harassment and investigation. Those interested in development social sciences (especially Anthropology) were

often branded as communists or Marxists. Magos (2004: 340) states that by the latter half of the 1970's, even the conservative social scientists felt that their social analyses and interpretations should become relevant to the economic and socio-cultural realities of the country. Thus, they abandoned the outmoded structural functionalism of the 1950's and 1960's, and adopted conflict models, including Marxism which were seen as more suitable for a country in crisis. In advocating the self-determination of indigenous peoples, anthropologists allied with the Marxist-inspired movement. For instance, the fight of the people of the Cordilleras against the National Power Corporation's Chico River Basin Project linked anthropologists to the Left. Their experiences in the field contributed to the call for a reinvention of anthropology, the organization of its professional organization[1] in 1977 and the themes that engaged them in the 1980's such as the anthropology of resistance, ethnicity and national unity, culture change and national development, mass movements, human rights and ancestral lands, technology, power and environment (Bautista, 2001:102).

The chaos of the early 1970's became a turning point for the proactive Filipino social scientists who had spent years of training abroad, and also among academics in the non-social science disciplines. In the social sciences, a new motivation came from anthropology, history, and psychology to look at the Filipino soul and psyche in order to discover what was really Filipino. The reexamination led to calls for "indigenization" of these disciplines, as in other countries which had experienced colonialism (Magos, 2004: 340-341).

At the University of the Philippines, responses to indigenization took three forms: 1. *Pambansang Samahan ng Sikolohiya* (National Association of Psychology which promotes *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* – Filipino Psychology) pioneered by Virgilio Enriquez to develop indigenous psychology; 2. *Pantayong Pananaw* ("We"/ "Us" Perspective) established by Zeus

[1] This anthropological association of the Philippines was named Ugnayang Pang-Agham Tao (UGAT).

Salazar and his associates in the History Department to promote the "New History" *(Bagong Kasaysayan)*; and, 3. *Pilipinolohiya* (Filipinology) established by Prospero Covar in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. These were all established in the 1970's and made more gains in the 1980's, 1990's, and even today as they are able to attract faithful followers who are regularly conducting seminar-workshops and conferences. The common denominator for all three was the search for the indigenous cultural and historical roots of the country. Drawing inspiration from ethno-science and history from within, these groups of Filipino intellectuals rallied for the liberation of the Philippine social sciences in their respective domains. These three schools of thought privileged the emic or "native point of view" over the etic or "researcher's viewpoint. They posited new consciousness reflecting local Filipino knowledge that emerged through the use of local language as a tool for the identification and rediscovery of indigenous concepts and articulation of Philippine realities (Miralao, 1999: 391-392).

One of the active indigenous movements (which is the concern of this paper), is working in the field of reviving the ancient Filipino spirituality that is centered on the belief of Bathala/Bahala, the old name of the Filipino/Tagalog Supreme God. Branded as "Baybayin enthusiasts" [2], the group's main concern is to propagate the indigenous meaning of Bathala/Bahala through the metaphorical interpretation of the Baybayin, the ancient Filipino system of writing. For the Baybayin enthusiasts, the hidden meanings of the Baybayin symbols are so important to Filipino's healing from historical imperialism, colonial mentality and to reclaiming of Filipino's indigenous identity.

[2] Maria Rhodora "Bing-Bing" Veloso, Mary Ann Ubaldo, Bayani Mendoza de Leon and Perla Paredes Daly to name a few are some of the Baybayin enthusiasts who have written books and created websites to promote the spiritual aspects of Baybayin writing. See them in the following websites: www.babaylan.com, http://baybayinalive.com, http://baybayinbuhayin, and http://urduja.com.

Bathala, The Filipino Ancient Supreme God

Every society then and now, has its own belief system that serves as a guidepost in viewing and understanding the cosmos. The inhabitants of each society have their own terms for their Supreme God or gods and goddesses. The Jews call their Supreme Being as *Yahweh* while the English-speaking people call Him as *God*. The Japanese have *Kamisama*[3], the Muslims have *Allah* and the Spaniards have Him *Dios*. So with the early people of the Philippines, they have *Bathala*[4], the Superior One Deity whom they consider as the Omnipotent Creator of the universe (Jocano, 1998: 183). This Bathala manifests in the four elements of nature such as the earth, the air, the water and the fire.

According to Delos Reyes (2002: 221), the great Lord *Bathala* dwells in *Kaluwalhatian* (Glory or Heaven) together with the lesser divinities: gods and goddesses. However, aside from these lesser divinities, He sent His *anitos* (spirits of the dead ancestors considered also as secondary gods/goddesses) to assist the daily lives of every Filipinos. The soul *(kaluluwa)* of a person becomes an anito (ghost or ethereal being) after death to serve *Bathala* and intercede on behalf of the living.

Bathala is also addressed as *Maykapal* (Creator) or *Bathalang Maykapal* (God, the Creator). Some authorities believe that His name originated from the Sanskrit word *bhatarra* which means "noble or great lord" (Scott, 1997: 234) but some Filipino critics claim that *Bathala*

[3] *Kami* is often used as a term for Japanese god/gods, deity or spirit. Adding the honorific suffix *sama* makes it more polite. See the following Japanese Dictionaries: *Kenkyusha Lighthouse Japanese-English Dictionary,* 4th Edition, (2002), p. 289; and *Denshi Jisho Japanese Translation Dictionary* available in this website: jisho.org/search/kamisama.

[4] Also known as *Batala* in the account *Relacion de las Yslas Filipinas* of Miguel de Loarca, 1582; *Badhala* in the account *Relacion de las Costumbres de los Tagalos* of Juan de Plasencia, 1589; *Bahala* or *Bahala na* which means several things: "God or God now", "leave it all to God", "God is present", "go with God", "only God knows" and more. See Perla P. Daly, 2003 in her *Bahala Meditation* available in http://baybayinalive.com and www.babaylan.com. websites.

was derived from the Tagalog word *bahala* or *bahala na* which signifies "God or God now", (Daly, 2003: 3).

Dr. Pedro A. Paterno (1915: 31-34), a Filipino mestizo who lived during the 19th century compared the Tagalog Bathala with Jehova, Brahma and Buddha believing that, as in the letters of the word Jehova, the ancient Tagalog letters (Baybayin) in Bathala had preternatural attributes. For Paterno, its invocation alone constituted a solemn prayer for Tagalogs. To establish this, he laid out the meanings behind the three ancient Tagalog letters  (B, H, and L), which, taken together, stood for the Creator of all, similar to Brahma. He further claimed that these letters symbolized the union and creation of man and woman, eternal and godly spirit, and the Holy Trinity. Paterno's conclusive theory on the paleography of the old Tagalog/Filipino alphabet that the first letter (Ba), symbolizing the Woman, and the third letter (La), symbolizing Man united by the letter (Ha) signifying Light, Spirit or the symbol of God; would remain authoritative and would be heavily drawn upon by succeeding Filipino historians. In fact, Isabelo delos Reyes, Paterno's contemporary made mention of his thesis on this mysterious attributes of the three Baybayin characters of Bathala (Delos Reyes, 2002: 209). The late Filipino historian, Gregorio Zaide, and even the late national artist Guillermo Tolentino had quoted and agreed to this unique interpretation of the hidden meanings of Bathala as revealed in the Baybayin script. Surprisingly, with the proliferation of indigenization knowledge and the enchantment of Filipino scholars in studying their ancient civilization, more and more groups of scholars are coming in to rediscover the greatness of ancient Philippine culture. This can be attributed to the growth of the indigenization movement initiated by Virgilio Enriquez, Prospero Covar, and Zeus Salazar of the University of the Philippines. Enriquez' *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* was institutionalized as a professional organization

in 1975 under the name *Pambansang Samahan sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino*[5] (PSSP) which in that same year, the First National Conference on Filipino Psychology *(Unang Pambansang Kumperensya sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino)* was also organized. From then on, PSSP national conferences would be held annually each time in different regions of the country so as to ensure the widest possible participation from outside Metropolitan Manila (Mendoza, 2007:241-297). In 2005, PSSP celebrated the 30th year anniversary of its founding. In this coming November 17-19, 2016, the organization will be holding its 41st national conference at Colegio de San Juan de Letran in Manila bringing in together again the various scholars in the field from different colleges and universities nationwide.

Likewise, Salazar's *Pantayong Pananaw* also called *Bagong Kasaysayan* (New History) has a well-developed methodology grounded in the indigenous conception of history *(kasaysayan)* as focused on drawing out the *saysay* (meaning, sense, or relevance) of events for a constituent people. According to Mendoza (2007: 241-297), in the last decade, the discourse of *Pantayong Pananaw/Bagong Kasaysayan*[6] appears to have reached a level of maturity and sophistication beyond its initial articulation by Zeus Salazar and generated new breed of scholars like Jaime Veneracion, Ferdinand Llanes, Maria Bernadette Abrera, Nilo Ocampo, Lorenz Lasco, Atoy Navarro, Vicente Villan, Portia Reyes, Maria Carmen Peñalosa, Nancy Kimuell-Gabriel, Lars Raymund Ubaldo, Mary Jane Rodriguez-Tatel, Michael Charleston Chua and many others. These *Pantayong Pananaw/Bagong Kasaysayan*[7] scholars and advocates had proven the

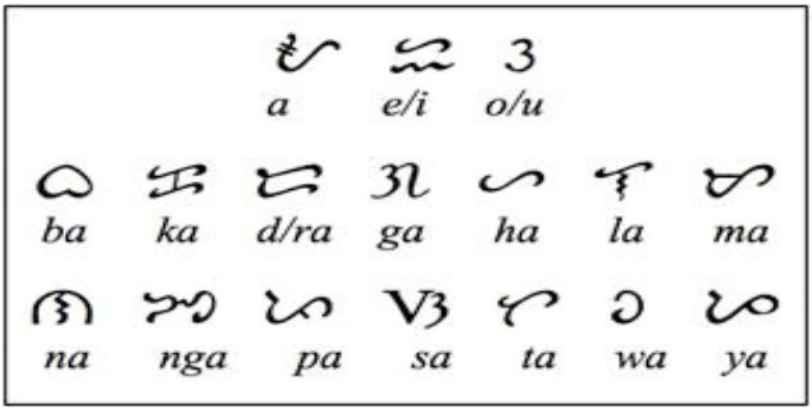
[5] Which can be translated to National Association for Filipino Psychology.
[6] For more details of Pantayong Pananaw/Bagong Kasaysayan, refer to Zeus A. Salazar, *Ang Pantayong Pananaw Bilang Diskursong Pangkabihasnan*. In V.V. Bautista & R. Pe-Pua (eds.) Pilipinolohiya: Kasaysayan, Pilosopiya, at Pananaliksik. Manila: Kalikasan Press, 1991.
[7] The thrusts and vision of *Pantayong Pananaw/Bagong Kasaysayan* are being articulated and reinforced by the two professional organizations known as *Asosasyon ng mga Dalubhasa, May Hilig at Interes sa Kasaysayan (ADHIKA), Inc. ng Pilipinas* at *Bagong Kasaysayan (BAKAS), Inc.* which hold annual national conferences and seminar-workshops nationwide.

richness of indigenous and traditional Filipino history, culture and civilization in their respective researches.[8]

The said proliferation and advocacy of indigenous knowledge is not only visible among the scholars in the academe. Even the popular websites in the internet such as; http://baybayinalive.com, www.babaylan.com, http://urduja.com, http://luntiangagham.webs.com are vocal skypes in the dissemination of the revivalistic campaign for the rediscovering of the ancient wisdom in the Filipino heritage despite negative criticisms that their claims have no legitimate historical basis and that their interpretations are founded merely in the grand illusion and absurdity of the ambitious writer named Pedro Paterno[9].

Baybayin, the Ancient Filipino System of Writing





[8] Their researches can be gleaned in the internet.
[9] Read the criticism of Paul Morrow in his article entitled, *Da Bathala Code* negating the reliability of the interpretations of the Baybayin enthusiasts regarding the hidden meanings of Bathala in the Baybayin script. Morrow's article is available at http://www.pilipino-express.com.

Illustration by Paul Morrow, taken from
http://www.mts.net/~pmorrow/baynotes.htm; retrieved September 5, 2013

Baybayin is the ancient syllabary script of the early Filipinos. Taken from the root word *baybay* meaning "to spell", it is a sophisticated writing system consisting of seventeen (17) characters, with three vowels and fourteen consonants (Morrow, 2002).

In their simplest form, each consonant represented a syllable that was pronounced with an (**a)** vowel. Simply adding a mark known as *kudlits* (diacritics) to the letter would change the inherent (**a)** vowel sound. If a *kudlit* was placed above a consonant letter, it gave an (**i)** or (**e)** vowel sound. When it was placed below the letter, it changed the vowel sound to (**u)** or (**o)** like this one: 

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The three vowel characters were only used at the beginning of the words and syllables, or syllables without any consonants. There were only three vowels because the ancient Tagalogs and many other linguistic groups did not distinguish between the pronunciations of (**i)** and (**e)**, or (**u)** and (**o)** until Spanish words entered their local languages. Consonant characters on the otherhand were always written with a vowel following them. If a syllable or a word ended with a consonant, that consonant was simply dropped. For example the letters (**n)** and (**k)** in a word like *bundok* (mountain) were omitted, so that it was spelled *bu-do*; 

(Morrow, 2002). Due to this confusing feature of the Baybayin for non-native readers, the Spanish friars reformed its characters to solve the problem of their religious texts translation by inventing a new *kudlit* in the shape of a cross (see the figure of Baybayin by Teodoro Agoncillo). This move gave the Spanish writers to use final consonants in their translation of the Doctrina Christiana.



The Baybayin taken from Teodoro Agoncillo's book, *Ang Pilipinas at ang mga Pilipino Noon at Ngayon* (History of the Filipinos People)

Some historians believed that the Baybayin is a member of the Brahmic family of India and is recorded as being use in the 16th century. It continued to be used during the Spanish colonization of the Philippines until the late 19th century (Morrow, 2002). The shapes of the

Baybayin characters bear a slight resemblance to the ancient Kavi (Kawi) script of Java, Indonesia.

Although the earliest writing recorded then are the Angono petroglyphs (3000 BC), it is believed that the ancient communities had already developed writing as early as 3000 BC with the introduction of Brahmic scripts as the ancestor of the Baybayin (Olivares, 2013).



Angono Petroglyphs in Binangonan, Rizal (3000 BC), Wikipedia
Watch the Angono Petroglyphs 2010 Documentary Film at Youtube

Olivares (2013) believed that these scripts were introduced by the Sumatran and Javanese traders and were quickly assimilated into the various native communities as evidenced by the Laguna Copperplate Inscription (900 AD) and the Butuan Ivory Seal (1002 AD) which used the Kavi script (see the figures of Laguna Copperplate Inscription and the Butuan Ivory Seal).



Laguna Copperplate Inscription (900 AD), Wikipedia



Butuan Ivory Seal (1002 AD) Containing Text in the Kavi/Kawi Script, Wikipedia

Father Pedro Chirino (1604), a Jesuit priest commented that *"all islanders are so accustomed to writing and reading that there is scarcely a man, and much less a woman who cannot read and write in the letters proper to the island of Manila"*. Dr. Antonio de Morga, a Spanish magistrate in the Philippines cited this account of Chirino regarding the high literacy of the natives in his book entitled *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* which was then annotated by Dr. Jose P. Rizal, the Philippine national hero in London (De Morga, 2008).

Although there were records that the Spanish colonizers burned the paraphernalias (that includes the written documents) of the babaylan (native priestesses/priests) and of the datu/rajah (native kings/chieftains), some Spanish scholars tried to preserve the Baybayin script. However, by the 18th century, the use of the script became extinct among the natives especially those who lived inside the pueblos (colonial towns) and cities. This can mainly be attributed to the people's preference of the Latin alphabet as a means of writing, since the alphabet was best suited to writing the new sounds introduced by the Spanish language. Another reason that has not yet been accounted for was the great depletion of the native population due to the introduction of new diseases by the Spaniards which took a heavy toll on the natives before they developed immunities to those diseases (Olivares, 2013). With the shift to the Spanish dictated townships and smaller populations, many traditions were foregone by the people including the use of the Baybayin. Although extinct in use, what the Spanish scholars had preserved in their documents lead to a renaissance of the Baybayin in the 19th century. Baybayin became fashionable in expressing the unity of the natives to their ancient culture and heritage, an example of which is the Katipunero's use of the Baybayin 

(Ka) in their revolutionary flags.

In the late 20th century up to the present, the Baybayin is gaining a new wave of popularity as an expression of national identity. From the logos of some government agencies and establishments such as the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), to bank notes, and even Baybayin meditation workshops, there is a grown romanticism of the script as well as earnest studies on its history and development. Beyond all of these enchantments, the Baybayin enthusiasts are in a great belief that Baybayin symbols are the keys to discover the greatness of ancient Filipino spirituality as these letters possess hidden meanings.

The Revelation of Bathala through the Baybayin

Ancient Filipinos were animists. They believed that all things have a spirit, everything has a soul, and every symbols have meanings. Today's Baybayin enthusiasts[10] believe that these characters denote deeper meanings beyond mere graphic representations of the spoken word, that these characters are not just mere letters but symbols with mysterious and hidden meanings. This ancient Filipino script is said to be a powerful tool to get in touch with not only the ancient Filipino great historical roots but also their emotional and spiritual roots. The promoters of this idea – that there are hidden meanings in the shapes of Baybayin letters usually start their revelation with the word Bathala (Bahala), the name of the pre-colonial Tagalog/Filipino God of creation.

In Baybayin writing, the word Bathala is written like this: 

. For the new Filipino spiritualists, 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) symbol is said to represent the female aspect of creation and its shape is supposed to mimic the genitals of a woman. Similarly, the (La) symbol represents the male aspect which apparently, is penis-shaped. These two concepts are united by the (Ha) symbol which represents the divine breath *(hininga)* or wind *(hangin)* that gives life to the spirits of women and men. (See figure in the next page).

[10] Filipinos who promote theories that Baybayin letters have deeper, mysterious meanings beyond being just graphic symbols or objects. Maria Rhodora "Bing-Bing" Veloso, Mary Ann Ubaldo, Bayani Mendoza de Leon and Perla Paredes Daly to name a few are some of the Baybayin enthusiasts who have written books and created websites to promote the spiritual aspects of Baybayin writing.



Perhaps, this group of Filipino spiritualists are influenced by the late Pedro Paterno, the one widely regarded as a "traitor" to the Philippine nation because of his role in the negotiation of the 1897 Pact of Biac-na-Bato between the Philippine revolutionaries and the Spanish forces. Paterno (1915: 33, 34, 259) laid out the meanings behind the three baybayin characters ᜊ (Ba), ᜑ (Ha), and ᜎ (La) which if taken together, stood for the Creator of all, similar to Brahma. He further explained that these characters or letters symbolized the union and creation of man and woman (or vice versa), eternal and godly spirit of the Holy Trinity. Let's take a glance at Paterno's revelations:

> 1. "La palabra baybayin viene de baibai, ó babai, ó babae, que significa hembra ó generadora, representada por la figura ᜊ imitación de la forma exterior del órgano genital feminino, así como el carácter ᜎ correspondiente á la letra latina L, essigno de Maque (macho) y es dibujo ó copia del órgano sexual del varón" (Paterno, 1915: 259).
>
> English Translation:
>
> 1. "The word baybayin comes from baibai, or babai, or babae, which means female or generator, represented by the figure ᜊ, an imitation of the external shape of the female genital organ, just as the character ᜎ corresponding to the Latin letter L, is a sign of Lalaque (Male) and is a drawing or copy of the male sexual organ".

2. “En la escritura tagálog, la H se escribe imitando el zic-zac del rayo que, desprendiéndose del alto Cielo, ilumina la oscuridad de la Tierra, así ” (Paterno, 1915: 33).

English Translation:

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

3. “Ahora bien; en la antigua escritura tagala del nombre de Dios ba ha la , se observa que la primera letra , que simboliza á la Mujer, y la tercera simbolizando al Hombre, están unidas por luz, espíritu, símbolo de Dios” (Paterno, 1915:34).

English Translation:

3. “Now then; in the Old Tagalog writing of the name of God, ba ha la , it is observed that the first letter , symbolizing the Woman, and the third symbolizing Man, is united by the light, spirit symbol of God”.

4. “Los signos , de hembra y macho, unidos por símbolo de la luz, forma el nombre de Dios ba ha la , que significa Generador ó Creador de todo lo que existe en el Universo” (Paterno, 1915: 259 footnote #3).

English Translation:

4. “The signs , of female and male, united by , the symbol of light, spirit, form the name of God ba ha la , which means Generator or Creator of all that exists in the Universe”.

Still, Paterno’s revelation on the symbolic meanings of ba ha la was supported by the late National Artist for Sculpture, Guillermo Tolentino (1937: 73) in his book entitled *Ang Wika at Baybaying Tagalog*.

Idea or Spirit within Bathala/Bahala

(Ba) as Fertility Symbols and Feminine Principle

Daly (2013) claims that the letter (Ba) has been chronicled by the Spaniards as both a clefted circle or as a plain circle depending on the geographic region in the Philippines. In the Philippines and around Southeast Asia, there are ancient fertility symbols that contain shape the same as the (Ba) symbol of the clefted version. They are called the *Lingling-o* and the *Dinumug* (see figures in the next page).



Examples of *Lingling-o*
Taken from Daly, 2013; http://baybayinalive.blogspot.com/search?q=fertility+symbols, retrieved July 18, 2013. Available also at http://www.foto-cd.com/crafts/llo/ or http://www.babaylan.com/aklat/lingling0-page.pdf.



***Lingling*-o on the Left and *Dinumug* on the Right**
Taken from Daly, 2013; http://baybayinalive.blogspot.com/search?q=fertility+symbols, retrieved July 18, 2013. Available also at Kipas Gallery - http://www.kipas.nl/Beads/BontFertSym.htm.



Negative spaces within the *Linling-o* and the *Dinumug* – similar to ᜊ (Ba) Shape
Taken from Daly, 2013; http://baybayinalive.blogspot.com/search?q=fertility+symbols, retrieved July 18, 2013.

The *Lingling-o* is a common ancient artifact symbolizing fertility found around Southeast Asia and the Philippines during 500 BC – 100 AD while the *Dinumug* is a fertility symbol and symbol of prosperity and love found in the Ifugao, Bontoc, and other Cordillera regions of the northern Philippines. Since the *Lingling-o* and the *Dinumug* were worn by people in various regions of the Philippines and the Southeast Asia, Daly (2013) is convinced that this symbol and its meaning of fertility existed beyond words and language – they were worn because of its "magical" or blessing qualities for fertility and prosperity, and at the same time, it embodied an abstract concept of the Feminine.

Further, Daly (2013) believes that the image of the clefted circle as a fertility symbol evolved to become the symbol for ᜊ (Ba) and included in the writing system of the Baybayin, and that the ᜊ (Ba) symbol, not only represent the "ba" sound as a writing symbol, but that its deeper meaning is, in fact, the Feminine principle. Examples of these Feminine principle qualities and energies are nurturing, sensuality, beauty, spirituality, fertility, compassion, receptiveness, and submission to the Divine will. In the shape of ᜊ (Ba) are the organic feminine forms: breasts, buttocks, vagina, womb or uterus; and thus the energy or spirit of the Feminine principal, which in Filipino can be expressed as *Maganda* (Beautiful).

- **La as Masculine Principle**

If ᜊ (Ba), the first letter of the word Babae (Woman, Female) represents the Feminine principle, the Baybayin enthusiasts believe that letter ᜎ (La) which is the first letter of the word Lalaki (Man, Male) denotes Masculine principle. As the Baybayin enthusiasts strongly believe, these Masculine principle qualities and energies are action, dynamism, force, strength, fertilization, aggression, domination, and challenge within Existence. In the shape of ᜎ (La) is the organic form of the male sexual organs, the testicles and the penis. ᜎ (La) conveys the

energy and spirit of the Masculine principal, which in Filipino can be expressed as *Malakas* (Strong). Thus, the Filipinos have a story of the first Man and Woman, the Strong and the Beautiful, the Story of *Malakas at Maganda* who are said to be the originators of the Filipino race.

ᜑ (Ha) as the Divine Breath or Spirit *(Diwa)*

In the curves of ᜑ (Ha) symbol, there is the principle and meaning of air, wind, breath, spirit, and light. Daly (2013) sees in this symbol similarities to scientific graphic renderings of light waves and the shape of wind and air. What is surprising is that wind and air in Tagalog/Filipino terms are translated in just one term – *Hangin*, while breath is translated as *Hinga* or *Hininga*; all terms begin in ᜑ (Ha) characters.

Deeper Meanings of Balance and Wholeness

With this new manner of contemplating upon Baybayin and the meanings of Bathala/Bahala, the Baybayin enthusiasts came to an understanding that Bathala/Bahala can create an awareness of both Feminine and Masculine energies of Existence and the Divine. It was conveyed by the feminine and masculine baybayin symbols and sounds in it, ᜊ (Ba) and ᜎ (La) – and most importantly connected in the middle with the ᜑ (Ha) sound symbol. Some interpret this as the Feminine principle connected by Spirit to the Masculine principle is a sum that is equal to God. The connector symbol ᜑ (Ha) is also interpreted as: God manifested within Creation exists in duality – Dark and Light, Seen and Unseen, Known and Unknown, Feminine Divine and Masculine Divine. In all meditative practices of all major religions, ᜑ (Ha) – Breath *(Hangin)* is the connection of our physical bodies to the Spirit. Meditation practices incorporate breathing in certain rhythms and ways. In the Baybayin formation of Bathala/Bahala, the Feminine principle of ᜊ (Ba) and the Masculine principle of ᜎ (La) seem to balance on both

sides of ᜑ (Ha), the symbol for air, wind, breath, light, and spirit. With such, Daly (2013) comes to a realization that there are parallelisms between the Baybayin of Bathala/Bahala and with the symbol of Yin Yang. See the mirrored line of ᜑ (Ha) in the dividing line of Yin Yang:



Taken from http://baybayinalive.blogspot.com/search/label/The%20Bahala%20Meditations, retrieved July 18, 2013

Tantric philosophy says that the whole universe has fundamentally two types of energy; the Yin (negative) and Yang (positive). The whole manifestation of the universe is subject to the two opposing but complementary forces: dark and light, lunar and solar, the centrifugal force and the centripetal force, the feminine and the masculine. In the name of the ancient Filipino God Bathala/Bahala, there is a balance of ᜊ "Ba" Feminine (Yin) and the ᜎ "La" Masculine (Yang) on both sides of ᜑ "Ha" (air, wind, breath, spirit, energy). The ᜊ "Ba" is the fundamental force that has an expansive tendency and is the source of tranquility, calm, cold, and dark. The ᜎ "La" is the fundamental force that has a contractive tendency and is the source of sound, dynamism, warmth, and light. The curving line of ᜑ "Ha" between the two (as in the curving line between the Yin/Yang symbol) is the interacting intersection of relationships: of spirit, of dynamic balance, and ever constant change.

Conclusion

In this paper, I presented how the specific paradigms of postmodernism (subjectivity or relativity; the reaction to the hegemony of male, white, and Eurocentric interpretation of things, etc.) facilitated the proliferation of nationalist and liberating ideas among the peoples of colonized societies during the post World War era. The Philippine experience highly testifies how indigenization knowledge in the field of the various social science disciplines has contributed to the renaissance of Filipino ancient history, culture and civilization.

The new Filipino Spirituality Movement exemplified by the Baybayin enthusiasts are highly convinced that the characters of the Baybayin script are not merely letters or words but possess metaphorical, esoteric, and deeper meanings. For them, symbols and metaphors speak for the deepest feelings, desires, and experiences better than rational words. For the Baybayin enthusiasts, the hidden meanings of the Baybayin symbols are so important to Filipino's healing from historical imperialism, colonial mentality and to reclaiming of Filipino's indigenous identity. As Daly (2003) pointed out, the Baybayin should not just be perceived as an ancient indigenous writing system but more than that, it bears spiritual relevance. Bathala/Bahala in the Baybayin gives evidence to the Universal Wisdom of the ancient indigenous spirituality of the Filipinos. By understanding the animist spirituality of the ancient people in the Philippines, we can come closer to understanding how the ancient Filipinos could believe that Baybayin symbols really have deeper meanings. To give all things meaning and a soul is the basis of animist spirituality. To believe that all things have spirit is a source of respect and reverence for all of Life and this philosophy was already inherent and part of the Filipino indigenous mind and worldview long before the coming of the European colonizers.

Thus, the revival of this seemingly new but already old interpretation and contemplation of the Bathala/Bahala – Baybayin symbols are so dear to the new Filipino Spirituality Movement. That in life, as the Filipino people of today struggle with the duality within themselves and try to find balance of dual dynamics within themselves – masculine and feminine, physicality and spirituality, ego and love, shadow and light, action and tranquility, seen and unseen, known and unknown; they (today's Filipinos) become closer to Bathala, God/AllThatis, the Divine Force. As called for by this group of Filipino new agers, the present Filipino generation must simultaneously learn to discern the wholeness and unity of their existence in the essence of duality. They must learn to find a balance of duality in themselves, in how they live their lives, in their relationships with others. This is the very reason why in the word Bathala/Bahala 

, the symbols of ᜊ (Ba) and ᜎ (La) are balanced on either sides of the ᜑ (Ha) symbol.

Lastly, I would like to end this paper by sharing an encouraging statement uttered by one of the Philippines' leading anthropologists:"*it is to our advantage as Filipino people to learn lessons from past experiences, if we are to secure the pathways of our current and future developments"* (Jocano, 1998).

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