

# LEARNING FROM WOMEN AND CHILDREN, EDUCATING THE SCHOLARS AND THE ORDINARY MAN ON THE STREET: THE FILIPINO NURSERY RHYMES

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Filipino and Western scholars have done research on our legends, myths, fables, riddles, proverbs, songs, and epics. A handful of scholars have included nursery rhymes in their study of the folklore of a region. In the main, however, interest in the collection and/or preservation of Filipino folk nursery rhymes - lullabies, counting songs, pronunciation poetry, singing games and teasing songs - is not evident. As a result, our nursery rhymes are excluded from academic discourse.

While a survey revealed that samples of nursery rhymes have been collected from among the Tagalog, Gaddang, Bicol, Blaan, Antique, Mandaya/Mansaka, Maranao, Capiz, and Pangasinense, there is a need to gather samples of nursery rhymes from other language groups in order to compare and analyze the various rhymes, some of which may be pre-Hispanic in origin. Why not consider the haunting Ili Ili Tulog Anay of the Ilongos as the national lullabye and some other poems as national teasing songs? If songs like Sarong Banggi of the Bicolanos, Atin Cu Pung Singing of the Pampangos, Manang Biday and Pamulinawen of the Ilocanos, Dandansoy of the Cebuanos, are taught in our schools, why not lullabies, counting songs, singing games, teasing songs?

But first, our scholars and teachers should learn the importance of nursery rhymes. Secondly, the rhymes have to be gathered from the children of yesterday and the mothers and fathers of today.

The nursery rhyme is a literary form we learn from women and children or from our childhood. Scholars record it from women as mothers, nannies or nurses and from children. But Filipino nursery rhymes are not given attention by publishers. At the UP Education Library there is only one nursery rhyme book, *Bata: Tugma at Awiting Bayan* with 87 pages, illustrated, written by Nelia Casambre et. al. And it is reported lost.

Nursery rhymes had to be culled from various books, theses, dissertations on folk literatures. This means our scholars and businessmen are not interested in the first songs they had heard as infants or about the singing games they played or the taunting songs they sang as children. And the ones

who are into publishing are the ones interested to teach children nursery rhymes. Unfortunately, these are the nursery rhymes of England and the United States.

Both scholar and man on the street have to be educated on the need to gather these nursery rhymes before they are lost forever, publish them, and teach them again in our schools and in our homes.

### **Types and Origin of Nursery Rhymes**

*The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* or *ODNR* (Opie and Iona, 1952), includes as nursery rhymes the nonsense rhymes, humorous songs, character rhymes, rhyming alphabets, tongue twisters, nursery prayers and singing games. To those I would like to add the lullabies, counting rhymes, taunting songs and magic spells. The categories sometimes overlap; and some nonsense rhymes are singing games or humorous songs. *ODNR*'s humorous songs and character rhymes could be the taunting songs we know as *kantyaw* in Tagalog and *sugsog* in Cebuano; and lullabies can be nonsense rhymes.

In England, the name "nursery rhymes" was first used in July 1824 in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* by the article, "On Nursery Rhymes in General". Before that these were simply known as songs or ditties. In the US they became known as Mother Goose songs after the first book of rhymes with that title.

*ODNR* considers rhymes before 1800 as the only true nursery rhymes, composed especially for the nursery, where rhyming alphabets, infant amusements (verses which accompany games) and lullabies were sung or recited. Riddles were designed for adult perplexity in the first place. The whole of folklore, in fact, to which nursery rhymes belong, has elitist origins, according to folklorist Lord Raglan, who said before the Folklore Society in 1946 and 1947, that 1) the folk are not part of making folklore; 2) early ballads were the concern of upper classes; 3) village dances villages imitated those at court; and 4) picturesque peasant costumes today are survivals of fashionable apparel of yesteryears.

In reviewing nursery rhyme bibliography, *ODNR* states that it appears to support the hypothesis that if authors of nursery rhymes were only known, they would be of distinguished birth, with long and influential lives. The overwhelming majority of these rhymes were not originally for children but are preserved in the nursery. Others are survivals of an adult code of joviality which are unsuitable for the young, fragments of ballads, and folk songs or

remnants of ancient customs, rituals and may hold last echoes of long-forgotten evil. Some are memories of street cries and mummers' plays; proverbs; prayers of Popish days; refrains from barrack rooms, taverns and mug houses; legacies of wars and rebellions. These poked fun at religious practices and laughed at rulers of the day. These rude jests or romantic lyrics were diversions of the scholarly, erudite and wits first made popular on the stage or in London streets.

The nursery lore of 2000 years ago are not really different from that of today. Earliest pieces surviving were unrhymed folk chants, counting out formulas, simple infant amusements and a number of riddles. The written word seemingly had little to do with the survival of the nursery rhymes, although, some are resuscitated when published, often with additional lines such as the 1944 recitation by a nanny of "Brow Bender" originally heard in 1788 version.

English rhymes have their equivalents in various European countries. "London Bridge", for instance, have versions in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Hungary and Slovakia, which could be either direct translations or cross-overs.

When children play games, they have a counting out formula. In their games, one must take a different part. Leader points to players in turn, one accented syllable to a child and the child on whom the last word or syllable falls is the chosen. Or in Filipino, the *it*.

## Children's Literature in the Philippines

Paterno on Children's Literature. Maria Elena Paterno in "A History of Children's Literature in the Philippines" (*Bumasa at Lumaya, A Sourcebook on Children's Literature in the Philippines*) wrote that folklore is not only for children. In the search for material to publish for children, folktales and legends; and in retelling them, these were tailored to the needs of children. Among ancient Filipinos, mothers sang lullabies to make their children sleep, children played and exchanged riddles and some sang or told epics or stories.

Paterno wrote that among indigenous Filipinos, not much of the literature was tailored specifically for the child. I do not agree with this. It only appears so. She herself mentions the lullabies and the games that children play. But unfortunately, there is yet no comprehensive study of children's literature among various cultures and languages in our country. There are many lullabies created to make children sleep earlier, rhymes or songs for children to learn to count or pronounce words, rhymes or songs which children use to taunt or quarrel with other children. All ethnic groups in the

country have samples of such but they remain uncollected in one comprehensive volume. The samples I have gathered come mostly from mostly unpublished and disparate unpublished sources, including theses and dissertations.

A gap in Lumbera's research. In *Tagalog Poetry 1570-1898: Tradition and Influences in Its Development*, Bienvenido Lumbera tackles the first work by Spanish friars on Tagalog poetry, which is *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala* by Juan de Noceda and Pedro de Sanlucar (1754). He points out the samples of early Tagalog poems (*tanaga*, *dalit*, and proverbs and riddles in poetic style) which were printed in the dictionary. The words were taken since contact point in 1570 where 12 native speakers had to confirm use of the word before one word is included.

Lumbera's use of riddles, proverbs, poetry was later on duplicated by other scholars or collectors, which was unfortunate because other native forms of poetry were thus excluded, like lullabies, folk poetic lines, and children's folk poetry. Perhaps Lumbera did not include children's folk poetry because Noceda and Sanlucar had not given specific examples.

If we are to accept this gap as real, the book, which is declared a solid contribution to scholarship, would have us accept that from 1570 to 1899, Tagalog mothers stopped singing lullabies to bring their children to sleep, fathers did not sing ditties to play with their children, older siblings did not teach younger siblings to count or pronounce words, children did not play singing or poetic games and taunt or quarrel with fellow children. There was altogether no mention about children's nursery rhymes among Tagalogs. Nursery rhymes, I suppose, were already well studied in the 1950s or 1960s or even earlier in the US. And to think that in England, lullabies for instance, had already been considered a literary form for six centuries.

Among Lumbera's bibliography were the books by Inigo Ed Regalado and Julian Balmaceda, who had also done their own researches on printed children's folk poetry, but the samples of folk poetry that they included from earlier writers were overlooked by Lumbera.

I believe that some of the games or songs that children play or sing at present could be ancient ones. Some could have been preserved as is, or altered during the Spanish or American periods, and the alterations reflected in the Spanish or American terms or words. Some of these songs could have been, like the English nursery rhymes, written by established poets of their times, or fragments of adult rhymes or of our ancient epics or songs.

In her class in Philippine Folklore, Rosario Cruz Lucero cited parts of the epic *Hinilawod* that are used in the *pamanhikan* in Panay and Negros. The fragments come verbatim such that descriptions of the whiteness of the

woman are still mentioned although the prospective rural bride may be dark-complexioned. Nagasura Madale, in an article on Maranaw forms of oral literature, also notes that some of the lines spoken by the intermediary of boy and girl during a courtship or negotiation for marriage, are actually excerpts from the epic Darangen. If these fragments of the Panay and Maranaw epics survive in marriage rites, can we not consider that other epics also survive in fragments, especially in the children's nursery rhymes? Future researchers could work on this possibility.

Balmaceda, citing Ronquillo. In a lecture entitled "Ang Tatlong Panahon ng Tulang Tagalog," Julian C. Balmaceda (1938) quotes a Tagalog poem with the Spanish loan word *alta* (from *altar*), which marks the time it was created. However, although he doesn't include the pre-Spanish in his *tatlong panahon*, he cites other poems bearing the imprint of native Tagalog culture:

*Sa ibang salita, nariyan sa loob ng ating mga tahanang dampa, sa gitna ng mga di-malabigang lipunan, doon sa ang ganap na pagdaramayan ay ipinakikilala sa gawa, doon sa ang lahat ay para sa isa, at ang isa'y para sa lahat, doon naroroon ang tunay na panitikang tagalog, ang yamang minana natin sa ating mga ninuno, ang gintong lantay ng sariling kabihasnang ngayo'y ibig ikait sa atin ng ilang manunulat na, sa kasamaang palad, ay mga kababayan pa naman natin.*

It is among the poorer citizens, who are not reached by Spanish education that the ancient literatures survive, just as ancient words or languages survived among the Welsh or Scottish who were not conquered by Romans and other invaders. Here, it is among the unconquered Cordillera tribes, Panay groups and Mindanao *lumad* that our ancient epics have remained. But even among the Christianized Tagalogs, Cebuanos, Pampangos, Pangasinenses, Warays, who may have lost their beautiful and ancient epics, some forms in miniature version, still survive.

According to Balmaceda, from the time the child is brought forth into the world, it is the poem which welcomes him in the form of lullabies. All his examples are taken from an article by Carlos Ronquillo, "Ang Tagalog Kung Bakit Mahilig sa Tula," in *Renacimiento Filipino* (Hulyo 7, 1910). In the following lullaby, the child is sometimes being threatened of being given away in exchange for something, a threat also evident in Pangasinense lullabies:

*Matulog ka na, bunso,/ at ang ina mo'y malayo/ at hindi ko masundo/ may putik at may balaho.*

*Ikaw ay magmeme, malikot na bata/ ang nanay mo'y buntis, ang tatay mo'y wala,/ pag nakatulog ka'y para kang mantika,/pag ikaw'y nagising ay para kang guya.*

*Meme na ang batang munti/ isisilid ka sa gusi/ at pagdaraan ng pare'y/ ipapalit ng salapi.*

*Meme na ang batang sanggol/ isisilid ka sa bumbong/ at pagdaraan ng patron/ ipapalit ng bagoong.*

Some short verses are used to in children's recreation, like the Pampango *Neneng, kakang Doro/ bantog-kalisero...../ Sinong kapatid mo?/ Salbaheng kutsero* OR a Kapampangan *basulto* like *O, kaka, O kaka,/ Sampernando't Wawa/ Betis at Bakulod/ sakop ning Menila* OR the following, said with the child on his father's legs: *Biyabo ka nang biyabo/ Umakyat ka sa mabulo/ At tanawin mo si Piro/ May hila-hilang kabayo/ Saan tayo maglalapa? / Sa kamalig ng kastila./ At kung ito ay magiba?/ Tukuran ng isang hita.*

There are also poems used by children to taunt other children. Examples: *Bata, bata/ Pantay lupa/ Asawa ng palaka.* The taunted child who could not answer back physicaly because the taunter is in their house, would say: *Putak-putal/ Batang duwag/ Matapang ka't/ Nasa-pugad.* Which could be answered with: *Pihit, Batang Kawit,/ Laylay ang kwelyo/ Tutop ang puwit.* Other taunting verses are: 1) *Pedro, Penduko/ Matakaw ng tuyo/ Nang ayaw maligo/ Pinukpok ng tabo;* 2) *Huwan, Bulaan/ dumumi sa raan,/ hindi tinabunan/ hinagad ng kapitan;* 3) *Andres Pakiskes/ Nagnakaw ng mais,/ Nahuli ng Suwes/ Pinukpok ng walis;* 4) *Gaya-gaya/ Puto-maya,/ Kung dumiga/ Walang lasa;* 5) *Maryangge, kuto-kuto/ pulang-saya, pulang-baro./ pulang-tapis, pulang-panyo,/ pula pati itinago;* 6) *Si Marya Kundende/ naglako ng gabi,/ nang hindi mabili,/ Naupo sa isang tabi...*

In their games, children also use the following three lines or "ditso": *Ako po'y si Kataba/ anak ng Kondeng mababa/ pag nakainom ng tuba/ay nanghahagad ng taga;* which could be answered with *Ako po ay si Pandak/ anak ng kondeng tabayag/pag nakainom ng alak/ang biyanan ay hinahagad,* which in turn, could be answered with the funny *Ako'y si Kastuli/ anak ng kondeng bungì/ pag nakainom ng basi/ ang biyanan ay....*

The poems collected by Ronquillo in 1910 suggest that these were collected around publication date or most probably even going back to 1898, 22 years earlier. 1898 was the last year within the scope of Lumbera's research, which ignores such verses.

Inigo Ed Regalado. Regalado (1947) came out with children's poems often used to teach values. Two lullabies or *uyayi*, for exmple, read: *Matulog ka na, bunso,/ ang ina mo'y malayo,/ di ko naman masundo,/ may putik, may*

*balaho*; and *Tahan ka na, bunsong mahal/ matulog ka sa kandungan,/ hintayin natin ang tatay/ humanap ng kani't ulam*. A third is used by the mother if the child has already started to talk, since the last word of the verse is to be supplied by the child: *Ang batang mabait aakyat sa....* or *Ang batang masama,/ gagapang sa ...*, which the child would finish with the words *langit* and *lupa*, respectively.

Regalado also gives other examples of poetry used to educate children, called *talinghagaan* or *pataasan ng lipad* or *pahambugan*. He gave these three stanzas coming from three people:

1) *Doon po sa aming bayan ng San Roque/ may nagkatuwaang apat na pulubi,/ nagsayaw ang pilay, umawit ang pipi,/ nanood ang bulag, nakinig ang bingi.*

2) *Doon po sa aming maralitang bayan,/nagpatay ng hayop, niknik ang pangalan, ang taba po nito nang ipinatunaw/ang nakuhang langis, siyam na tapayan*

3) *Doon po sa aming maliit na nayon,/may nakita akong nagsaing ng apoy,/palayok ay papel, gayon din po ang tuntong/tubig na malamig ang iginagatong.*

From Bataan. Only a few books on children's poetry are found at the UP libraries, some of them already declared lost. But among them was a coffeetable book by Fr. Wilfredo C. Paguio (1997), which contains folksongs and rhymes collected by Msgr. Jose Marquez, priest of Orion and Balanga for many years. Those poems which use unfamiliar words could mean they are peculiar to Bataan or some parts of Bataan.

Leading my list is "Kapirasong Luya" which is still being sung by children: *Ako'y nagtanim ng kapisasang luya/ Tumubo ay gabi, namunga ay manga./ Nang pipitasin ko'y hinog na pala./ Lumagpak sa lupa'y magandang dalaga.*

While most of the poems have no sense, but have rhyme and are funny, some are instructional, like one which teaches the use of a bolo, bamboo and house: *Buwan, buwan, sisilang/ Hulugan mo ako ng sundang./ Aanhin mo ang sundang?/ Tataga ako ng kawayan./ Aanhin mo ang kawayan?/ Gagawa ako ng bahay./ Aanhin mo ang bahay?/ Lalagyan ng palay*. The reason why poems like this are slowly disappearing must be because of modernization, where bamboo has given way to concrete houses, and rice is no longer stored but bought from the store.

Like the popular "Ako si Andres Bonifacio," the following poem shows something of Filipino psychology: we must not be shamed or we will kill.

*Ako'y si Bahuyot/ Walang gulat./ Walang takot./ Pinatay ko ang  
gubernur./  
Kahihyan ang nag-utos.// Halina't dakpin natin/ Sa karsel ating  
dalhin/  
Tasahan ng pagkain./ Sa pag-inom ay gayon din.*

A version of the song “Lalaking Matapang” has an adult theme, but the enemy is “pancit”. The second stanza, where the persona cannot catch the snail, reminds us of “Tongtongtong Pakitongkitong”:

*Ako'y ibigin mo, lalaking matapang,/ Hindi makaisa paglubog ng  
araw./  
Ngunit at datapwat kung palaka lamang/ Hawakan sa paa't aking  
lalabanan.//  
Ako'y ibigin mo, lalaking maliksi./ Susong gumagapang, hindi ko  
mahuli./  
Nang aking hulihin, buwan ng Septiembre,/ Oktubre na ngayon, di  
ko pa mahuli.*

Some of the poems are about nature: mountains, seas, skies, birds, bees and frogs. “Ako’y si Bubuyog” is about drunkards who beat their wives (“Ako’y si Bubuyog./Anak ng taong mapusok/ Kundi makainom ng pulot./ Ang asawa’y binubogbog.”); one of the most beautiful, “Ito Palang Bundok”, teaches about the forest where different animals and the Aetas live (“Ito palang bundok, simbahan ng ita./ Tirahan ng baboy, luksuhan ng usa./ Manok na labuyo, mapula ang mata./ Ang hayop na tikling, mahaba ang paa.”).

More poems: “Sa Giniray-Giray” (“Sa giniray-giray ng dahon ng tubo./ Ipinagtatanong ang bahay ni kuto/ Ang sagot ni Liza, wala po rito./ Tinangay ni Suyod, tiniris ni Kuko.”); “Maligo Sa Pandan” (“Anong sarap yata ng makapaligo/ Sa ilog ng Pandan na hindi malabo./ Lalo na’t kung mayroong kabuyaw at gugo./ Buhok ay mabango, kung ito’y matuyo.”); and “Ako’y si Palaka” (“Ako’y si palaka, anak ng taong masiba/ Kung makainom ng tuba, biyana’y tinataga.”).

Other poems tell of ordinary events in a town: “Nasaan si Karingki?” (“Nasaan si Karingki? Nasa puno ng dayap./ Hindi makalipad./ Bakit hindi makalipad?/Bali-bali ang pakpak.”); “Bitibiti Kung Biti” (“Bitibiti kung biti, kutsarang maliliksi/ Sisiping sa babaing masingsing.”); “Buyabo ng Buyabo” (“Buyabo ng buyabo./ salungkit po ng aso/Kung may dalang kuwago/ Saan tayo magtatago/ Sa bahay ni Ka Ambo.”); “Pahiram, Pahiram” (“Pahiram,



*pahiram ng batyang ginto/ Sasabunin ko lamang ang sayang napuno./ Ang isasabon ko ay atay ko at puso./ Ang itutubig ko'y luhang tumutulo.”); “Sino ang Namatay?” (“Sino ang namatay? Si Puting Kamay./ Ano ang kabaong? Balat ng pagong./ Ano ang bendita? Buntot ng baka./ Ano ang pamisik? Buntot ng biik./ Ano ang kandila? Buntot ng pusa./ Saan ililibing? Sa puno ng saging.”); “Aling Charing Ikakasal” (“Aling Charing, ikakasal,/ dumarabog sa simbahan,/ Kaya pala dumarabog,/ nanghihingi ng tugtog./ Musikong Antipolo, kung tumutogtog/ piyanong piyano/ Kaya pala piyanong-piyano,/ ang upa ay isang libo./ Isang libong ibibigay sa magulang,/ Kaya pala ibibigay, ipagagawa ng bahay./Bahay tatablahin, bintana’y kakapisin,/ Harapa’y sisimintuhin, sisidlan pa ng salamin.”); “Mang Teban” (“Mang Teban, saksakan ng yabang/ Ang gusto’y laging tagaan,/ linom ng alak sa tindahan,/ Maghahamon ng away.”); “Mariang Puputi-puti” (“Mariang puputi-puti, sumamang sumandali/ Natibo ang daliri, tumakbo ang pari./ Pari, gamutin mo nga, ang sugat kong namaga,/ Sumagot si Patumbong, malaki ang tumbong.”)*

### Current Children’s Poetry in Tagalog

The following nursery rhymes are still being heard now: “*Islaw palitaw, lulubog, lilitaw/Sa tae ng kalabaw*”; “*Ulan, ulan, pantay kawayan/ Bagyo, bagyo, pantay kabayo*”; “*Isa, dalawa, tatlo/ Ang tatay mong kalbo*”; “*Batabatuta/ Samperang muta*”; “*Tutubi, tutubi/ Huwag kang pahuhuli/ Sa batang mapanghi/Sa mamang salbahe.*” (from Veneracion Marasigan, Nueva Ecija); “*Sawsaw suka/ Ang mahuli taya.*” (from Eileen Austria)

I also got children’s games from others who grew up in the Tagalog language. Geoffrey Manalili from Dinalupihan, Bataan said the following two poems are used in determining the “it” or the chosen. “*Langit, Lupa, Impyerno*” (“*Langit, lupa, impyerno./ Im im impyerno/ Saksak puso tulo ang dugo/Patay buhay alis ka na diyan.*”) and “*Nanay, Tatay*” (“*Nanay, tatay/ Gusto ko ng tinapay/ Gusto ko ng kape/ Lahat ng gusto ko/ Ay susundin nyo/ Ang magkamali ay pipingutin ko/ Isa, dalawa tatlo...*”)

To the second poem, Eileen Austria from San Pablo City but who had also gone to Batangas as a child, had this to add: “*Pengeng singko/ Pambili ng puto/ Pengeng diyas/ Pambili ng kamates.*”

In some of the lines, the Spanish influence is already obvious in some of the words like *impyerno* and the images of *saksak puso, tulo ang dugo* which remind us of the pictures of Christ with pierced heart. Coffee, which came from the Arabs, was introduced by the Spaniards for cultivation. *Singko, diyas* and *kamates* can also be traced during the Spanish period.

But in the following poems, the American influence is obvious. "I went to California" ("I went to California/ *Nagnakaw ng pinya./ Nahuli ng may-ari./ Pinagsayaw siya*"); "Monkey, Monkey, Annabelle" ("Monkey, monkey, Annabelle/How many monkeys did you see?/ One, two....!"); and "Arikitik kitik and a blue black sheep/ Spell yes. (Y-e-s) Alis/ Spell no (N-o) Out you go." (from Eileen Austria)

There are game verses/ poems where the Spanish words are minimal or not visible at all: "*Bubukas ang Bulaklak*" ("*Bubukas ang Bulaklak/ Bubukas ang bulaklak, sasara ang bulaklak/ Dumating ang reyna pakembot-kembot pa/ Abong tiyayabong, tiyayabong yeye abom.*", from Eileen Austria)

The following game is very educational because it teaches the cycle of life of a woman: "Nena" ("*Si Nena ay baby pa./ Ang sabi niya ay um, um ye ye./ Si Nena ay dalagita na./ Ang sabi niya ay um um ye ye./ Si Nena ay dalaga na./ Ang sabi niya ay um um ye ye. Si Nena ay nag-asawa na. Ang sabi niya ay um um ye ye. Si Nena ay manganganak na. Ang sabi niya ay um um ye ye. Si Nena ay uugud-ugud na. Ang sabi niya ay um um ye ye. Si Nena ay mamamatay na. Ang sabi niya ay um um ye ye* (from Eileen Austria).

### Children's Poetry in Misamis Occidental

According to Resil B. Mojares, in his introduction to an anthology of Cebuano poetry until 1940, the first to write about Cebuano poetry was the Augustinian friar, Francisco Encina (1715-1760), in *Arte de la Lengua Zebuana* (1801). Encina mentioned poetic forms like *balac*, *garay*, *inagung*, *uriyan*, *cachorinon*, *comintang*, *guyo* and *awit*, but his knowledge about them was limited and probably full of errors. In this anthology, which has English translations, Mojares and the other editors (Erlinda K. Alburo, Simeon Dumdum Jr. and Vicente Bandillo), gathered the earliest examples of Cebuano poetry. It followed the Lumbea "example" of presenting riddles, proverbs and other kinds of poetry.

Mojares et. al. had not taken into consideration the singing games/poetic lines that were probably still current in their childhood. Lines I remember from my own childhood in Jimenez, Misamis Occidental include "*Sanggotot, sanggotot/ Kinsay nakaotot,*" which were used to determine the "it" or the one who will chase or find the others. The leader would say the words with each syllable falling on each child. The child on which the last syllable falls is the "it" or chosen.

The lines "*Humpyang humpyang/ Makulub mahayang*" were also used to select the "it." All children would form a circle, put their stretched palms

at the center and say the words together. With the last syllable, they would either let their palms face up or remain as is. The child alone in holding his palm up or down was the “it” or *taya*. The remaining ones went through the same process until the “it” was determined.

Others are: tongue-twisters, like “*Ang balay ni Belay libat*” and “*Sipasipai, patiri*”; fillers said by the “it” while players hide, like “*Baka niya / tago piyong*,” (which has a version in Bicolano); and charms so the opponent fails in hitting an object, like “*Lukso baki/ sa luyo mangihi*.”; and a loser’s verses as in *syatong* - - “*Hagiyong tambaliyong/ Tinyente hagong*.”; humorous ones in rhyme, like “*Juan de la Cruz/ Nalibang nanguro*,” “*Asawa ni pare/ Ayaw hilabti/ Kay walay pantí*” and “*Bata batuta/ Sumpay muta*”; and taunting lines like “*Rayna’s kaanyag/ Puti pay inanag*” which is addressed to a dark-skinned girl.

A popular verse sung by children is a take on moving the bowels, probably when there were no toilets before: “*Kung ikaw kalibangon (Kung ikaw ay natatae)/ Dagan lang sa baybayon (Tumakbo ka sa tabing dagat)/ Kung ikaw walay ilo (Kung wala kang pampunas)/ Id-id lang sa mga bato (Ipunas mo lang sa bato)/ Kung ang bato ay may sisi (Kung ang bato ay may sisi [shell])/ Ang imong sampot nagisi (Nasaktan ang iyong puwit)/ Tambali lang sa mercurochrome (Gamutin mo ng mercurochrome).*”

The song could be new or a mere bastardization of formal songs. This can also be sung using the tune of “*Mutya ka Baleleng*”, isang awiting Tausug. “*Mutya ka, Baleleng*” is also used as a tune in singing “*I Have Two Hands*” (Baleleng Version).

### Children Deconstruct Songs

Children make fun of songs and transform them as a form of rebellion. Or perhaps adults revise or compose songs which the children remember and appropriate for themselves and keep for posterity. These songs are often funny, even bawdy or gross.

Here are examples, with translations into Filipino or English:

#### Sa Kabukiran

*Sa kabukiran, daghang libat*  
*Nganong nalibat, entra’g gubat*  
*Nganong mientra, walay kwarta*

*Sa kabukiran, maraming duling*  
*Bakit naduling, sumali ng digmaan*  
*Bakit sumali, walang pera*

*Uli sa ila, pikas mata.*

*Umuwi sa kanila, kalahati na ang  
mata*

*Lingkod sa bangko, gatabako  
Wala kabantay, igo lagay.*

*Umupo sa bangko, nagtabako  
Hindi nakabantay, sapul ang titi.*

### Jack and Jill

*Jack and Jill gamay'g tiil  
Dako 'g tiyan ginreyder  
Javier*

*Jack and Jill maliit ang paa  
Malaki ang tiyan ginreyder  
Javier*

### Waray-Waray

*Waray-waray igit galumbay  
Gimasinggan, igit nanagan.*

*Waray-waray, stools lining up  
Machinegunned, they ran away.*

### Happy Birthday

*Happy birthday, walay manok  
Naay baboy puros tambok  
Spaghetti, puros wati*

*Happy birthday, walang manok  
May baboy pero taba  
Spaghetti puro bulate*

### We Wish You a Merry Christmas

*We wish you, American frog. (3x)  
A hapay New Year (mahirap)*

### **Children's Folk Poetry from Bicol**

In the *Haliya Anthology of Bikol Poets and Poems* (Realubit et al., n.d.), counting rhymes and other children's poetry were collected. Below are examples.

*Ano ang Kakanon mo?*

*Ano ang kakanon mo?/ Bagas na mapula./ Anong inomon mo?/ An tubig sa Naga.*

(What will you eat?/ Red rice./ What will you drink?/ Water in Naga.)

*Sad Kuno*

*Sad kono, duwa kono trono/ Itso malubago kinse/ Irikitik sinabugit sinabugaw/ Kwaw*

(One, he said, two, he said, trono/ . . . untranslatable)

Note that some words are not translatable. In English, children's rhymes are sometimes called nonsense rhymes because nobody knows the meanings of some words. These words may have been just inventions to teach children to pronounce, or borne out of children's gibberish, or their meanings may have been already lost.

What is remarkable in the collection are the many counting songs included, e.g.:

*Darang Saro*

*Darang saro/ Darang duwa/ Dara gabos/ An leon, an tiak/ Pati pa an pisi.*

(Bring one/ Bring two/ Bring all/ Bring the lion, the axe/ And the rope as well.)

*Baka Kandila*

*Baka kandila/ Tago piyong/ Tuklon tilon paskape/ Paragato parak*  
(Cow, candle/ Hide, close your eyes/ . . . untranslatable)

*'Kunsentido-habol ko.*

*Humale'an sarō katawo/ Koro karamatsin (2x)/ Dalagan, matsin/ Piko  
piko golgorito*

*An madakop ko'bihag ko.*

(One man should go/ Koro karamatsin (2x)/ Run, monkey./ Piko piko  
golgorito

Whoever I catch is mine.)

*Una Balona*

*Una balona/ Siete katan/ Kolor de manzana/ Siete con diez.*

(Una balona/ Seven katan/ Color of the apple/ Seven with ten.)

*Saro, Duwa*

*Saro, duwa, tolo, apat/ An gona magkutkutat/ Lima, anom, pito, walo  
An gona nagtuyong magluko/ Siyam, sampolo/ An sogok niya sako.*

(One, two, three, four/ The mother hen cackled,/ Five, six, seven, eight  
The mother hen did something foolish./ Nine, ten/ His egg is mine.)

*Saro, Duwa, Tolo*

*Saro, duwa, tolo/ Nagtanom ako nin upo/ Apat, lima, anom/ Saimong  
aatumanon Pito, walo/ Kon magbunga na ito./ Siyam, sampolo/  
Aroaldaw ka magaani.*

(One, two, three/ I planted squash./ Four, five, six/ You'll take care of  
it Seven, eight/ When it bears fruit/ Nine, ten/ Harvest will be daily.)

But the following counting verses are different because they taught  
values in pure Bikol:

*Saro, Duwa An Daghan ko Nagkukuba*

*Saro, duwa/ An daghan ko nagkukuba/ Tolo, apat/ Dapat akong  
magingat  
Lima, anom/ Dai nanggad ako magirong/ Pito, walo/ Masabi ako nin  
totoo*

*Siyam, sampolo/ Malinig an sakong puso.*

(One, two/ My chest is heaving/ Three, four/ I must be careful  
Five, six/ I'm not going to say a word/ Seven, eight/ I will tell the truth  
Nine, ten/ My heart is pure).

According to Realubit in her longer work, *Bikols of the Philippines: History, Literature and General List of Literary Works* (1983), the rhymes are nonsense but they give “pleasure because of its rhythm and rime; it is doubtless one of the oldest surviving nonsense rhymes.” But it could be that these seemingly nonsense words have meanings which were not carried into the present or were already forgotten like the “eine meny miny moe” rhyme which had its origins in the way the ancient Britons count before their language was changed by succeeding waves of invaders.

In a community song, are the following funny lines:

*Saro, duwa, tolo/...lalantaon,/ Apat, lima, anom/...Papaplanton  
Guirondomon/ Hare ka dodorog sa bako mong agom.  
(One, two, three/ (it must be) boiled/ Four, five, six/ Cut off its ears  
Remember this/ Do not sleep with somebody else's wife.*

A lullabye shows one of the superstitions of the Bicolanos and the usual things used to frighten children: *Katorog katorog/ Sakloto nin banog/ Ipaglayoglayog/ Sa poon manuyug,/ Ipaglakawlakaw/ Sa poon makakaw/ Ipagduyanduyan/ Sa poon kawayan.* (Sleep, sleep/ Or the night bird will get you/ And bring you/ Up a coconut tree/ Or walk you/ Near cacao trees/ Or swing you/ On a bamboo).

## The Maranao Child Sings to Fishes and Birds

The Maranaos are the “lake dwellers,” living around Lake Lanao, a lake in a plateau whose outlet is the Agus river, which is utilized to draw hydroelectric power for the whole of Mindanao. They produce beautiful works of arts, evidenced in their brassware, and carved *torogan*. They also have two epics, the Indarapatra at Sulayman and the famous Bantugen, whose adventures are recorded in several volumes.

Nagasura T. Madale, in a paper on Maranao forms of oral literature, classified Maranao children’s literature into: hunting songs, fishing songs, lullabies and rhymes. Children sing while riding a carabao, taking a bath, fishing, or when they see birds flying. They also have a way of calling each other when they quarrel. Maranao children sing a hunting song. They believe that the bird--*dao’lan*--can be caught by singing a song so the children are fond of setting traps for it. There is a belief that God sent *dao’lan* to find out if there are still people on earth, so they must be trapped so that others who are not trapped will tell God that there are still people on earth.

In translation, the *kapangendas* (snaring a bird) goes this way: Dao’lan, dear, Dao’lan/ Where are you, Dao’lan/ What kind of bird is this?/ When a trap is set/ It hides itself among the bamboo grove/ Kill the bail *saba* if you desire/ It is getting late and the *saba* will leave you/ Think! During the time of your father/ He snatches and follows that which falls,/ Thinking it is the *saba*.

## The Many Versions of Penpen de Sarapen

The Penpen de Sarapen has several versions all over the archipelago. Often the first two lines are the same (*Pen pen de sarapen de cuchillo de almasen/Haw haw de carabaw batuten*) but the next lines are already different. In Bicol, Negros and Antique, the “Tagalog” version is used but with improvisations. Even the Tagalogs has several versions.

Here is the version of Isabel De la Torre of Bicol: *Pen pen de sarapen de cuchillo de almasen/ Haw haw de carabao batuten/*



*Panyong pula isang pera/ Panyong puti isang salapi/ Sipit namimilipit gintong araw/ Namumulaklak sa tabi ng dagat!* Take this example from Tess Battad of Montalban, Rizal: *Penpen de sarapen de cuchillo/ De almasen haw haw de carabao batuten/ Saya kung pula, tatlong pera/ Saya kung puti, tatlong salapi.* And here is the sample from Michael Macatangay of Calauag, Quezon: *Pen pen de sarapen, de cuchillo de almasen/ Haw haw de carabaw batuten/ Pitpit namimilipit/ Ginto't pilak namumulaklak/ Sa tabi ng dagat/ Panyong pula, isang pera/ Panyong puti, tatlong salapi.*

For the Visayan versions. From Russell Andaya of Dumaguete City, which is Cebuano-speaking.: *Penpen de sarapen De kutsilyo de almasen/ Haw haw de karabaw De batuten/Dahong pula Tatlong pera/Dahong puti Tatlong salapi.* The version from Misamis Occidental goes this way: *Penpen de sarapen de kutsilyo de almasin/ Haw haw de carabao batuten Miss Philippines/ Bangko lamesa, tinidor kutsara/ Along-along humot agwa.* This is the Antique version of *Pen pen de Sarapen*. Note the change of the pronunciation from *pen pen* to *pin pin*. This was also used in Dumaguete, Negros. *Pin pin de serapin, kutsilyo de almacin/ Pin pin de serapin, kutsilyo de almacin/ Haw haw de karabaw batutin/ Sayang pula, tatlong pera/ Sayang puti tatlo ka salapi/ Tigbak pi-ang binuno kang aswang* (The lame was hit, the *aswang* stabbed him.)

As I continue with my research, I will probably stumble upon other versions of *Penpen* and more nursery rhymes. I know that the many versions of *Penpen* will only show the creativity of the Filipino children, their improvisations, and their enjoyment of this game whose meaning may not be understandable.

### **Wanted: A Study of Philippine Nursery Rhymes**

Until now, there is no comprehensive study of our nursery rhymes. Damiana Eugenio had compiled our riddles, proverbs, folk songs, metrical romances, legends, myths. Many had written about our epics. But sadly, there is no book on nursery rhymes in the various Philippine languages and dialects. Some nursery rhymes appear in some collections of folk literature as nursery rhymes or folk songs.

Only a few had gathered our nursery rhymes in the various languages and dialects. I was able to get samples in Tagalog, Cebuano (from the field, Bicolano, Ilocano, Pangasinense, Gaddang, Blaan, Antique, Mansaka/Mandya. So many nursery rhymes need to be collected from the other languages.

What is beautiful is that the children and the women are the repositories of these rhymes and the gathered collections from them are the ones to educate the scholars and ultimately the man on the street. Women and children are the sectors which need the most empowerment in our society today. For so long, women and children, especially, were not given attention by scholars who are mostly men.

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