

## AN ANALYSIS OF THREE BILAAN FOLKTALES

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Acculturation inevitably diminishes folk practices, among them story-telling, a form of oral literature. Story-telling also dwindles with the passing away of the teller of tales in different ethnic groups. Its preservation, to the serious student of Philippine culture, is not simply the collection of indigenous tales. More significantly, it means a deeper understanding of these tales through analysis. For folktales open the door to knowledge and understanding of a people: their fears and superstitions; their concepts of good and evil, their attitudes towards man and nature, their religion. They also contribute towards the establishment of Philippine literary and cultural identity.

This study<sup>1</sup> attempts to analyze three Bilaan folktales<sup>2</sup> – a trickster tale, an anecdote and an animal tale.<sup>3</sup> As Herskovits puts it:

. . . . tales . . . from a single society must be studied with the critical apparatus, and in terms of the concepts that guide the analysis of any literary form. In these terms, the mechanisms employed by nonliterate folk to develop plot, sustain interest, and achieve adequate characterization will be found not only too far at variance with those used by any skilled teller of tales, whether his medium be the oral folktale or the written narrative. Yet one distinction between the stylistic conventions of the written and unwritten tale must be drawn. The fact that the folktale is recited gives it certain values that the written story can never achieve – just as certain features of the written story are necessarily absent in the tale.<sup>4</sup>

### The Bilaans: a brief ethnology

The term “Bilaan” refers to the members of the ethnic group variously called Bira-an, Bara-an, Bla-an, or Bilaan.<sup>5</sup> Fay Cooper-Cole

lists five other names with which this group is identified: Tagalogad, Tagkogon, Buluan/Bлууanes, Vilanes, Bilanes, Balud or Tumanao.<sup>6</sup> The coastal natives of Davao province refer to them as Tagalogad (dwellers of the back country). Bilaans in the grass plains of Malalag, Davao are known as Tagkogon (dwellers of the cogon); those around Lake Buluan in North Cotabato are known as the Buluanes. Early writers called the Bilaans on the Sarangani Islands as Balud or Tumanao. Davao Bagobos call them Bira-an or Baraan.<sup>7</sup> Tagabilis call them Bila — which means “a friend.” Bilaans refer to each other as Bla-an.

Bilaans are generally a mountain people, scattered, often isolated, in steep slopes or summit of high hills. They live in typical platform-like houses.

Bilaans women are usually treated like chattels that can be bought from her parents or husband, or even be used to pay indebtedness. They are usually bread earners who toil in the fields.

Polygynous marriages are allowed in Bilaan society. Children, even unborn ones, are sometimes betrothed to each other. In marriage, a man must pay a bride price (*sungod*) to the woman's parents, or to her husband. Divorce is also allowed.

Disputes, such as divorces, are settled by a council of elders presided over by a *bong fulung* (also called a *datu*) in a session called *kasfala*. The *bong fulung*, a very powerful man in the community, is highly respected and can levy taxes and mete out the death penalty for offenders.

Basic to the life of the Bilaan are his religious beliefs, which are richly sprinkled with superstitions. To him, it is important to have the goodwill of many spirits who often interfere with his activities. Although Bilaans believe in a supreme being<sup>8</sup> called Mele (or Adwata or Dwata) they also address prayers of adoration, petition atonement and thanksgiving to minor spirits to maintain their goodwill. Luus Klagan, the most vicious malevolent spirit, is a cuss name and is invoked when a Bilaan wishes another person harm. Perhaps the most feared is the call of the *limukon*, considered a bird of ill omen. Bilaans have also mediums (*almos*) who can communicate with the spirits and the dead and who officiate in rituals to appease the offended spirits and ward off the menacing ones.

When a Bilaan dies, his soul (*almagol*) is believed to go back to Mele. The good, who died of natural causes, go direct to Mele but the bad must first pass through *Kilut*, a place somewhere on earth. Those who had died of accidents or had been murdered, go to *Kayong* where everything is said to be red. Those who had hanged themselves go to *Bolul Mawing* (a mountain that quakes) where everything is said to be suspended. Bilaans have several death rituals and ways of disposing the dead. The mourning period is strictly taboo for merrymaking.

Bilaans have folk explanations of the different natural phenomena such tides, earthquake, lightning and thunder.

### **Bilaan folktales: analyses**

The Bilaan folktales are analyzed as to motifs, parallels, contrasts, humor and other literary elements and devices present in both structural and substantive forms. Each tale is analyzed separately. The English translation of each tale is presented first, followed by its analysis.

### **THE STORY OF OKAN: A Trickster Tale.<sup>9</sup>**

Okan and Ebat had two children, a boy and a girl. From Ebat's right hand sprung the first Bilaan.

They planted a tree in the direction where the sun usually hides in the afternoon. After one night it grew into a very tall tree. Its base was as big as a house. On the third night it reached the sky. The sky was very low then. The dead climbed this tree on their way to heaven. They named the tree *Kalkam*. When the sky was raised, the tree became useless. So the Bilaans chopped it down. The trunk turned into a big river, and its branches became creeks. The river is now called *Palian River*. The fallen tree left a wide gaping hole but before long it was filled with water. It was later called *Lanaw Sbu*. Christians call it *Lake Sebu*.

Okan and Ebat had an easy life. Food was abundant. This was the time when the sky was low. Almost everybody had to pound rice because the harvests were always bountiful. People were inconvenienced by the low sky. Their pestles touched it when they pounded the rice. The owners of the sky heard the people's gripes so he decided to raise it. He told the people that they would have a hard time looking for

food. But he pledged that he would send *blatik* [a constellation] so they would know when to plant.

Before long, Ebat died. Okan was very lazy so he sent them to the fields so he could be alone. Then he roasted some beans and fed them to the chickens. All the fowl that partook of the beans died. Then the villagers came back, they were convinced that the event was a portent of evil. Okan was happy about this because now he could continue with his plans. He told them that the spirits would be appeased if they cooked all the rice they had and feasted on the dead chickens.

Many came to the feast but there was a lot of leftover food. Okan told them to pack the leftovers in banana leaves and float them downriver. That night Okan waited downriver. When the basket that contained the packets of food reached him, he fished it out of the river and threw it into a hole. Water seeped into the hole so a pool developed. He used a *sbat* [a two-pronged arrow] to get a packet of rice or a piece of chicken.

There was a great famine. It came as a result of the great feasting. The people cooked all the rice they stored for the rest of the year.

But Okan was not worried. His supply of food was great. Every day he left his house on the pretext of going to hunt for food.

One day, one of the villagers caught him in the act of getting a packet of food from the hole. But he was able to convince the other man that he had *tulus* [supernatural power] because each time he thrust his arrow into the pool, some food stuck to it.

The man was impressed so he borrowed Okan's arrow. "I can't lend it to you," Okan said.

But the man insisted because his family was starving. Besides, he was willing to share his hunt with Okan. Okan relented on condition that the hunt be confined to the pool.

The man went home with the food for his family. He told the hungry villagers how he was able to get the food. Many went to see Okan so they could borrow his arrow. He lent it to those who could give a horse in exchange for a night's use.

When the man left and the horse was safely in his possession, Okan escaped to another mountain. Meanwhile, the man continued spearing for food. At about midnight, the prongs of the *sbat* were bent because it hit hard rock.

The men realized they were victims of Okan's trickery. They decided to kill him. The men were more enraged when they failed to find Okan in his house.

Okan knew what to expect so when he escaped he took with him some empty bottles and wild banana stalks. He arranged them such that

when he pulled a string, the tinkling of bottles and the hissing of leaves simulated the sound of men ready for battle. He lied down and let his long hair fall to the ground.

It was dark when his pursuers arrived at the vicinity of his makeshift shelter. They closed in very slowly because seeing Okan's hair, they thought there were many people with him. The man shot their arrows at Okan's direction but he was not hit. They were afraid that Okan's companions would retaliate.

Okan manipulated the bottles and the banana leaves. Indeed they sounded like many men. The pursuers thought they were outnumbered. So they ran as fast as they could! Some fell to the ground. Their own companions trampled on them! Many lost their pants! Others fell into ravines and holes because they were not familiar with the place

The news about Okan's cunning spread far and wide. It reached the ears of three men who wanted to marry the only daughter of a datu. She was very beautiful had the makings of a good housewife. All the things they had, put together, were not sufficient to pay the bride price set by the girl's father. So they called for Okan and asked him to think of ways so that at least one of them could marry the girl.

Okan took the payment the three men were willing to give, then set his mind on the job.

One night he went to the girl's house. He was easily mistaken for a woman because of his long hair. He slept among the women.

When he heard the datu's daughter come towards her sleeping place, he took off his clothes.

When the princess groped for her blanket, she touched the lump of flesh below Okan's navel. The princess shouted to her father and told him that a dog defecated on the stomach of what she thought was a sleeping woman. She got up and took a banana leaf which she used to pick up what she supposed was dog's excrement.

When she touched him again, he "awoke" from his feigned sleep and said: "You have to marry me because you have touched the symbol of my manhood."

The datu had to marry off his daughter to Okan because indeed, she had touched him. It was Okan, not one of the men, who succeeded in making the datu's daughter his wife. He did not even have to pay the bride price.

Okan and the datu's daughter had two sons. One had enough sense, the other was a simpleton. Tobulu, the simpleton, tested the sharpness of his bolo until it could make a cut in his legs. He also saved himself a lot of work this way.

The spirit of Okan is with people who are smart and clever.

**The analysis.** Okan's story runs through three episodes held together by connective sentences that show a cause-and-effect relation between them. These episodes are: 1) Okan ensured himself a steady food supply; 2) he eluded the enraged villagers; and 3) he won himself a princess.

The prologue tells of Okan's having lived in premordial times. It thus sets off the tale from present-day life, from the everyday world and puts it "in a ridiculous context so that we may laugh the laugh of superiority."<sup>10</sup>

Krappe's observation that humor attends trickster tales<sup>11</sup> holds true. Humor is a common element in all three episodes of the Okan tale. In the first episode, the humor lies in Okan's fooling the gullible villagers. The villagers, convinced of Okan's supernatural powers, provided the trickster with food and a means of escape. In the second episode, ironic ("The pursuers thought they were outnumbered") and incongruous ("Their companions trampled on them! Many lost their pants!") passages make the tale hilarious. The third episode is like a punchline. It is in this episode wherein Okan – ironically, not any of the suitors that hired him – got married to the princess. He seemed to know that those in the upper rung of society would stop at nothing to avoid scandal.<sup>12</sup>

By the time the raconteur gets to the last part, the audience's amusement has already risen. The audience also expect the last part to be the funniest. In the third episode, sex – the public discussion of which is taboo<sup>13</sup> contributes to the humor. The princess mistook Okan's penis for a dog's excreta. The audience, identifying with the suitors who could ill afford the bride price, gets the vicarious satisfaction – expressed through "the laugh of superiority" of bringing the princess' father down to its level (the father had to marry off his daughter without even asking Okan to pay the bride price). The amusement is thus not unlike that derived from seeing the proverbial banker slip on a banana peel. As Abraham puts it:

. . . . [The] Trickster functions primarily as a release valve for all of the anti-social desires repressed by the man who tell and listen to his stories. He behaves as the members of society would behave if they were not constrained from acting. Vicariously, sympathetically, through

the acts of this egocentric sensualist, man expunges the pressures that might otherwise destroy both his ordered world and himself.<sup>14</sup>

Seen in this context, Okan's actions, amoral as they are, "represent a way of getting around a taboo and other restrictions without actually upsetting the order of society."<sup>15</sup> They also provide a means of ventilating feelings about customs which contribute to tensions in Bilaan life; they give Bilaans a chance to laugh at themselves and in the process keep their hostile feelings in check.

The episodic and rambling nature of Okan's tale and its seeming inconsistency (i.e., the unlikelihood of Okan's being Ebat's husband) are, in Thompson's words, explained thus:

The adventures of the Trickster, even when considered by themselves, are inconsistent. Part are the result of his stupidity, and about an equal number show him overcoming his enemies through cleverness. Such a trickster . . . may appear in any of these roles: the beneficent hero, the clever deceiver, or the numskull. As we look at these incidents, we find that this mixture of concepts is continually present, so that any series of adventures is likely to be a succession of clever tricks and foolish mishaps.<sup>16</sup>

### KAY BAI AND BONG BAI: An Anecdote

Kay Bai and Bong Bai were neighbors. One day, Kay Bai washed her *kumot* [skirt] and *albong* [blouse] in the river. All of a sudden there was a flood! Her clothes were washed downriver by the heavy current. She went after them by following the course of the river bank. They were her only clothes. Soon she found her clothes hanging on the fence of Lamsungfu.

"*Fiu flabi, Ye Bong*" [Good afternoon, madam], Kay Bai greeted the woman. At this time, the sun had already passed the zenith and Kay Bai was hungry.

"I see that you are hungry," Lamsungfu said. "Come and eat some of my boiled camotes."

"No, thank you. The sun will hide behind the mountains very soon and my house is very far. I just came to get my *albong* and *kumot* which were washed away by the flood. They are on your fence". That was Kay Bai's reply.

Said Lamsungfu: "Get your clothes now and hurry. When you pass that tree, at the same time pointing to a betel palm in her yard, pick the young nuts and take them with you."

*"Bong camdom, Ye Bong"* [Thank you very much, madam].

She tucked her clothes under her arm and held the betel nuts in her palms. Just as the sun was about to hide behind the mountains, she noticed that a handsome young man was following her. She walked faster. Suddenly she became afraid.

But the man was very kind. "Lamsungfu told me to bring you home. It is not safe to walk alone."

"Why were you chosen to accompany me?" said Kay Bai.

"Because you picked the young nuts."

So Kay Bai and the young, handsome man reached the house. Seeing that she was alone in her house, the young man married Kay Bai the following day.

Bong Bai learned how Kay Bai got a husband. She promised to see Lamsungfu.

The following day, Bong Bai went to the river and washed her *kumot* and *albong*. She got angry because the flood did not come at once. She uttered bad words. Suddenly there was lightning and thunder. The clouds became very dark and it started to rain. She was happy because the flood came at last. But the flood did not wash her clothes away. So she took a very long stick and pushed her clothes downriver. She succeeded in hitching them to Lamsungfu's fence.

She went to Lamsungfu's yard and demanded that she be allowed to see the woman. She did not know that she was talking to Lamsungfu herself.

"What can I do for you?" Lamsungfu asked.

"I'm very hungry. I smell roasted meat. Please feed me."

The sun was beginning to set when Bong Bai finished eating. She forgot all about her clothes.

"Please ask somebody to accompany me home. It's getting dark and I'm afraid," Bong Bai said finally. She did not even thank Lamsungfu for the roasted meat.

"Somebody will join you when you get to the forest. Be sure to get some nuts from that tree." It was the same tree from which Kay Bai picked the young nuts.

It was already very dark when Bong Bai reached the tree so she was not able to choose the kind of nuts she liked. She just filled her hands with the nuts. She continued her journey. Then she heard somebody's footsteps behind her. She was thrilled! She walked very slowly so the one following her could catch up.

When she looked back, she saw an old man who was bent because of his age. "Why are you here, Old Man? It's late and you should be in your house."

“I followed you because I am to become your husband. The old nuts mean you want me for a husband.”

Bong Bai had to marry the old man. Whereas Kay Bai lived happily, Bong Bai lived miserably.

**The analysis:** The anecdote on Kay Bai and Bong Bai is a story of contrasts. Its characters and incidents are foils that set off the qualities of one against the other. Kay Bai’s counteousness is accentuated by Bong Bai’s lack of it. Bong Bai’s punishment for her haughtiness is severe in the light of Kay Bai’s reward for her humility. The fact that they are neighbors makes the contrasts more evident. Their names are also contrasting. “Kay” is a contraction of “tukay,” which means “small;” “Bong” means “big”. Other contrasting points are shown as follows:

<i>Kay Bai</i>	<i>Bong Bai</i>
Humble and good natured	Overbearing
Undemanding (she refuses the invitation to eat because it could mean depriving Lamsungfu of her meal)	Demanding (she asks to be fed with meat and asks for an escort)
Married a young man	Married an old man
Lived happily	Lived miserably

I was impressed by the structural balance of the anecdote. The anecdote is made up of two episodes of the same length. It is unified by sentences that set off, at the same time, linked, the episodes.

Time is generally indicated by the sun’s position, i.e., afternoon (“the sun had already passed the zenith”)<sup>17</sup> dusk (“the sun will hide behind the mountains”).

Elements such as suspense (“Then she heard somebody’s footsteps behind her”), excitement (“she walked very slowly so the one following her could catch up”) and irony (“When she looked back, she saw the old man. . . .” instead of a young Bong Bai had expected to find) are woven into the anecdote to bring out the moral lesson: that punishment awaits the scheming, the demanding and the ungrateful. In Bong Bai’s case, punishment was providential. Due to darkness, she picked the old nuts – which signified the age of her future husband – instead

of the young ones. Consequently, she had to marry an old man, with whom "she lived miserably."

### THE MONKEY AND THE TURTLE: An Animal Tale

One morning, a monkey and a turtle who were close friends talked about their situation. After a while, the monkey said, "Let's go to the forest and make a trap for wild pigs." The turtle agreed. When they came upon a *dakit* tree, they saw the tracks of wild pigs. "Let's make a trap here," said the turtle, pointing to the base of the tree.

"No, let's make one up the tree because pigs go there and gather fruit," said the monkey.

"No, let's stay down here because the tracks are here."

"All right, you make your trap here while I make one up the tree."

So the monkey and the turtle went their separate ways. After setting their traps, the monkey said, "Let's return after two days. Wild pigs should be there by then."

But the day after the traps were laid, the monkey went back to the *dakit* tree by himself. The turtle's trap had a pig, his had a bird. The turtle was right. To save face, the monkey brought the pig from the turtle's trap to his own and replaced it with the bird caught in his.

On his way home, he met the turtle.

"Where have you been?" asked the turtle.

"I went to the river to take a bath," was the reply.

As agreed, on the second day after the traps were laid, the monkey and the turtle went to the *dakit* tree.

"Let's hurry so we can get there early. Last night I had a good dream. Our traps must surely have something in them," the monkey said.

The turtle was surprised to find a pig up the tree and a bird in his trap which was set on the ground. He knew the monkey tricked him and told the monkey so. The monkey insisted that he had nothing to do with the result of their catch. Without saying another word, the monkey and the turtle went home with the pig and the bird, respectively.

When they came near the monkey's house, they decided to fight it out.

"Wait," the monkey said, "I'll build myself a fort." He proceeded to make a fort out of banana leaves. He believed them impenetrable.

"Shoot first," the turtle said. "After all, you challenged me into this fight. If it were true that my trap caught a bird, pray that I will be killed at once."

The monkey took careful aim while his family watched from behind the banana fort. The turtle was hit! The monkey rejoiced.

The turtle cried, "You hit my back but I am protected by my shell. Can't you see I am alive?"

The monkey was dismayed but he was a good sport. "Then shoot!" he called from the fort.

The turtle took careful aim and when his arrow found its mark, he heard a monkey cry. One of the monkey's children was killed.

"No, I was not hit. It was one of my chickens," lied the monkey.

The monkey's turn to shoot came but the turtle was not afraid. His shell was very thick. The arrows bounced.

Each time the turtle released an arrow, it hit a monkey. One by one, the monkey's wife and children died.

"Why don't we be friends again?" shouted the monkey from his fort. "I'll tell you the truth. Your trap caught the pig. It is yours."

The monkey and the turtle reconciled once more. If the monkey did not shout after the last of his children was killed, the turtle would have killed him, too. They sealed their friendship by partaking of *nama* [chew]<sup>18</sup> from the monkey's chew box.

Sometime later, the monkey felt lonely because his wife and children were dead. "Please keep me company," the monkey pleaded. "We can go to the river and fish."

They left the river to fish. At the riverbank they saw a banana stalk. "Let's cut this in two," the monkey suggested. "I'll take the upper half because the leaves and the fruit are too heavy for you."

The monkey and the turtle went to their respective *kaingin* [farm clearings] and planted their respective banana tree parts. The next visit to their *kaingin* brought happiness to the turtle and sadness to the monkey. The turtle saw his plant heavy with fruit. The monkey's plant had wilted.

The monkey volunteered to get the fruit for the turtle. When he was up there, he did not care to go down anymore. He ate everything. He was so full that he slept with a banana in his mouth. This made the turtle very mad.

Silently, the turtle planted bamboo stakes around the banana stalk. When the monkey turned on his side, he fell and was at once impaled. Helpless, the monkey agonizingly died.

The turtle feasted on the monkey. His ears were like good *buyo* [betel] leaves, his tail was like betel nut, and his brain tasted like superior lime. He chewed the concoction<sup>19</sup> and was pleased with himself.

On his way home he met a pack of monkeys who were on their way to their *kaingin*. They saw the turtle's beautiful black teeth so

they asked for some of his *nama*. He hesitated for a little while because he was afraid the monkeys might harm him. Then a wonderful idea struck his mind. He turned his back and wrapped some of his *nama* in a leaf from a wild tree that grew by the roadside. He told the monkeys to open the package only when they reached their *kaingin*.

The monkeys did as bidden. When they reached their *kaingin* they gathered around the package and looked forward to a wonderful *nama*. After chewing some, many threw up; others felt weak and dropped dead. Those who did not partake of the *nama* realized that what their companions chewed was a monkey. They decided to run after the turtle and kill him.

The monkeys found the turtle near a riverbank. The turtle was subdued at once. The monkeys laid him on a flat stone. Each monkey beat him with a stone. They saw how the turtle enjoyed it. "Go ahead, continue beating me so I'll turn out wide and flat; I will be able to lick you all with my tail." So the monkeys decided to throw him into the river. This seemed to have frightened the turtle. Seeing how pale the turtle was, the monkeys were sure they decided the right thing. So into the river the turtle went with a splash!

"Ha-ha-ha!" The monkeys heard the turtle laugh. "Don't you know that I can live in the water?"

The monkeys were very mad. Then it happened that a deer was drinking upstream. They asked the deer to drink all the water there as in the river so they could get to the turtle.

The deer promised to help the monkeys. He asked them to put a stopper in his anus. They used a corn cob to close the orifice.

The monkeys waded toward the turtle while the deer drew water from the river. When the monkeys could almost make it to the turtle *tabkuko* [a bird] pecked on the corn cob and out went the water again! Thrice the deer drew the water, thrice did the *tabkuko* remove the corn cob. Three monkeys drowned.

The *tabkuko* incurred the monkey's wrath because they never succeeded in laying their hands on the turtle. They seized the bird and twisted its neck. The bird writhed in pain and felt its end was near. "You won't kill me that way. Can't you see you're even making me beautiful? See how red my bill is! The harder you twist my neck, the redder my bill becomes. But if you want to kill me, pull my feathers and leave me on that stone near the river. In a week's time you will see worms feasting on my body."

The monkeys stripped the *tabkuko* of all its plume and left it on the stone. After a week, they saw that looked like worms all over the *tabkuko's* body. They thought it was rotting. When the monkeys

left, the bird stretched its wings and examined what it knew would turn out into beautiful plumage.

But the turtle did not go unpunished. When he went out of the water, he met a red-tailed lizard. He wanted to have a tail as red as the lizard's. The lizard told him that he only had to climb a red tree and jump from it. The lizard offered to bring him up the tree.

So up the tree they went. The turtle held the lizard's tail as hard as he could, but he slipped! Down he went with a loud crash! His lizard friend went to him but he was beyond help: his shell was broken into a thousand pieces. And while the sun hid behind the trees, the turtle died.

**The analysis.** In this tale, the raconteur did not dwell on lengthy introductory details and started off by describing the monkey and the turtle as "close friends," a phrase which suggests long friendship — a tacitly inviolable relationship. Almost immediately, he plunged into the heart of the first episode — the trapping of pigs. From the dialogue between the monkey and the turtle, it can be gleaned that the two have different abilities in deducing from empirical evidence. It can be inferred from talk that the turtle is smarter than the monkey.

But the monkey is wily and sly. Although he set two days before checking their traps, he returned a day earlier. It seemed he had already planned to switch the catches if he were proven wrong — which was the case. When he met the turtle after switching the catches, he gave an alibi which the turtle accepted. Even when he was later confronted with his trickery, the monkey insisted on his innocence, and challenged the turtle to a fight.

The turtle's insouciance seemed deliberate, as if by postponing retribution, the turtle got some sadistic satisfaction with the thought that he would deal the death blow later, not only on the monkey, but on his family as well.

To his credit, the raconteur had captured the excitement of the battle between the monkey and the turtle. The account of the battle showed, not only the ironic defeat of the monkey,<sup>20</sup> but also the raconteur's ability to sustain tension.<sup>21</sup>

The second episode seemed obviously a continuation of the first episode. The transitional description of the monkey who felt "lonely

because his wife and children were dead” and who sought the turtle’s company tend to further suggest that the second episode is a continuation, not another story. In the second episode, it is still the same uncomplaining turtle who settled for what the clever monkey gave him and who bided for the opportune time for revenge. It is the same monkey who could not see beyond the immediate; the same monkey whose opportunism turned out to be his undoing. In a way, it is the same episode — with some variations — told all over again. The table below shows the parallels between the first and second episodes:

<i>Elements</i>	<i>1st episode</i>	<i>2nd episode</i>
joint venture	trapping	fishing
coveted	pig	banana plant
cause of feud	monkey’s getting the pig	monkey’s eating all the bananas
resolution	turtle battles the monkey	turtle drives stakes around the banana plant
result	death of the monkey’s family	death of the monkey

The tale has humor. The monkey’s naivete borders on the funny, if not the ridiculous. His choice of the trap’s location, his belief that his fort of banana leaves was impregnable and his preference for the upper end of the banana plant have always elicited laughter. The success of the turtle and the *tabkuko* in fooling their captors is also funny. Such sexual passage as stopping the deer’s anus with a corn cob is also funny — and is made funnier because the cob has to be plugged in three times because it was constantly removed by the *tabkuko*.<sup>22</sup>

Bilaan mores and beliefs are reflected in the tale. One such mores is face-saving. The monkey who wanted to show he was a better trapper than the turtle, did everything he could to save his face when his trap caught a bird instead of a pig, proving he was wrong and the turtle was right (and therefore was a better trapper). Mention is also made about the turtle’s black teeth. Bilaans consider black teeth beautiful. This attitude is reflected by the monkeys who wanted to have the turtle’s *nama* (chew) impliedly to blacken their teeth. The sharing of *nama* is to Bilaans a gesture of amity, a tacitly inviolable relationship. Thus the

turtle, for having been duped, may have considered it his right to kill the monkey for violating their friendship which had been made binding by the sharing of *nama*.

In the context of the Bilaan society, the turtle's death was deserved. The turtle, by arrogating unto himself what was due the gods, was guilty of *hubris*. Furthermore, the turtle was not justified in venting his vengeance on the other monkeys. The moral of the tale, according to the raconteur, was "To prove that evil will not go unpunished." As Thompson observes:

. . . it seems to be a well-established characteristic of the folktale that . . . good shall eventually triumph and wickedness receive a fitting punishment. Essential in the action of nearly all . . . folktales . . . is the contrast between the evil deed of malevolent persons and the commendable activity of the heroes of the tale. These punishments are often horrible enough, but they are always justified for the teller of the folktale by the reflection that the villain was planning just such punishment himself and that he is getting exactly what he deserves.<sup>23</sup>

The turtle was good. His detractor, the monkey, was evil; therefore he was punished. But the turtle carried his vengeance further and vented his ire on other monkeys. His pride in his triumphs over the monkeys made him vain: he wanted to have a tail as red as the lizard's. In that sense, he became evil and therefore could not go unpunished. And punishment in its extreme form is death. So it was, ". . . While the sun hid behind the trees, the turtle died."

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## NOTES

1. To my knowledge, no literary analysis of Bilaan folktales has been done yet. There is, however, a collection of Bilaan tales — a 23-page primer by Dr. and Mrs. Norman Abrams (Dad Blaán Tulen, Manila: Summer Institute of Linguistics, in cooperation with the Bureau of Public Schools and the Institute of National Language, Department of Education, 1965). This primer is used in Bilaan adult literacy classes. It contains ten tales and four riddles. Two Bilaan tales are also included in an anthology, *Stories and Legends from Filipino Folklore* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Press, 1967) by Delia Coronel, I.C.M.

The tales in my study are part of a collection of tales gathered in Barrio Assumption (popularly called Bolul) in Koronadal, Barrio Kalkam and Barrio Kablon in Tupi, and Lun Masla in Glan, all in the province of South Cotabato in Mindanao island in December 1969-January 1969. The gathering of the tales was funded by the now defunct Cultural Research Center of Silliman University. Valuable assistance was extended me by Fr. Francisco Demetrio, S.J., of Xavier University, Dr. and Mrs. Hubert Reynolds of Silliman University, Prof. E. Arsenio Manuel of the University of the Philippines, Delia Coronel, I.C.M., and Rev. Lorenzo Genotiva.

2. Two tales – the trickster tale and the anecdote – were told by Yawut (Patria) Angkuy, a Bolul shaman, and the third one, the animal tale, was related by Camag (Conrado) Talino of Lun Masla. The tales were translated from Bilaan to Ilonggo by Melba Jamagan, a young woman from Bolul, and finally, into English, by this writer.

Since I neither speak nor understand the language in which the folktales were originally told, I am aware of the materials I have collected having undergone transformations of some kind. First, my presence as an outsider, who recorded the folktales, either in writing or in tapes, have likely affected the raconteur's performance. The raconteur may have embellished the tales, or stripped them of elements he thought offensive to outsiders. Second, no translation can capture the nuances of the original language, nor can translators adequately describe the raconteur's gestures, which are vital aspects of oral tradition.

3. Cf. *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*. Maria Leach, ed., (New York; Funk and Wagnalls, 1949) p. 612

4. Melville J. Herskovits, *Man and His Works* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949). pp. 425-426.

5. Santiago B. Cabrera, "The Origin, Folkways, and Customs of the Bilaans of South Cotabato," *Unitas*, Vol. XL, No. 1 (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Press). p. 193.

6. Fay Cooper-Cole, *Wild Tribes of Davao District* (Chicago: Mindanao Field Museum of National History, Publication No. 170, Anthropological Series XII: 2, 1913). p. 120

7. Santiago, p. 193

8. Interviews with informants revealed that Mele and Adwata (Dwata) are one and the same spirit. But in some tales they are considered two distinct spirits. Among the Lun-Malapatan Bilaans, Mele is Dwata's elder brother. Those in Davao consider Dwata to be the "wife of Mele and of equal strength with him." Bilaans, justifying their residing in the mountains, say that they live nearer Mele than the Bisayans." (Bilaans refer to other Filipinos, except the Muslims, as Bisayans)

9. This tale will be published without any analysis in *Sands and Coral* (1975), literary annual of Silliman University. For other trickster tales, cf. tales of Juan Posong of the Bisayans, Juan Tamad, of the Tagalogs, Pilanduk of the Maranao.

10. Roger D. Abrahams, "Trickster, the Outrageous Hero," *American Folklore*, Voice of America Forum Lectures, Tristram Coffin, III, ed. (Washington, D. C.). p. 196.

11. Alexander Krappe, *The Science of Folklore* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1930. p. 53

12. Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1946). p. 669

13. The telling of the episode was itself humorous because the raconteur had to get around the taboo on sex talk. The audience was eager to hear the raconteur's description of sex passages, either through euphemisms or in graphic terms. Clumsiness in the use of euphemisms or temerity in giving the graphic terms could easily make the raconteur the object of laughter.

14. Abrahams, p. 195

15. *Ibid.*

16. Thompson, p. 319.

17. The raconteur pointed west.

18. This concoction, which is chewed, is usually made up betel (*buyo*) nut and leaf, and lime, with coloring added. In some ethnic groups, the color is red. Among the Bilaans, the color is black.

19. Apparently, the concoction alluded to is the *nama*. cf. fn. 18

20. It may be noted that even if the raconteur had seen to it (perhaps by modifying some details) that the contenders were evenly matched, the monkey still had the psychological advantage of his family rooting for him.

21. The raconteur sustained the tension of the episode by skipping the details of the other deaths, which were similar to the first, thus had spared the audience from tedious repetitions. In effect, he tightened the story. With the tension held thus, the effect of the anticlimactic confession and reconciliation that came swiftly is like that of a vise suddenly loosened after a gradual tightening.

22. It may be noted that the use of the pattern number is in keeping with the Law of Three, one of the epic laws of folk narrative. Cf. Axel Ohrik, "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative" *The Study of Folklore*, Alan Dundes, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1965) p. 133.

23. Thompson, p. 130