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Bienvenido Lumbera

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Tagalog Poetry during the Seventeenth Century

BIENVENIDO LUMBERA

PRINTING came to the Philippines shortly before the beginning of the seventeenth century when the *Doctrina Christiana* was published in 1593 by the Dominican printing press in Manila.¹ The three other pioneering religious orders—Franciscans, Jesuits and Augustinians—put up their own presses during the first two decades of the century, and joined the Dominicans in turning out grammars, dictionaries, catechism and confession manuals.² It was during this period that Tagalog poetry made its first appearance, not as independent reading matter but as a handmaid to the religious publications. The history of written Tagalog poetry—poetry written expressly for printing in Roman letters—dates from this point.³

The meagerness of the poetic output of these years may be explained primarily as the effect of the high cost of print-

¹ This book was published in a facsimile edition, with an introduction by Edwin Wolf 2nd, in 1947. Before then it was known only by a reference to it in a letter to Philip II of Spain, written in 1593, by Governor General Gomez Perez Dasmariñas. See Wolf's introduction in *Doctrina Christiana, the First Book Printed in the Philippines, Manila, 1593* (Washington, D.C., 1947), p. 6.

² John L. Phelan, "Philippine Linguistics and Spanish Missionaries, 1565-1700," *Mid-America*, XXXVII, July 1955, 158-159.

³ No record of Tagalog poetry written in the native syllabary has been found, and it is doubtful whether poetry was composed in written form prior to the introduction of the printing press.

ing, which did not encourage the publication of anything but the most functional materials. Between 1593 and 1648, 24 books in Tagalog came out, and whatever piece of poetry appeared in written form was found among the prefatory pages or, when it was part of the main text, appended to the catechism lessons as a means of arousing religious zeal. Thus, aside from limiting the number of poems published, the economics of printing also confined the themes of poetry to those that would serve the ends of the printers, who were the religious orders that helped the military in Spain's so-called pacification campaign in her Oriental colony.

Barely had Legazpi, Goiti and Salcedo extended Spanish sovereignty over the islands comprising Las Filipinas (a name intended to honor the then Prince of Asturias, Philip II), than the new colony was subjected to external and internal wars. The first half of the seventeenth century saw Filipinas attacked from without by the Dutch and from within by the Muslims of the southern part of the archipelago. The war effort proved too exhausting for the new colony. The natives were conscripted to work in the forests felling timber and in the shipyards building ships. Hard labor and injustice combined to decimate the population either by making the natives flee to the mountains or bringing about their death. It has been estimated that between 1621 and 1655, the population was reduced by 105,688.⁴

It is not likely that oral literature suffered any setbacks as a result of the war, but the development of written literature certainly did. The economic dislocation created by the Hispano-Dutch war and the Muslim raids prevented the educational efforts of the missionaries from reaching a great number of natives. The religious orders had brought with them primary education which Fr. Henry F. Fox, S.J., surveys in a recent article:

... Rudimentary centers of instruction arose under the sponsorship of Catholic parishes very soon after the advent of the Spanish to the archipelago. . . . Most, if not all, of these establishments were quite

⁴ John L. Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines* (Madison, Wis., 1959), p. 57.

tuition-free. Probably the great majority of them taught only reading, writing, and religion, along with a little counting and singing. Some, as in the Bicol region, used Spanish. Others employed the vernacular....⁵

In these parish schools, Tagalog children learned to read and write in the alphabet brought by the missionaries. But the times were not congenial to the peacetime pursuit of education, so that in all likelihood only a fraction of the population benefited from these schools.

The odds did not discourage the early missionaries, however, but only served to give them added zeal. Antonio de Morga, writing in 1609, describes with great admiration the work of the early missionaries:

Iunto, contratar los religiosos en sus doctrinas, de las cosas de la religion de los naturales, trabajan en adestrarlos, en cosas de pulicia suya, teniendo escuela de leer, a escribir, para los muchachos en español; enseñándoles, a seguir la yglesia, canto llano, y canto de organo, y tocar menestres, dancar, cantar, y tañer harpas, guitaras y otros instrumentos;...representan autos, y comedias en español, y en su lengua con buena gracia, que esto se deue al cuydado y curiosidad de los religiosos; que sin cansarse entienden de su aprouechamiento.⁶

Half a century later, the Jesuit chronicler Francisco Colín praised the ability of the natives to write in the Roman alphabet, noting that they served as clerks in public accountancies and secretaryships of the kingdom. He even went further and said that some of these natives were so capable they deserved to become officials in those parts.⁷

What do these remarks tell us about the literary climate of the seventeenth century? They allow us to glimpse the gradual infiltration of European elements into the culture of the natives, a process that was to culminate in the loss of the indigenous system of writing, which incurred with it the

⁵ "Primary Education in the Philippines, 1565-1863," *Philippine Studies*, XIII, No. 2 (April 1965), 229-230.

⁶ *Sucesos de las Filipinas*, ed. W. E. Retana (Madrid, 1909), p. 206.

⁷ *Labor evangélica*, ed. Pablo Pastells (Barcelona, 1900-1902), I, 55.

disappearance of pre-1570 oral literature that might have been recorded in the native syllabary. With only a handful of them working among widely scattered tribes, it was indeed a feat that the missionaries were able to accomplish the cultural renovation of the early Filipinos. For that was what their efforts amounted to—a renovation rather than an overhauling. John L. Phelan, in the book *The Hispanization of the Philippines*, explains why the Spaniards were unable to re-create the Filipinos unto their own image:

It is apparent that geoethnic factors had much to do with delimiting the impact of Spanish culture on the Filipinos. Isolation and consequent poor communications with Spain prevented the Church from adequately staffing its Philippine missions.

Rural decentralization, which the Spaniards could only partially change, gave the Filipinos more freedom in selecting their responses to Hispanization than they would have had if they had been congregated into large compact villages under the daily supervision of the religious.⁸

For those whom the Spaniards were able to draw out of their rural homes, there was town life which was dominated by religious activities. Each religious order must have followed its own method of imparting the doctrine to the catechuminate, but the pattern observed in the town of Silang seems to typify the standard practice:

Every day at dawn the church bell rings for all the children to come to church. Thence they go in procession through the town, chanting the catechism in their native tongue. The passing of the procession, so numerous (there are as many as 200 boys) and so devotional, is a constant delight to the beholder. They return to the church, where they recite the principal points of Christian doctrine and answer questions on them. Then they hear Mass after which they betake themselves to school. Some learn their first letters, others are further exercised in the catechism; no one is permitted to work on the farm or help his parents until he is first solidly grounded in the faith. On Sundays all people, young and old, attend a catechism lesson in the church.⁹

The emphasis on children is significant. The reason for this is not difficult to see. In any community they are the

⁸ pp. 51-52.

⁹ Quoted from the Annual Letter of 1614, Horacio de la Costa, S.J., *The Jesuits in the Philippines: 1581-1768* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961). pp. 369-370.

ones who have not yet committed themselves to the prevailing beliefs and values, and are therefore susceptible to re-orientation. Besides they represent the society of the future and winning them over to the beliefs and values means re-making that society. The Augustinian historian Juan de Medina, writing about his Order's work in Cebu in 1566, mixes his metaphors in setting forth the advantage of working with children rather than with the adults of the community:

Procuraron los religiosos que los niños de la gente mas granada viniesen al convento, ó á aquella casa donde vivian, para enseñarles la Doctrina, á leer y escribir, que como plantas, era fuerza, que recibiesen mejor la enseñanza, y se les imprimiesen mejor las nuevas costumbres, que en los ya duros y empedernidos en las suyas antiguas, llevandolo bien los indios.¹⁰

A measure of the success of the missionaries was the replacement by the Roman alphabet of the native syllabary in less than two centuries' time.

The existence of the indigenous syllabary was first noted by a European when Pedro de Chirino published in Rome in 1604 the *Relación de las islas Filipinas*. Chirino described the syllabary as having three vowels—*a*, *e* or *i* and *o* or *u*—and twelve consonants—*ba*, *ca*, *da*, *ga*, *ha*, *la*, *ma*, *na*, *sa*, *ta* and *ya*. A point inscribed above a syllable sign made it an *e-i* sound; below, an *o-u* sound. There was one peculiarity of the syllabary: it did not provide a way of writing a final consonant in a syllabic unit, so that *cantar* for instance, had to be written as *cata*. But Chirino did not find that the peculiarity created any difficulty for the natives who supplied the missing consonants with great skill as they read along. Writing was done on bamboo and on palm leaves by means of a piece of pointed iron. Originally, it went from top to bottom, starting from the left. However, at the time he wrote his book, Chirino noted that the natives had adopted the European way of writing horizontally from left to right.¹¹

¹⁰ *Historia de los sucesos de la Orden de su gran P. S. Agustín de estas islas Filipinas* (Manila, 1893), p. 54. Medina's work was written in 1630.

¹¹ Chirino, pp. 39-41. There is considerable disagreement as to the manner by which the natives wrote, whether it was from top to bottom, left to right, or vice versa. Robert B. Fox, the latest in a long

A century later, Gaspar de San Agustín was to refer again to the peculiarity noted by Chirino when he wrote about the syllabary which, in 1703, was still in use in the province of Comintang (present-day Batangas). He said that use of the syllabary in writing was easy, but to read what had been written was to indulge in guesswork. He demonstrated the difficulty of reading anything by giving the example of



which may be read as *lili*, *lilim*, *lilip*, *lilis*, *lilit*, *limlim*, *liclic*, *liglig*, etc.¹²

Any attempt to account for the loss of pre-Spanish literature among the Christian Filipinos should start with a recognition of its limitations as seen by Chirino and San Agustín. Considering the problems created for the reader by the syllabary, it is unlikely that it was used at all as a medium for written literature. Chirino asserts that it was used solely for writing letters.¹³ If it was used at all for literary purposes, it must have been to record oral lore, with the transcript serving as some kind of crib during performances or during transfer from adult to child. Anything written directly in the syllabary without having lived in oral tradition would have become totally incomprehensible to anybody but the author. For only one familiar with the oral life of the composition could make sense out of the cryptic syllabic combinations. The case of the Visayan catechumens of two Jesuit missionaries in the town of Ormoc throws some light on the use of the syllabary (which was the same one used by the Tagalogs) for purposes of keeping records. The catechumens made copies of the day's lesson on bamboo strips which they studied at home, memorizing their content for recitation during the next meeting.¹⁴

line of writers, says it ran from bottom to top, left to right. Fox believes that the Buginese of Southern Celebes, whose language did not have final consonants, brought the syllabary to the Philippines where the languages have final consonants, thus creating the anomaly recorded by Chirino. See Fox, "The Philippines in Prehistoric Times," *The Philippines of Yesteryears*, ed. Eufronio M. Alip et al, (Manila, 1964), p. 316.

¹² *Compendio de la lengua tagala*, 3rd ed. (Manila, 1879), p. 144.

¹³ Chirino, p. 52.

¹⁴ de la Costa, *The Jesuits*, pp. 161-162.

If literature in the native script was indeed impossible, then the explanation for the loss of pre-contact literature is vastly more complicated than some historians have been willing to concede. Knowing the limitations of the native syllabary as a literary medium, the student cannot accept without qualification the usual explanation that the friars destroyed the relics of paganism among their converts, or that the literature was recorded on highly perishable materials which disintegrated before scholars could get hold of them.¹⁵ There is no doubt that religious zeal impelled many missionaries to burn, along with pagan idols, written records kept by the natives. Chirino's attitude toward the folklore of the Tagalogs, if it was typical, was of the kind to encourage the destruction of whatever would perpetuate pagan practice and belief. He saw folksongs, in particular, as a means of preserving the works of the Devil himself who was behind the traditions of government and religion contained in them.¹⁶ As a matter of fact, he relates how he burned a book of charms written in verse called *golo* that a repentant young man had surrendered to him. How many other records he committed to the fire as works of the Devil, when they were actually no more than harmless or maybe profane secular songs, cannot now be ascertained. We do know that he had acted as official censor for the Archbishopric of Manila, and that in 1600 he was entrusted with the task of reviewing books written in Romanized Tagalog and in the native syllabary.¹⁷

That the fragility of the bamboo strips and the palm leaves led to the loss of whatever was recorded on them cannot be doubted either. Tropical weather has always been a potent destroyer and in this it has the cooperation of mildew, weevil and termites. Nonetheless religious zeal and defective writing materials do not wholly explain the total absence of pre-contact records of oral literature. After all, literate Ta-

¹⁵ See Conrado Benitez, *History of the Philippines* (Boston, 1929), p. 149; Eufronio M. Alip, *Political and Cultural History of the Philippines* (Manila, 1950), I, p. 70; and Gregorio F. Zaide, *Philippine Political and Cultural History*, Rev. ed. (Manila, 1957), I, p. 74.

¹⁶ Chirino, p. 52.

¹⁷ Colín, I, 55.

galogs could have recopied ancient records before they decayed or were destroyed. What seemed to have happened was that literate Tagalogs became fewer between the coming of the Spaniards in 1570 and the middle of the eighteenth century.

When the missionaries took children and made them the foundation of the new, Christian society they had come to foster in the Philippines, that meant giving their wards the rudiments of European education as the Spaniards knew them. The Roman alphabet was introduced. As the years went by, a generation untutored in the native syllabary was in the making. The new way of writing was seen to be a key to status in the society of priests and bureaucrats. Since all the advantages lay with learning the Roman alphabet, the native syllabary was neglected by the younger people who found no use for it. In good time, only the elder members of the community must have persisted in its use. In the meantime, the perishable records of ancient folklore were lying around with no one but the old folk to read them. Not all the young people had been able to learn the Roman alphabet well enough. As a matter of fact, it soon became obvious that only a minority had been able to master it. The result was a loss of literacy, that characteristic of Tagalog society at contact times that so impressed Morga at the turn of the seventeenth century: "...*Esriben en esta lengua [Tagalog], casi todos los naturales, asi ombres, como mugeres, y muy pocas ay que no la escribian muy bien, y con propiedad.*"¹⁸

When the native poets lost the syllabary and failed to acquire the Roman alphabet, their compositions remained in the oral tradition until a literate Tagalog or an interested missionary took them down in writing. It was often the missionaries, the few who had enough proficiency in the language and had anthropological interests, who wrote them down. This meant that some form of editing took place when the works were recorded. The missionaries were, understandably enough, careful to keep the natives from reverting to paganism. Of the poems and songs they heard from their converts, they probably took down only those which they

¹⁸ Morga, p. 190.

thought edifying. The poems in the *Vocabulario de la lengua tagala* (Manila, 1754) by Juan de Niceda and Pedro de Sanlúcar were typical of the acceptable ones.

Tagalog poetry written in the Roman alphabet appeared for the first time in a religious work meant to explain the basic doctrines of the Catholic Faith. The book *Memorial de la vida cristiana en lengua tagala* (Manila, 1605) with poems by a *ladino* (a bilingual native named Fernando Bagongbanta), by an anonymous native poet, and by the Spanish friar who authored the book, Francisco de San José.¹⁹ *Memorial* takes each of the ten Commandments and explains it in homiletic fashion in a now archaic metaphorical prose that reflects San José's grasp of the Tagalog idiom and style. Bagongbanta's poem appears at the opening pages as a versified preface praising San José's book. The poem by the anonymous native poet comes at the end of the book, but its function is the same as that of Bagongbanta's. San José's poems follow the prose discussions as poetic recapitulations of the lessons taught by the Commandments. These three poets represent the groups of poets whose works may be said to open the history of written Tagalog poetry.

The Missionary Poets. The first group, the most prolific by virtue of their connections with the publishers, is composed of missionaries who had mastered Tagalog well enough to be able to versify in it. San José is the best known of this group. A Dominican friar who arrived in the Philippines in 1595, he learned Tagalog and Chinese while stationed in the province of Bataan. A fine linguist, he wrote *Arte y reglas de la lengua tagala* (Bataan, 1610) which is the first attempt to codify the rules of writing and speaking Tagalog. Sanlúcar, in his introduction to the *Vocabulario*, calls San José the "Demosthenes" of the Tagalog language, a tribute to the friar's phenomenal mastery of the language. Unfortunately, that mastery did not endow him with the gift of poetry in spite of his enthusiasm as a versifier. As a poet, he seemed to have fancied himself an innovator. Gaspar de

¹⁹ The edition used is that published by Imprenta de D. Jose Maria Dayot in Manila, 1835.

San Agustín relates that San José wrote Tagalog poems according to the rules of Spanish versification and presented them to some natives who politely told him, "*Magaling datapoua hindi tola*" (Good, but not poetry.).²⁰ In *Memorial*, his poems are cast in *romance* form whose line groupings are irregular, a departure from the strict quatrains of traditional Tagalog verse. The freeness of the stanza often tempts San José into discursiveness as the following excerpt from the *auit* (song) coming after the Fourth Commandment illustrates:

Ang icapat na oton
ay biling ibinabantog
tantong ipinasosonod
nitong Panginoong Dios,
ang ona, ay gay-on pala:
igalang ang ama,t, yna,
yayang siyang nagdarala:
nag alila capagdaca,
mag-anğay-o,y, alaga pa,
salang malingat sa mata
ang asa,y, mamamatay na
nang malaquing pagcasinta.²¹ (p. 452)

Riming in the passage quoted is pure jingle in lines 5, 8, 9 and 11, where there is obvious padding in order to complete the octosyllabic count. In San José's Tagalog poetry, edifying subject matter is all, and this is an attitude discernible in the works of subsequent missionary poets.

In a later poem, the *himno* dedicating *Arte y reglas* to the Blessed Virgin, the innovator in San José shows once again in the seven-line stanza with alternating pentasyllabic and hexasyllabic lines. There are more moments of near-poetry in this poem because San José had begun to assimilate the metaphorical style of Tagalog folk poetry. However, the formal restrictions of the stanza form he had chosen fail to control his loquacity which makes the poem go on for

²⁰ *Compendio*, p. 155.

²¹ The fourth commandment / is an advice proclaimed / and given to be followed / by the Lord God, / that above all—and this is how it goes— / one should respect his father and mother, / they being the ones who support us; / so that the moment their eyes miss us, / they think we're in danger of death, / so great is their love for us.

26 stanzas. The poem seems to have drawn from the Litany to the Blessed Virgin for inspiration. The first stanza is a series of ejaculations in the manner of the Litany:

O Panginoon
nang lahat na tauo
o tantong Hari
nang lahat na Angeles:
o inang mahal
nang Dios na may gaua
sa sanglibotan.²²

The poem closes with a prayer for the Blessed Mother to come to the aid of the sinner during his final moments:

At cun malapit
ang casaquit saquit
na ipapanao
na hanga nang buhay:
icaò ang humarap
at pacatolongan
ang caloloua.

Na cun mangyaring
mapariyan sa iyo
at mapanolos
na uala nang pinid
ang panonood
sa muc-ha mong mahal
na ualang hanga.²³

San José was preparing to return to Spain in 1614 when he died. His example as a poet did not leave any mark on the poetic practice of the writers, both religious and lay, who came after him. However, his linguistic work as a missionary was to encourage other Spaniards to more intensive study of Tagalog.²⁴

²² O Sovereign / of all men, / O true Ruler / of all angels: / O mother beloved / of God who made / the universe.

²³ The quotation is from the edition of *Arte y reglas* published in Manila, 1832. And when it approaches, / the terrible time / of departure, / when life reaches its end: / take up its defense / and lend your help / to my soul. / So that when it has come to pass / that I join you / and find repose, / without end / will I gaze / at your face whose holiness / is eternal.

²⁴ See the tribute to San José in the introduction to the *Vocabulario de la lengua tagala*, 3rd ed. (Manila, 1860). He calls *Arte y re-*

Perhaps it is not entirely correct to say that San José did not influence the subsequent development of Tagalog poetry. For in a sense, by encouraging other Spanish priests to try their hand in Tagalog versification, he was responsible for the emergence of a new type of Tagalog poetry. This type, quite different from native compositions in the oral tradition, was in the making during the first half of the seventeenth century. Its tendencies had become marked when we find it used by Alonso de Santa Ana in *Explicación de la doctrina cristiana en lengua tagala* (Manila, 1628).²⁵ *Explicación* is what its title claims: an explanation of the basic tenets of Christian doctrine employing the question-and-answer method, a more detailed catechism for those who have advanced in the knowledge of the Faith. Except for its catechetical style, Santa Ana's book is in the tradition of *Memorial de la vida cristiana*. Between explanations in prose, the author interpolates verse passages which recapitulate points that have been made in prose.

After interpreting the first line of the Credo ("I believe in God the Father Almighty"), Santa Ana says in verse:

Cristianong lahat na
Tayo,i, maniala na,
At may Dios na maganda
Gumaua nang lahat na.

Ang lahat ngani caniya
Sucat ding utusan niya,
Ay tayo pa ngani бага
Ang di sumampalataya?²⁶ (p. 13)

glas "el Arte de todos los artes, o el unico que debe tener este nombre por primero, que es el del V. P. Fr. Francisco de San José, Demóstenes de esta lengua, á quien despues de tantos años y especulativas no se que le haya añadido un apice en la sustancia de sus reglas, y en que se ven en ellas las reglas tambien de su prudencia, pues parece que desconfía el llamarlo arte cuando suplica que alguno se dedique á formar-lo, valiéndose de las que con tanto cuidado, aplicación y advertencia puso en él" (fol. 3, recto of leaf 4).

²⁵ The edition used is that published in Manila, 1853.

²⁶ All you Christians, / let us now believe, / for there is a great God / who created everything. / Since everything belongs to Him, / He can command all; / Who are we / That we shouldn't believe in Him?

Santa Ana's verse may be charitably described as wretched. The rimes reveal the poverty of his vocabulary. In the first stanza, the particle *na* is used three times in order to find a rime for *maganda*. The uncertainty of his handling of syntax is betrayed by his failure to maintain the heptasyllabic count in the last two lines of the second stanza.

As an appendage to the explanation of doctrine, Santa Ana's verse is severely functional in character. As such, it is lifted from the level of prose only by the use of rime and meter. In order to accommodate the complexity of the various concepts in his verse, he eschews a set stanza pattern. Thus, like San José, he groups four, five, six, seven or eight lines into stanzas depending on how much he has to say. In his use of meter, he demonstrates some awareness of the folk tradition, for he uses the heptasyllabic line most of the time. His occasional use of the octosyllabic line foreshadows the eventual popularity of this meter in treating religious subject matter. That he was aware of his limitations as a Tagalog poet is made clear by the disarming apology that introduces his book:

Sa tagalog na marunong
aco,i, nananangap sahol
cun may lico,i, maitulot
cun matouid maquisaloc.²⁷ (xii)

The third missionary poet from the seventeenth century was Pedro de Herrera, an Augustinian friar who arrived in Manila in 1610, the year San José's *Arte y reglas* came off the press. In 1645 he published a translation of a retreat manual by the Jesuit Francisco de Salazar. The translation bore the awkwardly worded title *Meditaciones, cun manġa mahal na pagninilay na sadia sa Santong Pag eexercicios* (Meditations, when one ponders holiness during Holy Retreats).²⁸ Aside from being a devotional book, *Meditaciones* contains the biggest collection of seventeenth-century poems by a single writer. The poems are grouped according to theme

²⁷ To the learned Tagalog / I admit my shortcomings, / if there are errors, overlook them, / if there are truths, share them.

²⁸ The edition used is that published in Manila, 1843.

in the 1843 edition. The first group ("*Dalit sa caloualhatian sa lanġit na cararatnan nang manġa banal*") contains 47 quatrains on the theme of heavenly reward for a holy life. The second ("*Dalit sa pagsisisi sacasalan*") is on the theme of repentance, and has 26 quatrains. The third group ("*Dalit sa camatayan*") treats the subject of death in 26 quatrains. The fourth group ("*Dalit sa paghohocom nang ating Panġinoong Jesu-Christo*") consists of 36 quatrains and one quintet, all describing the Last Judgment. The final group ("*Dalit sa ualang catapusang hirap at saquit sa infierno*") conjures the everlasting pains of hell in 40 quatrains.

The term *dalit*, together with *tanaga* and *pamatbat*, is listed in the *Vocabulario* separately from the 16 types of *avit*. This was perhaps to distinguish the form from those that were strictly musical in origin. The *Vocabulario* simply identifies it with the Spanish *copla*, a term as flexible in its application in Spanish literature as *dalit* is in Tagalog poetry. A poem appearing in Santa Ana's *Explicación* was explicitly called a *dalit*. This was Pedro Suarez Ossorio's poem in praise of Santa Ana's book. It was written in monoriming quatrains of octosyllabic lines. San Agustín, in 1703, had more to say regarding the term than the *Vocabulario*. He said that the *dalit* was "*mas grave y sentencioso, al modo que los Griegos y Latinos llamaron épico-ditirámicos*." He added that serious themes were treated in this poetic form.²⁹ It would seem then that the octosyllabic quatrains in the *Vocabulario* were in fact examples of the *dalit*.

A good many of Herrera's poems are as drably discursive and directly didactic as the stanzas of Santa Ana. The fact that he was writing in a second language often mars the versification, but it is easy to see that Herrera had a better command of Tagalog than Santa Ana and a greater understanding of the traditions of Tagalog poetry than San José. As a poet, he was guided by the Latin psalms he translated and adapted. A verse from the *Asperges me* shows him at his best. The adaptation has a startling freshness because

²⁹ San Agustín, p. 152.

the ready-made material has been given new life by imagery drawn from the native scene:

Cun tubig mo ang yhogas
caloloua cong malibag
lilinis macacatulad
pagcaputi nang busilac.³⁰ (p. 330)

The use of *libag* (a film of dirt clinging to unwashed human skin) to denote the sins that cover the sinner's soul forcefully drives home the theme of the ritual of blessing with holy water which the *Asperges me* accompanies. Herrera shows that he was in touch with the folk tradition when he makes the homely task of making cheese, a European export, serve as the central image in this *dalit*:

Cahalimbaua rin aco
gatas na guinauang queso
hinango ri,t, pinisil mo
lagay co yaon nang bago.³¹ (p. 336)

The formal correctness of Herrera's verse, all 185 quatrains, is an achievement when compared to the sloppiness of Santa Ana's poems and the alien techniques of San José's *himno* and *avit*. However, he is not far above the other two in poetic talent. The general run of his poems is uninteresting, many of them quite prosaic, unleavened by the barest touch of poetry. The following poem is typical in that the only value it has to offer is its pietistic earnestness:

O Binyagan balaquiot
lilo sa Ama mong Dios
uala camang sinta,t, logod
dili ca rin matatacot.³² (p. 341)

That venerable pioneer historian of Tagalog literature, Epifanio de los Santos, called attention to Spanish cultural heritage in the Philippines in an essay published in 1914:

³⁰ Washed with your water, / my grimy soul / will be cleansed and be like / whiteness itself in whiteness.

³¹ I am like unto / milk that has been made into cheese, / you took me out and molded me: / that was my state when I was young.

³² O faithless Christian / unfaithful to God the Father, / of loss of love and joy / aren't you afraid?

*"Como la conquista la llevaron castellanos del siglo XVI el siglo de oro de su literatura, impregnada del Renacimiento, tomo carta de naturaleza en Filipinas."*³³ The historical fact he started with is true enough, but the conclusion he derived is seen now to be totally baseless. The Spanish *conquistadores* were sons of the Golden Age, to be sure, but their coming did not automatically bless the Philippines with the riches of Spanish literature. If it did, the three hundred years of Spanish Occupation would not have been the lean literary period that it was.

The explanation behind the barren literary intercourse between Siglo do Oro Spain and seventeenth-century Tagalog poetry is a complex of political, economic and socio-cultural reasons. One must remember that the years between 1565 and 1700, when "the main outlines of the semi-Hispanized society came into focus,"³⁴ were a troublous time in the new colony. Mention has already been made of the Dutch attempts at invading the Philippines and Spanish efforts to subjugate the Muslims in the south. The war effort had an adverse effect on the Spanish policy of urbanization. The burdens of forced labor and heavy taxation made many natives flee farther into the interior country. When the Spaniards came to the Philippines, they found a particularistic society whose various pockets resisted resettlement into compact urban centers. In order to adjust to the situation, they had to be content with deploying the few people they had among so many villages. The result has been described as follows:

. . . All the major participants in the transformation of Philippine society—the Spanish magistracy, the episcopacy, the regular clergy, and the Filipinos—each one had some freedom in which to maneuver.

³³ "Nuestra literatura a través de los siglos," *Builders of a Nation*, ed M. M. Norton (Manila, 1914), p. 53. This essay contains a number of questionable assertions on Tagalog literature and Philippine history that Santos' reputation has established as truths in the works of subsequent historians. A more reliable account of Tagalog writing by the same writer is an earlier essay published by Retana as a note in his edition of Morga's *Sucesos* (pp. 456-464).

³⁴ Phelan, *Hispanization*, pp. 99-102.

The paucity of large, compact villages of the type contemplated in colonial legislation, the scarcity of Spanish colonists, the slow growth of a mestizo class, the failure of the Spanish language to spread, and the shortage of religious limited the impact of Hispanic influences on the Filipinos.³⁵

Since the Spanish language would have served as the bridge for bringing into the Philippines the cultural wealth of the Spanish Renaissance, its failure to spread among the Filipinos may be analyzed. When Morga wrote in 1609 that the missionaries had opened classes where native children were taught reading and writing in Spanish, he seemed to presage a future when a generation of Spanish-speaking Filipinos would arise. That the generation did not materialize is not surprising. To begin with, the sense of realism of Spanish missionary strategy dictated that the natives would be more effectively evangelized if the priests would preach to them in the vernacular. Aside from the pedagogical soundness of this policy, practical considerations made it sensible. There were not enough missionaries to give instruction in Spanish to all the prospective converts. Even if there were, the lessons would have taken up time that would be better spent teaching the catechumens about the Faith. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the failure to teach Spanish to the natives took on a political color, with the clergy advising against it in the interest of keeping the natives untouched by "dangerous ideas" coming in from the Mother Country and Europe at large, especially France. In this the clergy had the support of colonial administrators and royal officials who foresaw the problems of governing an "enlightened" populace.

The language barrier notwithstanding, Spanish literature affected the development of Tagalog writing. In poetry such missionary poets as San José, Santa Ana and Herrera left their imprint in spite of the mediocrity of their works. Their religious calling put them in a very influential position. They belonged to the group controlling the printing presses, so that their works were among the first written Tagalog poems during the seventeenth century. In addition, the intimate

³⁵ Phelan, *Hispanization*, p. 155.

connection between their poetry and the catechism insured their works wide dissemination. Their poems were sung or chanted by both children and adults being drilled on the rudiments of Catholic doctrine at the many church functions and even at work. The Dominican historian Juan Lopez refers to some "dirty songs" of the natives. In appraising the works of Francisco de San José, Lopez throws some light on the process by which the missionaries tried to eliminate objectionable pagan lore by creating substitute materials:

. . . Y porque solian y suelen aquellos Indios quando muchos á una hacian alguna cosa, como quando arrastrauan algún palo grande ó piedra ó remauan en sus embarcaciones, cantar canciones suzias, entoñandolas vno y prosiguiendo el canto dellos respondiendolos á cada verso, digamos, y arrimado entonces todos á vna las manos al trabajo que hazian; les compuso muchas coplas en su lengua á lo divino (para lo que tenia particular gracia) y las introdujo entre ellos para aquellas ocasiones, con que les hizo olvidar las antiguas que olian algo a su Gentilidad pasada³⁶

Their far-reaching influence was in the subject matter of poetry. The Christian themes of sin, guilt and retribution, concepts alien to pre-Hispanic religious thought, came into poetry through the catechetical lessons and the prayers contained in sundry books that followed the *Doctrina Christiana*. Among these books were San José's *Libro de las excelencias del Rosario de Nuestra Señora* (1602) and *Libro de los Sacramentos* (1603), and Herrera's *Confesionario en lengua tagala* (1636) and *Ang Pacadapat ibiguin si Jesus nang manġa Calolouang Tinobos Niya* [Jesus Should Be Loved by the Souls He Saved] (1639). Since the printed books were not meant to be distributed among the natives but to be used by the priests in teaching their respective congregations,³⁷ the poems contained in them soon became part of the oral tradition once memorized by the natives. And being the poetry endorsed by the missionaries, these poems eventually superseded traditional poems in prestige among the more devout converts. Once they had become part of the stream of traditional

³⁶ *Historia General de la Orden de Predicadores* (Valladolid, 1621), quoted by Manuel Artigas y Cuerva in *La Primera Imprenta en Filipinas* (Manila, 1910), pp. 7-8.

³⁷ Phelan, "Philippine Linguistics," 158-159.

poetry, their themes were assimilated by subsequent compositions.

The new subject matter of Tagalog poetry inevitably required a change in the technique of the folk poem. The religious poems written by missionaries were intended to instruct the natives in the Christian ways of living and believing. To be effective, the poems had to be explicit in treating a subject and also accurate. Folk poetry was highly metaphorical in structure, making it unfit for the exposition of ideas. Certainly, Tagalog poems and proverbs treated ideas. But even here the folk technique centered on the use of the *talinghaga* and therefore created ambiguities that endangered the accurate transfer of doctrinal content from the poem to the reader. The missionary poets had found examples of poetry employed in the service of religion in Spanish monastic poetry of the Middle Ages.³⁸ To put Tagalog poetry to use in the task of evangelization, the missionaries left out the *talinghaga* in many instances, preferring the clarity of prosaic language in the interest of instruction and edification. The discursive verse that resulted was to make itself felt, not only in the writings of later missionary poets and religious poets among the laity but also in the works of twentieth-century Tagalog poets.

The *Ladinos*. The term *ladino* was first used in application to a native writer in *Memorial de la vida* when San José prefaced the poem by Fernando Bagongbanta with the remark that the poet was a *ladino*, meaning that Bagongbanta could read and write in both Tagalog and Spanish. San José calls Bagongbanta's poem a *romance*, an indication that the work derives from Spanish origins, most likely San José's influence.

"*Salamat nang ualang hanga*" (Endless Thanks), as the poem has come to be known, has been called a Tagalog poem.³⁹ The statement could only be the result of a mis-

³⁸ Elias L. Rivera, "Spanish Poetry," *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger et al. (Princeton, N. J., 1965), p. 799.

³⁹ Eufronio M. Alip, *Tagalog Literature: A Historico-Critical Study* (Manila, 1930), p. 41. Alip's book was the first attempt at a survey of Tagalog literature, and as a pioneering work it is full of all kinds of errors and inaccuracies.

apprehension. Bagongbanta's poem is not Tagalog; it is Spanish, with the Tagalog lines serving as translation of the Spanish. Even the first stanza, which has always been quoted by historians of Tagalog literature as though it were a complete poem, makes this clear:

Salamat nang ualang hanga
 gracias se den sempiternas,
 sa nagpasilang ng tala
 al que hizo salir la estrella:
 macapagpanao nang dilim
 que destierre las tinieblas
 sa lahat na bayan natin
 de toda esta nuestra tierra.

Both the Tagalog and the Spanish lines follow the same octosyllabic meter, but only the latter rime correctly. *Hangá* and *talà* do not rime because of the glottal stop in the final syllable of the second word which *hangá* does not have. As one reads farther down in the poem, he is confirmed in the view that Bagongbanta was actually composing a Spanish poem. The eleventh and final stanza makes the contrast between the slapdash Tagalog lines and the ingeniously rimed Spanish too glaring to be ignored:

Aaquin aquinin cata
 tu seas mi propia hacienda
 sumaaquin aquin ca
 siempre estes junto á mi cerca
 cun acoy datnan nang lumbay
 si me llegaré tristeza
 icao ang tantong pangaling
 darne has consuelo de veras:
 at cun may pagal at hirap
 si hubiere cansancio, ó pena
 icao ang pagpapahingahan
 en ti el corazon alienta
 sasang anong paquinabang
 los provechos son sin cuenta,
 ang magmomola sa iyo
 que de ti mi alma espera
 gracia pati pa nang gloria
 la gracia, y la gloria eterna.

Bagongbanta, from the evidence given above, properly belongs to the history of Spanish literature in the Philippines. So does the other *ladino* poet, Tomas Pinpin.

A printer for the Dominican press from 1610 to 1630, Pinpin wrote a book called *Librong Pagaaralan nang mang̃a Tagalog nang Uicang Castila* (A Book in Which Tagalogs May Study the Spanish Language), published in Bataan in 1610.⁴⁰ The book consists of five chapters of lessons ranging from simple vocabulary to complete sentences, all meant to be memorized. A guide for Confession (*confesionario*) written by San José is added and so is a glossary of Tagalog root-words found in the book, together with their Spanish equivalents. The part of *Librong Pagaaralan* for which Pinpin has been linked to the history of Tagalog poetry is the six songs (*awit*) inserted at certain points in the book as exercises to be chanted by the students. Pinpin's use of the *awit* has misled commentators into taking the first song as a Tagalog poem, when actually it is a Spanish poem like Bagongbanta's. This may be observed in the passage quoted below:

Anong dico toua. Como no he de holgarme.
 Con hapot, omaga, la mañana y tarde; dili
 napahamac, que no salió en balde; itong
 gaua co, aqueste mi lance; madla ang naalaman.
 y á mil cossas saben; nitong aquing alagad,
 los mis escolares; sucat magcatoua, justo es
 alegrarse, ang mang̃a ama nila, sus padres
 y madres; at ang di camuc-ha, pues no son de otro
 taller; na di ng̃ani balio, no brutos salvages.⁴¹

Again, a comparison of the Tagalog lines with the Spanish shows that the former are really no more than translations. The Spanish lines are consistently hexasyllabic, with assonantal *a-e* rimes. The Tagalog lines do not follow a consistent meter and they do not rime. This is an anomaly when seen in the context of the folk tradition of Tagalog poetry, which certainly must have been quite prevalent this

⁴⁰ This book was reprinted by Artigas, with the original orthography preserved, in *La Primera Imprenta*, pp. 134-259.

⁴¹ Artigas, p. 148.

early in the colonial period. Thus, when Epifanio de los Santos, commenting on the "poem," claims that in it Pinpin combines lines of five, six and seven syllables, the remark must be taken as an error born of enthusiasm for "the prince of Tagalog printers."⁴² Pinpin himself refers to the songs as "songs in Spanish" (*manġa auit sa Castila*).⁴³

Although the preceding treatment of the *ladinos* has been rather deprecatory, it cannot be denied that these bilingual natives contributed a great deal to the infusion of Tagalog literature with Spanish influences. The works of Bagongbanta and Pinpin show how these influences found their way into Tagalog poetry. The alternating Tagalog and Spanish lines revealed certain metrical affinities between Tagalog and Spanish versification, so that borrowing of Spanish poetic forms and measures in later centuries was facilitated. There were other *ladinos* like Bagongbanta and Pinpin, but they did not publish any literary works. Their contribution to the development of poetry is therefore intangible though not any less real. The help they gave to the missionaries who compiled the first grammars and vocabularies could have been nothing less than considerable. Through them, contact between Spanish and Tagalog cultures took place within the native sensibility and made possible the emergence of a literature fusing the folk tradition and the influences brought by the Spaniards. Tomas Pinpin's introductory remarks in *Librong Pagaaralan* allow a glimpse of the process of change the contact had generated:

Di baquin ang ibang manġa caasalan at caanyoan nang manġa Castila ay inyong quinalologdan at guinagagad din ninyo sa pagdaramitman at sa nananadataman at paglacadman at madlaman ang nagogol ay uala rin hinahinayang cayo dapouat mamochamocha cayo sa Castila. Ay aba itopang isang asal macatotohan an sa pangongosap nang canila ding uica ang di sucat ibiguing camtan?⁴⁴

⁴² Santos, "Nuestra literatura," p. 54.

⁴³ Artigas, p. 145.

⁴⁴ No doubt you like and imitate the manners and looks of the Spaniards in matters of clothing, the bearing of arms, and of gait even, and it makes no difference if you spend a lot just so you would resem-

The Tagalog Poets. The first example of written poetry by a native Tagalog poet is "*May Bagyo Ma't May Rilim*" (Though It Is Stormy and Dark), an anonymous poem which appeared, with San José's *avit* and Bagongbanta's *romance*, in *Memorial de la vida*. San José simply identifies the poet as "*una tagala persona*," an unfortunate omission because the poem is a fine specimen of early Tagalog poetry for which the author richly deserves to be celebrated. The poem has remained buried for more than three centuries and a half since its publication, unnoticed by scholars who honored Bagongbanta with their comment. Like Bagongbanta's poem, it deals with the merits of San José's book, using imagery that seems either to have been borrowed from Bagongbanta or to have inspired that of the *ladino* poet.

"*May Bagyo*" is a carefully crafted poem that transcends its prosaic subject matter and becomes, through the use of evocative imagery, a touching affirmation of Christian heroism. The opening stanza announces the motif of struggle which will appear in the remaining four stanzas:

May bagyo ma,t, may rilim
ang ola,y, titiguisin,
a'co,y, magpipilit din:
a'qing paglalabayin
toloyin cong hanapin
Dios na ama namin.⁴⁵

It is nighttime and a storm is raging, and the speaker sees himself as a child who refuses to give himself up to wailing in spite of his fears.⁴⁶ He decides to set out in search for his father who is God. This is courage, and it will sustain the speaker in the struggle described in the succeeding stanzas.

ble the Spaniards. Therefore, is there not every reason to want to acquire this other trait, that of being able to speak their language?

⁴⁵ Though it is stormy and dark, / I'll strain my tearful complaints / and struggle on— / I'll set out on a voyage / and persist in my search / for God our Father.

⁴⁶ An ambiguity is created in the second line by the phrase *ola,y*, which may be either *olan ay* (rain + linking particle) or *ola ay* (bawling of a child + linking particle.)

Temptation appears as an insidious force in the next stanza. Its action is ambiguously expressed in the word *mabaomabaoín*, which may either mean that temptation is a weight that bears down on its victim (in later religious poetry, the word is used when Christ takes up His cross), or that it is a lover-seducer mounting his victim for the love act.⁴⁷

Cun di man magupiling
tocsong mabaomabaoín,
aco,y, mangangahas din:
itong libro,y, basahin,
at dito co hahangoin
aquing sasandatahin.⁴⁸

But the speaker is confident, and he reveals the reason behind his courage: the book (*Memorial de la vida*) gives power with which to overcome temptation.

That power consists in the light of God which the author has allowed to shine through. That light has given back sight to the speaker. The third stanza is thus the pivotal section where the child in the first stanza encounters the father he has set out to find:

Cun dati mang nabulag
aco,y, pasasalamat,
na ito ang liuanag
Dios ang nagpahayag
sa Padreng nagsiualat
nitong mabuting sulat.⁴⁹

The speaker is reunited with his father, God, and so has emerged from the storm and darkness. In the stanza below, he speaks of a tempest at sea which capsizes his boat. But he does not despair:

⁴⁷ *Babao*, the root-word in *mabaomabaoín*, is used with sexual connotations in the *confesionario* of San José which is in Pinpin's *Librong Pagaaralan*. See Artigas, p. 219.

⁴⁸ Though it doesn't sleep a wink, / this temptation that bears down on me, / still will I dare / to read this book, / and from it, draw / the weapon I'll wield.

⁴⁹ Though blinded in the past, / I'll give thanks / for this light / which God let shine / upon the priest who has made known / this noble book.

Nagiua ma,t, nabagbag
 daloyong matataas,
 acoy magsusumicad
 babagohin ang lacas:
 dito rin hahaguilap
 timbulang icaliligtas.⁵⁰

And defeated as he might be by the misfortunes that come upon him, he cannot be completely helpless. The final stanza affirms the strength that God's light gives:

Cun lombo ma,t, cun pilay
 anong di icahacbang
 naito ang aacay
 magtuturo nang daan:
 toncod ay inilaan
 sucat pagcatibayan.⁵¹

The poem has very definite affinities with folk poetry. The meter is heptasyllabic and each stanza is self-contained. But what makes it readily identifiable as a poem created in the tradition of folk poetry is its use of the *talinghaga*. This sets it apart from the verses of the missionary poets who were wary of metaphors. It is also the reason for the richness of meaning which makes the five-stanza poem infinitely more complex than all the poems of the missionary poets put together.

On the other hand, "*May Bagyo*" is quite unlike folk poetry. Its stanza form is something that was never to be repeated in any of the poems of the entire period of the Spanish Occupation. This might be taken as an indication that the poem was written, not composed orally. Only one putting lines together for purposes of publication would find any reason for breaking away from the conventional forms of the oral tradition. Another indication that "*May Bagyo*" is written poetry is its use of language. The ambiguities of the language may be due to the distance between

⁵⁰ Though tossed and dashed / by huge waves, / I'll thrash my legs / and renew my strength— / in this [book] will I grasp / for the buoy that saves.

⁵¹ Though disabled and limping, / nothing can hold back my steps, / for this [book] will take me by the hand / and show me the way— / the staff has been prepared / to give me strength.

what Tagalog was in the seventeenth century and what it is now. Nevertheless, one notes a penchant for subtleties in the poet's choice of words, which prefers the double-edged word consistently. For instance, the use of *nagsiualat* takes advantage of the double meaning arising from the existence of two roots to which the verb may be related: *siualat*, meaning "reveal," and *ualat*, meaning "scatter." The literal sense of

sa Padreng nagsiualat
nitong mabuting sulat,

is that the priest published the book. *Nagsiualat* implies more than its literal sense—it makes of the content of the book something arcane and exclusive but finally made available to the general public. Finally, the unifying of five self-contained stanzas through the use of a central motif is a step in the direction of organic unity in poetry. This marks the beginning of a break from the improvisational freeness of oral poetry toward the tightness of written poetry.

The first Tagalog poet whose name has come down to us is Pedro Suarez Ossorio, a native of Ermita, whose one poem appears in the *Explicación* by Santa Ana. Like "*May Bagyo*," Ossorio's "*Salamat nang Ualang Hoyang*" (Unending Thanks) praises the book in which it appears. The folk heritage is obvious in its use of the *dalit* stanza, four monoriming octosyllabic lines. Of far greater importance, however, is the interdependence of the eleven stanzas of the poem. This is the result of the syntactical relationship of one stanza with another, as seen in the second and third stanzas:

Ang ito n̄gang librong mahal
Na ang lama,i, iyong aral
Iyong tambing tinulutan
Ilimbag at nang maraṅgal.

Nang coming manṅa binyagan
May basahin gabi,t, arao
Na aming pag aaliuan
Dito sa bayan nang lumbay.⁵²

⁵² This fine book / which contains your message, / You have speedily allowed. / To be published and honored. / So that we Christians / Might have something to read night and day, / Something to console us / In this valley of tears.

In spite of the period after the second stanza, most likely a typographical error, the two stanzas make one complex sentence. This is a departure from the folk tradition whose quatrains, as noted earlier, tend to be independent units. Ossorio must have perceived that a series of stanzas on the printed page make it necessary for the poet to link the stanzas together. Where the poet of "*May Bagyo*" employed a central motif to hold the stanzas together, Ossorio resorted to a mechanical device, which may not be as artistic but nevertheless valid.

"*Salamat Nang Ualang Hoyang*" and "*May Bagyo*" are separated by 22 years. The distance in time between the two poems shows. A close reading of Ossorio's poem reveals, the folk influence in the stanza form notwithstanding, its indebtedness to a new tradition--the tradition of written poetry as created by the works of the missionary poets and the *ladinos*.

The first line of the poem echoes Bagongbanta's "*Salamat nang ualang hanga*." The tone, however, is quite clearly that of missionary poetry. It drops the personal tone of "*May Bagyo*" and assumes the generalized "we" of Catholic prayers in the first seven stanzas. The last line of the third is, as a matter of fact, taken from the *Salve Regina*. Where the *Doctrina Christiana* says "*baian cahapishapis*" (grief-giving land), Ossorio says "*bayang nang lumbay*" (the land of sadness). The remaining four stanzas are invocations to Santa Ana's "book both fine and noble" (*librong mabuti't mahal*) in the manner of the Litany.

The first seven stanzas are in the class of the poem of San José, Santa Ana and Herrera: overtly moralistic, prosaic dribble. Take the sixth stanza, for example:

Cun atin nğang pagtamanan
Sundi,t, camtan itong aral
Madlang lubhang paquinabang
Ang caloloua,t, catauan.⁵³

⁵³ If we'd only apply ourselves / and take these lessons to heart, / all manner of profit / will accrue to our body and soul.

Only in the last three stanzas does Ossorio look back to the folk tradition. In imitating the Litany, he makes use of metaphors and thus falls back on the *talinghaga* of folk poetry. Santa Ana's *Explicación* is invoked, first, as "boat exceedingly strong" (*daong na lubhang matibay*), then as "our lodestar" (*paraluman namin*), and finally as "great mine" (*dulangang mahal*):

O sulat na calulugdan
Daong na lubhang matibay
Na sucat sacyang ouian
sa bayang caguinhauahan.

Icao paraluman namin
Ang sucat nga naming sundin
Hangang di cami macarating
Sa lalauigang mahimbing.

Icao ang dulangang mahal
Na aming pag hahanapan
Nang totoong cayamanan,
At nang buhay na ualang hangan.⁵⁴

"*May Bagyo*" and "*Salamat nang ualang hoyang*" are poems that could not have come to be in Tagalog literature without the influence of Spain. Indeed, if seventeenth-century Tagalog poetry might be said to have profited by its contact with the poetry of the Spanish Golden Age, one could cite these pieces as a re-creation in Tagalog of what, for want of a better term, might be called complimentary verse. This was occasional verse written in praise of a book, some poems appearing in the prefatory pages, others in the last pages of the volume. Complimentary verse was almost an indispensable part of any book published during the sixteenth century, with Lope de Vega and Miguel de Cervantes among the famous names who turned out sonnets endorsing the works of their friends. So fashionable was the practice and ridiculous the extent to which it was carried, that Cer-

⁵⁴ O document that fills one with pleasure, / Boat exceedingly strong / That we should take when we go home / to the land of bliss. / You, our lodestar, / Should be our guide / Until we find ourselves / In the harbor of rest. / You are the great mine / Where we can dig / For the true wealth / And life everlasting.

vantes poked vicious fun at it in *Don Quixote*—he prefaced Part One with parodies of complimentary poems, among which was a sonnet allegedly written by Rocinante. It is a sobering fact of Spanish-Philippine literary relations during the colonial period that two of the Spanish contributions to Tagalog poetry were genres that Cervantes attacked in his novel: the complimentary poem and the metrical romance.

In 1703 San Agustín's *Compendio de la lengua tagala* appeared, and it may now be studied as a reflection of the state of Tagalog poetry in the seventeenth century. The slim volume is actually a grammar book in the manner of San José's *Arte y reglas*. What makes it significant in the history of Tagalog poetry is the final chapter which San Agustín devotes to a discussion and illustration of Tagalog versification. The illustrations, drawn mostly from missionary poetry, makes the *Compendio* the first anthology of Tagalog verse.

San Agustín's discussion covers three aspects of Tagalog versification: rime, meter and genre. He notes erroneously that the sole requirement for riming in Tagalog is that the final vowel or consonant sounds be the same. He then proceeds to classify rimes into *mariin* ("stressed") and *mababao* ("light") as a guide perhaps to future versifiers. *Mariin* rimes are those whose root words have no glottal stop when the last syllable ends with a vowel. *Mababao* rimes are the opposite; the final vowel of the root-word is apocopated when it takes on a suffix. Root-words with diphthongal endings, such as *ay*, *ao*, *iw*, etc., are also *mababao*. It is doubtful that San Agustín's classification was traditional: it is superfluous to the practice of native poets, who would know when the final vowel called for a glottal stop and would therefore have no need for San Agustín's guide.

The information that San Agustín gives regarding Tagalog metrics is scanty. He notes that the measures are more "lyrical than heroic." The number of syllables per line may be 7, 8, 12 or 14. Heptasyllabic lines may form strophes of three or four lines. The most common combination of octosyllabic lines is the quatrain, but six-line stanzas are also

found. The octosyllabic meter, it is implied, is of Spanish derivation. Lines consisting of 12 or 14 syllables are employed in native drama "in imitation of the Latin comic poets." Here again, one wonders how reliable San Agustín's description is. His description may be checked against the examples that he offers. There are 14 pieces, four of them by Pedro de Herrera, two by Antonio de San Gregorio, one by Santa Ana, and one by Pablo Clain.⁵⁵ The remaining six are anonymous, although we know one of them to be another piece of missionary poetry, being a quotation from "*una comedia antigua de San Dionisio de Areopagítica*." The rest are presumably folk poetry. The distribution is illuminating. It suggests that San Agustín's description was based mostly on missionary poetry, a narrow area of Tagalog poetry as remarked earlier.

There used to be two types of Tagalog poetry, according to San Agustín. The first kind was dramatic, like the *solirarin*, which was sung by two people, one giving a strophe to which the other responded with a refrain. The other was the *dalit* which was reserved for serious themes. Since he had divided Tagalog poetry into two kinds, one would expect that San Agustín would fit the poems he knew or had heard under either of the categories. Instead he enumerates other types: *diona*, *oyayi* and *ait*. Without giving its native name, he refers to "*epigramas donde en una estrofa solo dicen sentencias muy buenas, pero siempre con metáforas*," a description pointing to the *tanaga* which the *Vocabulario* was to define fifty years later. The example given, however, is a three-line stanza of heptasyllabic lines. San Agustín concludes by remarking that the natives had been shown various poems written according to the rules of Spanish riming by Francisco de San José, but the pieces failed to please the natives who said that they were not poems. This section of the chapter is as confusing as the sections on rime and metrics, so that one

⁵⁵ Of the poets named, Herrera and Santa Ana have been mentioned and discussed. San Gregorio was a Franciscan friar, author of a book on the mysteries of the Faith which came out in 1648. Clain is the Hispanicized name of Paul Klein, a Jesuit who helped compile the *Vocabulario*.

comes away from the discussion tantalized by scraps of information that seemed to have been but imperfectly understood by San Agustín.

The chief value of the *Compendio* lies in its presentation of various examples of Tagalog poetry as it was being written towards the close of the seventeenth century. In it the juxtaposition of folk poetry with missionary poetry helps one understand what happened to Tagalog poetry during its transition from a purely verbal art to written literature. There was oral poetry—brief, gnomic, lyrical and metaphorical:

Galing nang may sinicuan,
nang may labilabihan
cun maghabi nang birang
tambing marorolohan.⁵⁶ (pp. 148-149)

Then there was missionary poetry—written poetry inspired by the desire to win the natives over to a system of beliefs brought over from Europe by men burning with medieval zeal for the propagation of Catholicism. The new function assigned to Tagalog poetry by the missionary poets requires that the verse have the same literalness as prose so that doctrinal matter may be communicated without danger of being misinterpreted. Alonso de Santa Ana's poem is representative:

Ang mang'a cristianong banal,
paua ring maquiquinabang,
niyong dilang calangitan,
ni Jesucristong ma alam,
at silang lahat pa naman,
ay nag papaquinabang'an,
nang caniyang cabanalan.⁵⁷ (pp. 150-151)

From the evidence of the *Compendio*, it is clear that the quality of written verse during the seventeenth century was inferior to that of oral poetry. Nevertheless the impact of written poetry on subsequent writing was to prove salubrious

⁵⁶ The good thing about having thread in a spool, / about having an excess of it— / in weaving a scarf, / you finish the work fast.

⁵⁷ All holy Christians / will be benefited / by all the sufferings / of Jesus Christ the wise, / and all of them / are benefiting / from His holiness.

in spite of the initial impression that it was emasculating. This was to be demonstrated in the eighteenth century when the synthesis of the folk tradition and Spanish influences produced the first major poets of Tagalog literature.