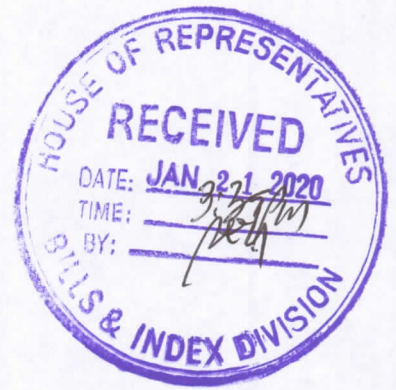


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5984



Introduced by Hon. John Marvin "Yul Servo" C. Nieto

EXPLANATORY NOTE

"While a people preserve its language, it preserves the mark of liberty."
- EL FILIBUSTERISMO, 1887

Baybayin is the ancient syllabary script of the early Filipinos, which means "to spell." Spanish priest Pedro Chirino in 1604 and Antonio De Morga in 1609 wrote about Baybayin as being widely known by the country's population. This supports the claim of Prof. F. Landa Jocano that Filipino ancestors have already established life ways prior to the coming of Western colonization.

In "Relacion de las islas Filipinas" by Pedro Chirino, which was originally published in Rome in 1604 and made more accessible in a bilingual edition of 1969 with a translation from the original Spanish by Ramon Echevarria. Here Chirino stated that: "So accustomed are all these islanders to writing and reading that there is scarcely a man, and much less a woman, who cannot read and write in letters proper to the island of Manila, very different from those of China, Japan, or India." He even drew the various letters of the baybayin, explaining how this was written and read.

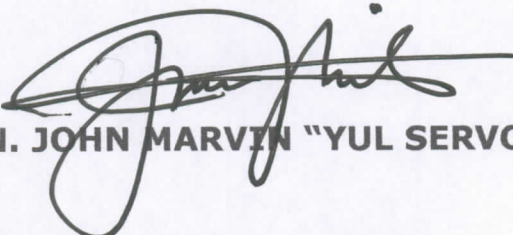
Pedro Chirino (1557-1635) served in the Philippines for 12 years. He arrived in May 1590 and left in July 1602, and thus saw and described the Philippines and the Filipinos during the early years of the Spanish conquest. Perhaps the most cited chapter in his work concerns the pre-Spanish writing or Baybayin. He proudly declared in "Sucesos de Las Islas Filipinas" circa 1609 that the "Philippines had an established barangay government system, a flourishing interisland and regional barter trade and a writing system well known and practiced in the land, contrary to the vulgar name 'Indios' that the Spanish friars and conquistadors had called our people then". Before the Spanish conquest, the Filipino men and women were known for their advanced knowledge and skill in our indigenous written language, the "BAYBAYIN". It was a sophisticated written language that was used to conduct commerce and trade with Malaysia, Indonesia, and even in the Middle Eastern countries. Our ancestors were proud of their race, have a cultural and national identity that were at par with other advanced countries.

The "Baybayin" is an ancient Philippine system of writing composed of a set of 17 cursive characters or letters which represents either a single consonant or vowel or a complete syllable. To recognize our traditional writing systems which are objects of national importance and considered as a National Cultural Treasure, the "Baybayin", an indigenous national writing script which will be Baibayin in Tagalog (Doctrina, 1593 & San Buenaventura, 1613) Pintados in Panay/Negros (1572), Sambal in Zambales (1601), Kumintang in Batangas (1843), Guhit in Bicol (1835), Surat Binisaya (1637), Kulitan Sulat Kapampangan (1699), Kurditan in Ilocano (1620), Surat Mangyan Buhid and Surat Mangyan Hanunuoo in Mindoro (1792), Surat or Suyat Palawan and Tagbanua in Palawan, Jawi Maguindanao and Jawi Tausug (The Surigao Declaration, 2018). Baybayin is the "collective and popular" term for "ancient and traditional scripts in the Philippines," [Angel P. Bautista, et al., *Baybayin , Mga Sinauna at Tradisyunal na Panulat sa Pilipinas (Ancient and Traditional Scripts in the Philippines)*, 2014]. Antoon Postma once described it as "the so-called Baybayin Script," referring to it also with the more inclusive or generic terms "Philippine syllabic script" and the "syllabic writing mode." [KASAYSAYAN, *The Story of the Filipino People*, vol. 2, 1991]. Baybayin is hereby declared collectively as the "Baybayin" National Writing Script of the country. Hence, it should be promoted, protected, preserved and conserved for posterity for the next generation.

The importance of writing in general and of the alphabet in particular for the preservation and progress of civilization is incalculable. As University of Chicago scholar I. J. GELB has declared:

"Writing is so important in our daily life that i should be willing to say that our civilization could exist more easily without money, metals, radios, steam engines, or electricity than without writing."

BAYANI MENDOZA DE LEON, the author of *"Baybayin, the ancient script of the Philippines: A concise manual."* The Baybayin Bill is really important step towards instilling the Baybayin script into the consciousness of the Filipinos, especially the youth. In the foreword of my Baybayin manual, I made this statement: "There was nothing in the national condition to support the script's continued existence. The people had for so long lived on borrowed identities—borrowed thoughts, values, sentiments, and aspirations—that being their authentic selves, like practicing a native system of writing, had lost its relevance."



HON. JOHN MARVIN "YUL SERVO" C. NIETO

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5984

Introduced by Hon. John Marvin "Yul Servo" C. Nieto

AN ACT
PROMOTING THE PHILIPPINE INDIGENOUS / TRADITIONAL
WRITING SYSTEMS, THE USE OF BAYBAYIN AS A TOOL FOR
CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES, PROVIDING FOR
ITS PROTECTION, PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the State and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

Section 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the "Philippine Indigenous / Traditional Writing Systems Act 2019."

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to inculcate, propagate and preserve the cultural heritage and treasures of the Philippines for the evolution and development of patriotism among the citizenry by giving utmost priority to the conservation and promotion of arts, letters and culture. Towards this end, there is a need to promote, protect, preserve and conserve "Baybayin, and the other Philippine Indigenous / Traditional Writing Systems (Writing Systems)," using it as a tool for cultural and economic development to create a consciousness, respect and pride for the legacies of Filipino cultural history, heritage and our authentic identity.

Section 3. Declaration of "Baybayin" as Philippine Indigenous / Traditional Writing Systems (National Writing Script). – To generate greater awareness on the plight of "Baybayin" and foster wider appreciation on its importance and beauty, "Baybayin" is hereby declared the National Writing System of the Philippines. As used in this Act, "Baybayin" shall refer to all existing and discovered ancient and traditional scripts of the Philippine indigenous peoples such as Baibayin in Tagalog (Doctrina, 1593 & San Buenaventure, 1613) Pintados in Panay/Negros (1572), Sambal in Zambales (1601), Kumintang in Batangas (1843), Guhit in Bicol (1835), Surat Binisaya (1637), Kulitan Sulat Kapampangan (1699), Kurditan in Ilocano (1620), Surat Mangyan Buhid and Surat Mangyan Hanunuoo in Mindoro (1792), Surat or Suyat Palawan and Tagbanua in Palawan, Jawi Maguindanao and Jawi Tausug (The Surigao Declaration, 2018).

Section 4. Funding. – An initial budget of One Hundred Twenty Million Pesos (P120.000.000.00) is hereby allocated for this Act. The funds necessary to carry out the provision of this Act shall be included in the General Appropriation Act of the year following its enactment into law and thereafter.

Section 5. Promotion of Philippine Indigenous / Traditional and “Baybayin” as the National Writing System of the Philippines. – “Baybayin” as the National writing system representing Philippine traditions and national identity shall be promoted. Philippine Indigenous / Traditional and “Baybayin” as a representation of Philippine traditions and national identity shall be promoted through the following:

- a. By mandating the Department of Education (DepEd), and Commission on Higher Education (CHED), to include the Writing Systems in relevant subjects of the basic education curriculum and to create an elective or specialized course in higher education and technical vocational programs for the same;
- b. By creating and supporting activities that promote the awareness of the Writing Systems during Buwan ng Wika and other similar occasions and events;
- c. By conducting seminars, conferences, conventions, symposia, and other relevant activities on the study of the Writing Systems, taking consideration of the writing system that is indigenous to a particular region; and
- d. By ensuring the proper record-keeping of relevant documents and preservation of oral evidence on the Writing Systems.
- e. By mandating the local government units LGUs to include the appropriate “Baybayin” script in their signage for street names, public facilities, public buildings, and other necessary signage for other public service establishments such as hospitals, fire and police stations, community centers and government halls;
- f. By directing the appropriate government agency to disseminate knowledge and information about “Baybayin” script by distributing reading materials in all levels of public and private educational institutions and government and private agencies and offices to instil awareness of the declaration of “Baybayin” as the national writing system and to conduct staff trainings for the proper handling of these important documents.

Section 6. Protection, Preservation and Conservation of Indigenous / Traditional Scripts of the Philippines. – The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCAA) shall be the lead agency in

promulgating policy guidelines in the promotion of the Writing Systems. The NCAA is hereby mandated to protect, preserve, and conserve the Writing Systems as a National Cultural Treasure. NCAA shall coordinate with DepEd, and CHED, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and other relevant agencies for the proper implementation of the same.

Section 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within sixty (60) days after the approval of this Act, the NCAA, in coordination with DILG, DepEd, CHED, and TESDA, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this Act.

Section 8. Separability Clause. – If any part, section or provision of this Act shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other part, section and provision not otherwise affected shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 9. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations and other issuances or parts thereof that are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

Section 10. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.