

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 490



INTRODUCED BY HONORABLE CHERYL P. DELOSO-MONTALLA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Once there was Baybayin, the Philippine's pre-colonial syllabary - a set of written symbols that represent syllables which make up words. It thrived not just among the affluent but in all levels of society. Characterized by its wave-like script, Baybayin surprised curious Spaniards in its wide use as the prevalent reading and writing communication mode at that time.¹

Fast-forward to today, Baybayin remains a functionally dead script, unused in any of the country's dialects. In recent times however, its revitalization has been recognized by some Filipinos within and outside the country who are passionate about its significance as a window to Philippine heritage.² Despite Baybayin's significance, it is only taught in passing in elementary schools in the Philippines today, much like a museum artifact, or as a "for your information (FYI)".³

The script continues to face a battle against extinction. Only a few people in each community still know the letters and even fewer in tribal communities located closer to towns. In schools, the younger members are taught the Philippines' main language, Filipino, which they use to communicate with the city dwellers when trading. The Baybayin script is now confined to writing poetry and love letters on pieces of bamboo or trees.⁴

Ironically, one can sometimes find a greater passion about one's heritage and a yearning for what is back home when distant from the motherland. Distance makes the heart grow fonder, not necessarily in the romantic sense, but in a truly nationalistic one. Even Dr. Jose Rizal, the country's national hero, learned Baybayin while in Europe.⁵

Nation-building is not only confined to the acquisition or production of material things. Equally important in the overall objective of society is the promotion of desirable cultural values, the inculcation among the citizens of an appreciation for the finer things in life, such as music, literature and the arts.⁶ Development in all aspects – political, economic, social, educational and cultural – must be the goal of the nation.

The Constitution sees the need for preserving and developing a more conscious national identity through knowledge and appreciation of our native culture including our native scripts.

¹ <https://www.canadianfilipino.net/sections/culture/baybayin-does-this-ancient-filipino-script-have-a-future>

² Ibid.


³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.thenational.ae/world/asia/fighting-to-keep-alive-the-philippines-ancient-script-1.465473>

⁵ <https://www.canadianfilipino.net/sections/culture/baybayin-does-this-ancient-filipino-script-have-a-future>

⁶ Proclamation No. 1148.

It is in this light that this bill is being filed and immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



CHERYL P. DELOSO-MONTALLA
Representative
2nd District, Zambales

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HOUSE BILL NO. _____

INTRODUCED BY HONORABLE CHERYL DELOSO-MONTALLA

AN ACT
DECLARING “BAYBAYIN” AS THE NATIONAL WRITING SYSTEM OF THE
PHILIPPINES, PROVIDING FOR ITS PROMOTION, PROTECTION,
PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “National Writing System Act of 2019.”

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to inculcate, promote, propagate, conserve and preserve the cultural heritage and treasures of the Philippines for the evolution and development of patriotism among its citizenry by giving utmost priority to the promotion, conservation and preservation of arts, letters and culture. Towards this end, there is a need to promote, protect, conserve and preserve “baybayin” as the National Writing System of the Philippines, using it as a tool for cultural and economic development to create consciousness, respect and pride for the legacies of Filipino cultural history, heritage and authentic identity.

SECTION 3. *“Baybayin” as the National Writing System of the Philippines.* – Baybayin is hereby declared as 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.

SECTION 4. *Promotion of “Baybayin” as the National Writing System of the Philippines.* – “Baybayin” as the national writing system representing Philippine traditions and national identity shall be promoted through the following:

- (a) Requiring all manufacturers of locally-produced processed products to inscribe “baybayin” scripts and their translation on the containers or labels;
- (b) Mandating all national government agencies and 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 other government-owned properties;
- (c) Requiring newspaper and magazine publishers to include a “baybayin” translation of their official name; and

- (d) Directing the appropriate government agency to disseminate knowledge and information about “baybayin” script by including its teaching in basic education curriculum of both public and private schools.

SECTION 5. *Protection, Preservation and Conservation of “Baybayin” Script.* – The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and the Komisyon ang Wikang Filipino (KWF) are jointly mandated to protect, preserve and conserve “baybayin” as a National Cultural Treasure.

SECTION 6. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days after the approval of this Act, the NCCA and KWF, in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of Education (DepEd), shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulation to effectively and efficiently carry out the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 7. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, Executive Orders, rules and regulation and other issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* – If any part, section or provision of this Act shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining parts, sections or provisions not otherwise affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 9. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,