

THE 'MUTYA' FIGURE IN THE KUNDIMAN

Grace Odal-Devora, Ph.D.

College of Arts and Sciences, UP MANILA

Abstract

This paper presents the word and image of "mutya" in Tagalog arts and culture, particularly, in the kundiman, depicting it as a "diwa", a core concept and a cultural metaphor.

From its earliest historical reference, through its uses in Spanish times, and as central image in kundimans and songs, the paper traces the various meanings and significance of "mutya." It ends with the view that "mutya" may be a potential of the spark of divinity within us, waiting to be awakened.

Introduction

Literally, the word "mutya" signifies a "pearl" or a "magical stone." Its earliest historical reference can be found in Pigafetta's account in 1521, referring to his compilation of Bisayan words gathered during his stay in Cebu with Ferdinand Magellan and his crew.¹⁵ In this account, the word "mutia" comes in its long version term as "mutiara," which he classifies as Old Cebuano, referring to "pearl".

However, the term also appears in Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Malaysia, Javanese, and Sundanese with the same reference to "pearl." Its short term "mutia" was included as an entry in Padre Pedro San Buenaventura's *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala* published in Pila, Laguna in 1606 and 1613. In this entry the word "mutia" signifies "piedra preciosa" or "precious stone."

In the 1624 *Vocabulario Tagalo* of Padre Francisco de San Antonio, and in the next dictionary, the *Vocabulario de la Lengua Bikol* by Padre Marcos de Lisboa, which was re-published in 1865, "mutia" also signifies "piedra preciosa." In 1668, however, Padre Ignacio Alcina, SJ, writes that it is a "piedra preciosa...atribuyen a esta piedra varias virtudes..."

¹⁵ Rodrigue Levesque, translator, (1980). *The Philippines : Pigafetta's Story of their Discovery by Magellan* (Quebec, Canada : Les Editions Levesque Publications, 1980), 124.

Its identification with various virtues, specific to the unique nature of the stones and their noted qualities became the foundation of the metaphoric references to the "mutya."

The word "mutya" came to mean, "anting-anting" or "talisman" / "amulet". It also signifies a beautiful woman, a one-and-only child, as well as a unique, special, extraordinary, rare person, thing, place or event. This idea is found in 34 ethno-linguistic languages in the Philippines, as revealed by an examination of various vocabularies and dictionaries available in the Philippines.

The word, "mutya" can be explained as a polysemic term whose meanings expanded through metaphorical and symbolic extensions. As a generic term, the word refers to anything that is considered "precious" by any person or group. As something precious, it further connoted something or someone treasured, loved with the highest devotion, and treated with great care and attention. Hence, the "mutya" stands for the highest ideals and aspirations, as well as the greatest expressions of excellence, love and devotion.

Through the practice of "pagbabansag" and "pagtuturing," the word "mutya" was used to refer to any person, object, place, or event considered to be the highest in value, virtue, beauty, goodness, or the most beloved of all -- as viewed by a person or a group.

A study of the term "mutya" or "mutia" as used in narratives yielded stories with references to magical stones, beautiful women, scenic places, lost kingdoms, and goddesses. However, the most prominent, popular and numerous of these "mutya" figures pointed to the "mutya" in the image of a beautiful woman or a beautiful goddess. In this sense, the generic concept of the word "mutya" to refer to anything "most precious", "most beloved" and "of greatest excellence", was embodied in the image of a woman -- either as a beautiful human being or a beautiful goddess. Hence, in narratives of myths and legends, the mutya was depicted in the form of a beautiful woman or goddess to represent the highest values, ideals, excellence, and love.

The "mutya" word as used in history can be seen in the works of Jose Rizal, Andres Bonifacio, and the Katipunan as a social movement. They were the ones who began to shape the image of the mutya as usually found in myths and legends as a beautiful woman or goddess who represents anything of the highest values, ideals, virtues, aspirations, dreams, shaping her into the image of the Inang Bayan.

However, prior to Jose Rizal, there were also instances when the image of the highest, purest, most loveable, came in the form of the Virgin Mary or the Blessed Mother. For instance, Padre Alonso Mentrída in his work *Arte de la lengua Bisaya-Hiligayna de la isla de Panay* (1628), collected an *ambahan form* that uses the word "mutia" to refer to the Nuestra Señora de Gracia. Hence, as early as 1628, the Spaniards were already incorporating the pre-Hispanic word mutya as a reference to the Virgin Mary. In 1712, the word "mut-ya" appeared in one *dalit* by Felipe de Jesus; it referred to the mut-ya" as Our Lady of Grace, to indicate her excellence, highest virtue, and greatness, referring to

mut-ya" as Our Lady of Grace, to indicate her excellence, highest virtue, and greatness, referring to her as a pearl with the radiance like the sun, that cannot be stained by sin or evil.¹⁶

It was also the metaphor for the teachings of Saints Barlaan and Josaphat.¹⁷ Their teachings were considered to be of great wealth and value, like gems and decorations to the mind and lives of peoples –profitable to be made their "paraluman" or guiding spirit in the sea of life - as the word "paraloman" used to refer to "marine compass."

Another reference to the Virgin Mary as "mutya" was made by Padre Francisco Bencuchillo, OSA sometime between 1740 to 1750 in his "Epitome de la Historia de la Aparicion de Nuestra de Caysasay."¹⁸ He calls the Nuestra Señora de Caysasay" as a "mut-ya", with her image just appearing from nowhere, "Uala ngang macapanghula, nang cunsaan dacong lupa nag buhat ang gayong mut-ya sa Caysasay napadagsa."

Jose Rizal was the only one among the propagandists to use the word "mutya." He used the word in connection with Mariang Makiling. In the original Spanish publication of "The Legend of Mariang Makiling" in the first issue of *La Solidaridad* (1890), Rizal narrated that Mariang Makiling mysteriously appeared in the mountains, with people not knowing where she came from, "No se supo jamas que Mariang Makiling tuviera padres, hermanos o parentes: semjantes personajes brotan en la naturaleza como las piedras que los tagalos llaman *mutya*."¹⁹ This usage of the word "mutya" is similar to the usage of the word by Fr. Francisco Bencuchillo, OSA, in his reference to the Our Lady of Caysasay as just simply appearing in the place of Caysasay, with no one knowing where she really came from.

Aside from using the first reference of the "mutya" as a magical stone, Rizal also used the second meaning of the word "mutya" as a "pearl". He was the first one to call the whole Philippines as "Perla del Oriente" or "Perla del Mar de Oriente." This epithet appears to have been given to Manila, first, by the Spaniards after conquering Manila, for its central and illustrious role as trade emporium through the Galleon Trade. According to Sonia Zaide, it was the historian Fr. Juan J. Delgado, SJ, who called Manila "Perla del Oriente" in 1751 as a result of its central position in the Galleon Trade, bringing further wealth, honor, fame and prestige to the old pre-Hispanic Manila.

According to the report of Sonia Zaide, Rizal first used the term on September 24, 1892, in an article written by him for *The Hongkong Telegraph*, in which he called the Philippines "Perla del Oriente."²⁰ Then he used it again in his "Mi Ultimo Adios" or "My Last Farewell" (1896). Thus, when Jose Rizal first

¹⁶ Padre Alonso de Mentrída (1628). *Arte de la Lengua Bisaya – Hiligayna de la Isla de Panay* (1628), 245.

¹⁷ "Dalit:Purihin ang Sangsinucob," from Dr. Bienvenido Lumbea (1986). *Tagalog Poetry 1570 – 1898: Tradition and Influences in its Development* (Q.C. : Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1986), 169.

¹⁸ Padre Policarpio F. Hernandez, OSA, *The Augustinians in the Philippines* (Makati: Colegio San Agustin, 1998), 150.

¹⁹ Laong Laan (Jose Rizal), "Mariang Makiling," *La Solidaridad* (1890), edited by Guadalupe Fores-Ganzon, (1996) VI, II (Pasig City : Fundacion Santiago, Philippine Stock Exchange Centre), 612-619.

²⁰ Sonia M. Zaide(1994). *The Philippines : A Unique Nation* (Quezon City : All-Nations Publishing Co., Inc., 1994), 5.

called the whole Philippines "Perla del Oriente", he had expanded the coverage of the term from Manila to the whole archipelago.

The copy of his "My Last Farewell" was given to Andres Bonifacio, who translated it into Tagalog, before his own death in 1897. His translation was an indigenized version of Rizal's poem.²¹ Bonifacio was the first one to use the indigenous word "mutya" to refer to the "pearl," instead of using the borrowed word "perlas" in his lines "**mutyang** mahalaga sa dagat Silangan." Even Emilio Jacinto, in his "Pag-ibig", which is part of his *Liwanag at Dilim*, used the word "mutya" in his statement, "ang pag-ibig ay siya ngang susi at **mutya** ng kapayapaan at ligaya..."²²

From thereon, the Katipunero writers, followed suit with the use of "mutya" and deliberately called the Philippines "Mutya ng Silangan." Others, who were nationalistic, too, but not Katipuneros, usually used the phrase "Perlas ng Silangan" or "Perlas ng Dagat Silangan." The branching out into two streams of the nationalist movement was evident in songs, in poetry, and in the Tagalog translations of the "Huling Paalam." Katipuneros like F. Roke, Aurelio Tolentino, Iñigo Ed Regalado, Patricio Mariano used the word "mutya" in their writings. Jose Corazon de Jesus, who was sympathetic to the cause of the Katipunan also used the word "mutya" in many of his writings. It was only in 1963, with the declaration of "Lupang Hinirang" as the official National Anthem, that "Mutya ng Silangan" was deleted from popular usage. The name went underground, and hid in the shadows.

The "MUTYA" IN PRE-HISPANIC SONGS AND IN FOLK SONGS

How was the "mutya" depicted in the *kundiman* song, both in the traditional form and in the art song? The *kundiman* as folk song was already identified to be a "love song."²³ It is related to the "kumintang," the war song, but also identified as a love song.²⁴ Professor Felipe de Leon Jr., states that the *kundiman* appears to have sprung from a water-based tradition. Its three-fourths tempo has a rhythm based on water movements, especially the rhythmic movements of the waves upon the shore. It could not have sprung from a land-based culture whose walking rhythmic pattern is closer to the two-fourths tempo.²⁵

Similarly, the "mutya" as a pearl and a water-goddess appears to have sprung also from a water-based culture. The pearl is owned by the Pearl-Goddess, who is also the Goddess of the Sea, like that of Panay's Maguayen, who walks upon the sea with her body covered with pearls, corals, and mother-of-pearls.²⁶ Maguayen, has a counterpart in the Tagalog Goddess of the Sea, "Amansinaya" whose morphemes "Aman" is related to the Dravidian "amma" or "amman" referring to an indigenous

²¹ Virgilio S. Almario (1993). *Panitikan ng Rebolusyon (g 1896) : Isang Paglingon at Katipunan ng mga Akda nina Bonifacio at Jacinto* (Diliman, Lungsod Quezon : University of the Philippines Press, 1993), 201.

²² *Ibid.*, 172.

²³ Simplicio P. Bisa and Paulino B. Bisa (1984). *Lahing Kayumanggi : Panitikang Pilipino*, binagong edisyon (Metro Manila : National Book Store, Inc., 1984, 1987), p. 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁵ From a personal communication with Professor Felipe de Leon last July 18, 2012, at the NCCA Chairman's Office, NCCA Building, General Luna St., Intramuros, Manila.

²⁶ From Jose Maria Pavon's Manuscript of 1838-1839, Transcript No. 5 - D, pp. 5-8.

"mother-goddess"; "si" points to a "being"; and "naya" is a cognate of "naga" which is the water serpent as "water-god" / "water-spirit" (the guardian of the waters). The complete reading of the morphemes "Aman" plus "si" plus "naya" (naga) is the "mother-goddess", the Serpent" or "Mother, the Serpent-Goddess."

...The Sea as the Mother was the originally "mutya" figure. In the *kundiman*, she was re-discovered as the "Mutya ng Pasig", and the "Mutya" as "Diwata" in the "Kundiman" of Bonifacio Abdon. She was the Pearl of the Orient Sea" in Jose Rizal's "My Last Farewell" and "Mutyang mahalaga sa dagat Silangan"²⁷ in the indigenized translation by Andres Bonifacio of Jose Rizal's "Mi Ultimo Adios." From the Mutya as the Pearl and the Pearl-Goddess, she became "Mariang Makiling" the Goddess of the Mountain who was fond of sitting upon a rock beside a spring of water, and taking a dip in the spring waters at midnight, especially when the moon was full in the sky.²⁸ In Rizal's reference to the folk legend of Mariang Makiling, Jose Rizal was depicting her as the image of the Inang Bayan or the indigenous Mother-Goddess of the People who left her people because of their neglect of her. Rizal, therefore, considered her as the "mutya", when he likened her to the magical stone that just appeared in nature, not knowing when or how it was "born." Unexplained she appeared (like the "mutya" stone); without notice, she disappeared. Like her, we also have lost our original "Mother" and "Goddess." In this way, Mariang Makiling is the image of the "lost Inang Bayan," with the word "bayan" to come possibly from the root word "bay" which both mean "water" and "woman."

The word "bay" both referring to water and woman probably was derivative of the word "balangay" or "barangay" whose root-word appears to be also "bay". Hence, if the water is a mother, and the barangay (balangay) is a house upon the waters blessed by the Mother, then, the ship running aground upon the shore, becomes the basis of a water-based community – the original Inang Bayan being the Mother Goddess of boat-dwellers who later became land-based but had homes established near bodies of water. Their ship-houses, became land-houses with the "May-Bahay" as the matriarch of the clan.²⁹

On record, the *kumintang*, is presented originally as a war song that later became a love song.³⁰ Its being a song of warfare is related to its defense of the "Motherland" or "Inang Bayan" as the original or "katutubo" Mother-Goddess, the Mother of the Race or the people. Later on, the Christianization of the Tagalogs converted it into a love song no longer for the goddess but for the human woman one loves. Probably, like our Marcha Nacional Filipino, it was supposedly a martial song that was really a hymn of love for the Motherland.

²⁷ Virgilio S. Almario (1993). *Panitikan ng Rebolusyon ng 1898*: Isang Paglingon at Katipunan ng mga Akda nina Bonifacio at Jacinto (Diliman, Lungsod Quezon : University of the Philippines Press, 1993), p. 147.

²⁸ Laong Laan (Jose Rizal), "Mariang Makiling." *La Solidaridad* (1890), edited by Guadalupe Fores-Ganzon, VI, II (Pasig City : Fundacion Santiago, Philippine Stock Exchange Centre, 1996), 612-619.

²⁹ Please see my monograph that lengthily discusses this matter, Grace P. Odal, "Inang Tubig : Ang Diwa ng Ba'i sa Kalinangang-Bayan," *Kasaysayang-Bayan*, Bilang 1 (Diliman, Lungsod Quezon : ADHIKA ng Pilipinas, Inc., 1999), 1-142.

³⁰ Simplicio P. Bisa at Paulina B. Bisa, p. 9.

However, Balagtas, Jose Rizal, and the Katipuneros re-discovered the pre-Hispanic water-goddess as the Inang Bayan, even with or without a conscious and direct knowledge of the watery origins of the "Inang Bayan". The love for the human beloved became a metaphor or symbol of the love for the Inang Bayan. Thus, is born the "pamimintakasi" of the beloved woman as a symbol of the "pamimintakasi" to the Motherland or "Inang Bayan." The word "pamimintakasi" has the root words "pita" (intense desire) and "kasi" which means "heart" and "love". Hence, "pamimintakasi" refers to the great aspiration of loving to the utmost." The word "pinakasi" refers to the patron saint of a town or village, that was originally the pre-Hispanic goddess or spirit of the place. When the Spaniards came, she was converted to the patron saint. Then, the word "pintakasi" also referred to the "cockfighting" that was offered to her or the patron saint during a fiesta or to the "bayanihan" (free community labor) that was offered to her also during the fiesta. Later on, "pintakasi" as "cockfighting" became degraded when it came to refer to cockfighting as betting and a form of gambling. It was apparently an earlier game of sacrifice, with a divination quality to it.³¹

How do the kundiman songs feature the "mutya" and the "mutya theme?"

The "Mutya" In The "Kundiman" Songs

Several kundiman songs illustrate the "mutya" either as a beloved beautiful woman or a goddess that actually is a metaphor for the "Inang Bayan." Loving her causes the lover great happiness and pain. But no matter the lover's condition is (whether loved back or rejected by the beloved), his love goes on till death, or even beyond death. He continues to love her, is saddened by her tears, and waits for her listening ear, her glance, and even her brief attention, because no matter how brief they are, these signs of attention revive him.

1. In The "Kundiman" of Bonifacio Abdon (1920; Titik ni Patricio Mariano; Himig ni Bonifacio Abdon),

The beloved is considered a "Mutya" and a "diwata" of "dagat silangan." He comforts and honors her, wishing her to listen to his song of love for her that can help her alleviate her pain. She is directly called the "Bayan" here.

2. In the "Mutya ng Pasig" (1926; Titik ni Deogracias Rosario; himig ni Nicanor Abelardo), the Mutya is a Guardian-Goddess of a Pasig River Kingdom. This kundiman paints the image of the "mutya" as a goddess walking upon the river, with her kingdom as riverine Kingdom of Love. Her relation to the *Inang Bayan* is not direct but on the level of metaphor and symbolism.
3. In "Ang Bayan Ko" (Lyrics by Jose Corazon de Jesus; composed by Constancio de Guzman), the *The Mutya is the Beloved* or "*Pinipintakasing Inang Bayan*" (*Minumutyang Pilipinas*)

³¹ This is what can be deduced from the "Legend of Cockfighting" that I got from Mike Pangilinan of Pampanga.

...Pilipinas kong MINUMUTYA
Pugad ng luha ko't dalita
Aking adhika, Makita kang sakdal laya.

That the the "Bayan" is "minumutya" means it is treated with utmost love as a precious beloved.

4. The five "Mutya Ng Silangan" Songs, (as composed by the Mabuhay singers; as "Awit Pambayanan written by Guillermo Cuino; notes by Hilarion Rubio;" as written by Amado V. Hernandez and melody by Leon Ignacio; as "Perlas ng Silangan" from Villar Records; and as "Pilipina, Mutya ng Bayan" by George Canseco), the "Mutya ng Silangan" and its synonym "Perlas ng Silangan," point directly to the "Inang Bayan."
5. Another group of songs depict the image of the beautiful human being (a woman) , or a beloved as a metaphor and symbol too of the *Inang Bayan*. "Mutya ng Aking Pagsinta," a farewell song to the Mutya (Vicor Music), "Mutya Niyaring Puso," a prayer to the Mutya (a Harana of Ruben Tagalog), "Kuwintas Mo Mutya" (by Armando Ramos, "hari ng Kundiman"), "Pakiusap" (by Ric Manrique, Jr.), "Madaling Araw, and "Joycelynang Baliwag," the Kundiman of the Revolution of 1898, all address the mutya in diverse situations and modes, but all look at her as a precious woman representing the Inang Bayan.

The "Mutya" In A Postcolonial Setting

The "mutya" appeared in *kundiman* and in the national Anthem of the Philippines as "Mutya ng Silangan," an epithet initiated by Andres Bonifacio. During the Second World War, Tagalog translations of "Filipinas" by Jose Palma, were existing. One of these translations was "Diwa ng Bayan" that opened with this line, "Lupang mapalad na Mutya ng Silangan..."³²

However, in 1963, when the "Lupang Hinirang" translation was made the official National Anthem³³ in the Filipino language, the "Mutya ng Silangan" discourse was "defeated."

Despite this, however, the "mutya" has not been "killed." It has also resurfaced from time to time in marginalized settings like the re-discovery of the "mutya" in the following songs: In "Mutya," a song created by political prisoners in the Martila Law years, and "Lupang Mutya." Other "rediscoveries of the "mutya" in other fields are arising. The most noteworthy is a poem by Alejandro Abadilla, "Dilim, Mutya ng Dilim," with the "mutya" even used as part of the title, referring to the "hidden goddess" or the "goddess hidden in the dark.

This poem presents the "Mutya" as the hidden beauty, the beautiful mystery of life and light hidden in the darkness... that emptiness and darkness are beautiful and life-giving because it is where the "Mutya" of Darkness and Emptiness can be found. This elevates somehow the "mutya" to the image

³² A.C. Hila, "Himno Nacional Filipino," CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art, Vol. 6 (Manila : CCP, 1994), p. 239; also "Lupang Hinirang", en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayang_Magiliw

³³ Under Presidential Proclamation No. 60.

of the Divine Self hidden in the darkness of one's being – one's own dark but "katutubo" and divine self – yet unknown and unmanifested to the conscious self. This brings the "mutya" to the "level of the Self – the Divine Self that can be found as a hidden potential in the unrealized self of everyone.

This awareness of the "mutya" in everyone gives one the courage to awaken the "mutya" in oneself and in others. The "mutya" becomes a tool for self-empowerment and for people-empowerment. As a scholar-artist, it becomes an instrument to use one's art-form or to discover one's art-form that will awaken the "mutya" in oneself, and in others... that would heal the wounds of the country and nature.

This giftedness of the ordinary person... this special quality of the everyday-person is a manifestation of the "mutya" as a potential of the spark of divinity within us, waiting to be awakened and cultivated for the rebirth of the individual, society, country, nature, a new earth. The use of the "mutya" force within activates the potential creative "micro-vita energy" hidden in everyone and in nature. MUTYA-NAWA!

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