

The Palawán Script, a film on the Surat Inaborlan  
by Kanakan Balintagos

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I learned the Palawan Script directly from my grand-aunt Upo Majiling. She fondly called the script simply as Aborlan or Surat Inaborlan, for it originated from Aborlan she says. I belatedly discovered that I have indigenous Palawán blood. Coming from the first generation of the Palawán, born in the city of Manila. My mother belongs to a lineage of Tungkul or Shaman-Chieftains in South Palawan. The people were called Palawán before the whole region was called Palawan.

Recently, I made a film with the main theme of cultural remembering and the Palawan script as the main dramatic action and the spine of the screenplay. The way the ancient script was used as my elders told me were incorporated in the film.

Baybayin, the Coast and Baybayin, the common term for Ancient Scripts from the Philippines. I intended to intertwine these two meanings through this film about a ménage a trois of the last writers of the ancient Palawanon alphabet set in the coasts of Palawan. A Unique Tale of two half-sisters who fall in love with a man who can't hear and speak to them- proof that love can speak even in Silence. Their only way of communication is the Surat Inaborlan, an ancient Palawanon script. Their love grows amidst the silences and letters in the pristine coasts of Palawan. In the end they accept each other's love, transcends themselves and decide to follow the ancient Duay tradition where two sisters married the same man. Love's Language is Silent and interpreted through the Palawan Script.

My films are the interwoven images of our culture, myth, ritual & modern issues that are threatening this way of life. The Palawan Trilogy is not a trilogy of plot but of thought. 'Busong ( Palawan Fate)' is Palawán's Philosophy. 'Baybayin ( The Palawán Script ) captures its Culture. 'Sumbang ( The Palawan Deluge )' will present my people's History."

I am not an academic but a culture bearer, a direct descendant of the indigenous Palawán. Learning the Surat Inaborlan was a birthright. But sadly no one else from my community was interested in learning the Surat Inaborlan. When my grand-aunt Upo Majiling died last year, I realized that I am now the last one with the knowledge of the ancient script in my Mother's community in Puring, South Palawan.

Reflecting now on the film and attending this Conference of Ancient Scipts, I

now believe that I have a great duty to discover more writers of the Surat Inaborlan in other Palawán indigenous communities. If they still exist. In fact this will be the theme of my next work , a documentary for the search for the last writers of the Inaborlan! Through Cinema we see who we really are. Our Presence becomes our History!

Manunga banar ( for Beautiful truths),  
Kanakan-Balintagos