From Nothing to Everything: Reading and Reterritorializing the Song(s) "Waray-Waray"

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Abstract

"Waray-Waray," a popular Tagalog song, has potently perpetuated a belligerent image of Eastern Bisayans by depicting a Waráy woman who unflinchingly faces any fight, and also initiates troubles. While the picture of an unyielding people can be a positive portrayal of a regional group, a review of the song's wording reveals that not much is complimentary of Eastern Bisayans. Even the word choices, syntax, and logic of the song lines reveal a composition needing corrective marks for basic writing.

Unknown to many, "Waray-Waray" has a Binisaya Waráy version, purported to be the original on which the Tagalog song is based. Unlike the latter which simply repeats the idea that "Warays-are-trouble" throughout the song, the Binisaya "Waray-Waray" relates aspects of Waray life: economics, socialization, religiosity, culture, even partying, and history (including prehistory). In the way each line presents ideas, in metaphor use, in succinctness, and in neatness of ending harking back to the beginning of the song, the Binisaya "Waray-Waray" passes as good writing and decent traditional poetry.

The Tagalog "Waray-Waray" with its warlike Eastern Bisayans has long prevailed in pop culture. It is about time the Waráys themselves challenged representations of them emanating from extraneous origins, particularly the hegemonic center (Tagalog Imperial Manila). It is about time they confronted postcolonial issues of identity, internal colonization, marginality, and appropriation.

Waráys now have to reterritorialize discourses on them, starting with the Tagalog "Waray-Waray."

Keywords: regional literature; pop culture; Eastern Bisayas; Waráy; Waray-Waray; postcolonial studies

The Tagalog "Waray-Waray" is a catchy song popular among Filipinos, but at the same time, it has also popularized and perpetuated the image of the Bisaya Waráy as bellicose hoodlums. This image has become so pervasive that even Cebuano-speaking Leyteños, who live mostly to the west and south of the island of Leyte—i.e., the Waráys' closest neighbors—also hold on to this image of their Waráy-speaking brethren, sometimes changing the lyrics of the song to *Waray-Waray kusóg mangaway* [Waray-Waray, frequently starts a fight, or Waray-Waray, good at fights.]

This image of a belligerent Waráy people that the Tagalog pop song generates is a construct, created by first appropriating an Eastern Bisayan folk song, keeping its upbeat melody and rhythm, while changing its words to the now well-known lyrics. The story of the song "Waray-Waray" can then be sampled as a case in point for discussion of how internal colonization functions within the Philippine borders—of how Manila sweeps through the country as a cultural juggernaut. An evaluation of the story of this pop song (as well as that of the original Bisayan folk song) satisfies the preoccupation with favored topics very much at home among postcolonial discourses: center-periphery, double colonization, marginality, appropriation, and reterritorialization, to name a few. Such an evaluation then inevitably engages "in the twin processes of critique and affirmation" (Legasto 2004, 15).

Indeed, if only for spreading this not-so-flattering image of the Eastern Bisayans, the Waráys have a very valid reason for being a bit too defensive, and for critiquing the song in turn, including the fact that it bastardizes a local Winaráy song[1].

Internal Colonization and Reterritorialization

Postcolonial conversations often focus on the multiform dynamics between the colonial masters and their (former) colonies. Discussions on the center-periphery binary usually equate the relation to such labels as Europe-non-Europe, Occident-Orient, and Third World-First World. However, what is not as commonly discussed, although not entirely ignored or elided over, are the similarly imbalanced relations between a former colony's center (e.g., economic, administrative) and its peripheries. The same mechanisms that the former colonial masters operated on the colonies effectively became the heirlooms bequeathed to the former colonies' centers, which the formerly colonized then operated on the peripheries after gaining independence. Some of these mechanisms were governmental rule, legislative control, financial regulations, and all the intricacies of worlding and othering.

Coined by Spivak (1985), worlding is the process employed by a center in constructing the "reality" of a "new" place or territory outside or away from it, some place other than the center itself—that is, the center's "other." When the center "worlds" its other, it relates of the other in ways that make this relation, this narrative, an accepted truth about the other; the reality of the other is constructed in and by the center. One famous example of worlding is Orientalism, an idea introduced by Said years earlier than Spivak, when Said came out with his influential book *Orientalism* in 1978. With Orientalism, the Western world, per Said, created a homogenous discourse about the East that created a reality for the East—a constructed reality that would then become the basis for the manner with which the West has interacted with the actual Oriental world.

While Orientalism is basically of global coverage, dividing the world into two (Occident vs. Orient), instances of worlding within localized regions also exist, are prevalent, and are as potent. Such worldings are common in former European colonies, particularly among the "Orientals" themselves, including the Philippines, where Manila has enjoyed a position of dominance and control over the rest

of the archipelago. Manila may not be necessarily Orientalizing the regions, but it worlds them.

Outside of Manila are the regions that have been conferred a particular status. Areas beyond Tagalog Metro Manila have suffered from a type of double colonization, a term that first referred "to the observation that women are subjected to both the colonial domination of empire and the male domination of patriarchy" (Ashcroft, et al., 2007, p.66). The term has expanded to mean the multiple subjection of a place or people to more dominant powers. In the national discourse of the Philippines, the regions have also experienced subjection to both the foreign imperial colonizers and the ascendancy of what has been known as Imperial Manila. Positioned in a place both central and elevated, Manila has, since the colonial times, exerted much influence over the regions, and even manipulated them, one way or another.

One way by which Imperial Manila has manifested its control over the regions is through the arts and pop culture, more particularly (as far as this paper is concerned), through songs that have been employed with some forms of musical appropriation. Tagalog Manila appropriates regional songs in different manners, but usually starts by translating a song in a regional language into Tagalog. By having Tagalog versions of the songs "Manang Biday" and "Sarung Banggi," for example, Tagalog has been able to "own" these songs. While these two originally regional and local songs did reach a nationwide audience (a worthy achievement) via Tagalized translations that made them understandable to the rest of the Filipinos, their fame has become double-edged, because many Filipinos now identify them as Tagalog songs. Many are oblivious to the fact that these songs they learned in school are translated songs, originally sung in Ilocano and Bicolano, respectively.

Other forms of appropriation when translating regional songs into Tagalog also happen, as with the sexualized, uncouth version of the Cebuano "Rosas Pandan," or with the "war song" transformation that "Waray-Waray" went through when it became Tagalog.

In defense of the Tagalog version, some people say that the song has those lyrics because it has its own context. Indeed, the song was used in a film portraying a strong Waráy woman—the 1954 F. H. Constantino-directed film of the same title, starring Nida Blanca in the titular role, and Nestor de Villa. In the film setting, the song is not as pejorative. However, this is what colonial or imperial appropriation is, or does: It is a technique that a dominant power employs, so as to incorporate as its own the territory or culture it desires (Spurr 1993, 28), thus transforming, in this instance, the Bisayan song for the purposes and benefit of the Tagalog film.

Outside the cinematic world, the Tagalog song has taken a life of its own, with many people knowing it as a pop song or an independent release, and not as a piece in a movie soundtrack. It would not even be surprising if not many people are aware that the song is part of a film.

"Waray-Waray" has chanted through the years the image of aggressive Eastern Bisayans—a created representation for a group, the portrayal of which has then become a point of reference for them—and has created a reality for and about them—for other Filipinos. This Waráy stereotype has to be confronted, and it is time that Eastern Bisayans engaged this story on them that is of adventitious provenance. It is time Waráys tell their own story and insist on their own original version of this song. It is time for the Bisaya Waráy to reterritorialize discourses about them, starting with the song "Waray-Waray." For this reterritorialization, the Bisaya Waráys have to take repossession of the song, tell its story, thereby also effectively telling their own story as a people. The image of the Waráy must now come from within the Waráy people. A reterritorializing evaluation of the "Waray-Waray" song will understandably (and inevitably) manifest what I elsewhere identified as two of the common traits that postcolonial writings share: as writings of protest and of affirmation (Agustin 2014, p.9) for the Waráys. Yet, an examination of its lyrics reveals how the Tagalog composition is not ideal itself:

Stanza 1

Waray-Waray hindi tatakas
Waray-Waray handang matodas
Waray-Waray bahala bukas
Waray-Waray manigas

[Waray-Waray does not flee
Waray-Waray ready to die
Waray-Waray whatever tomorrow will be
Waray-Waray stiffens]

The first line of the first stanza immediately establishes trouble. The listeners do not know any backstory yet, but there is a story, one that talks of trouble. The word is *tatakas* [to flee or get away]. The line suggests that something happened, although it is not known what exactly happened. But something happened, something that would require one to *takas* [to escape], and that means trouble. The song claims that the Waráy does not flee from trouble.

By opening with a line about an unidentified trouble, the song suggests that being involved in some problem is usual or even expected of the Waráy. That opening line presupposes that even if no background of a specific trouble is mentioned, people will automatically understand and accept the premise that indeed there is trouble whenever there is a Waráy—that it is common knowledge that Waráys simply mean trouble.

The second line is *handang matodas* [ready to die]; then the third is *bahala bukas* [does not care for tomorrow]; and the fourth line is *manigas* [become stiff]. The lines on being prepared to die and being carefree about the following day are understandable, and do seem to refer to the Waray-Waray. But the becoming stiff part is vague: What or who becomes stiff? If it is still the Waray, the line does not make sense at all. *Manigas* is sometimes used in Tagalog to refer to some failure or to being left hanging in the air, such as in *Manigas ka!* which could mean "You wish!" or even "(You) die!" In other words, *manigas* is

not a positive word. The first three lines of the stanza are supposed to describe admirable qualities of the Waráy, but the last line tells the Waray, *manigas*—thus throwing the coherence of the whole stanza into question.

The stanza also perpetuates a false sense of pride, hardheadedness, and even fatalism. The song opens with that undisclosed trouble, then proceeds to suggest that the Bisaya Waráy rushes things, rushes into trouble without planning and careful weighing out of options. So, instead of pausing for a while to recuperate, to recalibrate, or to get reinforcement, the Waráy supposedly plunges at once into the chaos and does not step back to better assess the situation, even if he knows that he would die [*todas*] doing so, not thinking of the consequences of such actions: *bahala bukas* [who cares about tomorrow]. These are not admirable traits but foolhardy instead. They reveal a false sense of pride (not stepping away from challenges) and hardheadedness, when the Waráy could rather plan strategically and emerge victorious, without having to die.

Indeed, the stanza is fatalistic, saying *patay kung patay* [die if need be], even if death can completely be avoided. (That phrase even appears on the *Waray-Waray* movie poster: *Talagang ganyan ang Waray-Waray, sa pagsinta at labanan, patay kung patay!* [The Waray-Waray is really like that—in love and war, die if need be!] For instance, to give the first stanza's unknown trouble a more specific storyline, the trouble could be a super typhoon, and the story goes that the Waráys are warned about what could happen, and how strong and destructive the typhoon would be. Following the logic of the first stanza, these Waráys just hold on to that pride and hardheadedness, to that "reputation" of not backing down from trouble, maybe even singing to those who warn them, "We are Waráys, *hindi tatakas*…" [we will not retreat…] So they do not evacuate, *bahala bukas... handang matodas*, and the next day, they indeed become *nanigas*, in rigor mortis, stiffening after death. Fatalism. Or defeatism. Getting oneself purposely killed when all the odds are in favor of living.

In lieu of the super typhoon, other forms of trouble can also be used as substitutes—raiding terrorists, a volcanic eruption, an addiction, a bizarre virus—the narrative flow and story ending will still be the same.

Stanza 2

Waray-Waray tawag sa akon
Sa bakbakan diri mag-urong
Sa sino man ang humahamon
Kahit ikaw ay maton

[I am called Waray-Waray
From a clash I don't retreat
Whoever the challenger is
Even if you are a bully]

The second stanza is again all about trouble, expounding further on the supposed belligerence of the Warays. From the very beginning, the tone of the song is aggressive, and in the second stanza, *humahamon* [challenger] does appear, "challenging one to a fight." But who is challenging the speaker, anyway? There seems to be no one. Instead, the one fomenting chaos is the speaker in the song, the Waray, starting a fight where none before existed.

The use of nonstandard language—what the Tagalogs call a *barok* version—is also suspect. Reverting to the Bisayan words in the stanza—*akon, diri* [me, no], though claimed by some as a touch of Bisayan authenticity or "local flavor"—can be seen as a form of mockery, a condescending approach towards the Waráys, not unlike an adult mimicking the speech of a child: *Mamam na*, *Nagwiwi ka na*? [Drink now, Have you peed?]—an adult reverting to childish speech but still maintaining the superiority of one's own language or of oneself. The same goes with the Tagalog words in the song, in relation to the Bisayan Waráy words. There is no need to use Bisaya *akon* (me) when Tagalog *akin* would do the job just as well; or *diri* [no] when Tagalog *hindi* is ready to serve. *Mag-urong* [to withdraw] is

particularly derisive. Nobody says that even in regular colloquial speech, whether Binisayâ or Tinagalog. Why not simply use the standard Tagalog *uurong*? In fact, even in Winaráy, to start that word with the prefix *mag-*, a Tagalog marker of future action, is inconceivable. In Waráy, the equivalent prefix is *ma-*. We say, *makaon* [going to eat], *masayaw*] going to dance], *maatras* [going to retreat]—not *mag-atras*. This word does not exist in the Winaráy lexicon, let alone *mag-urong*—not at all in any tense.

Stanza 3

Likas sa ating paraluman
Kaming palaging mapagbigay
Ngunit iba ang Waray-Waray
Walang sindak kanino man

[It is natural to us, maidens
We are always giving/indulgent
But the Waray-Waray is different
No fear of whomever]

The first and second lines in the third stanza above break the rules of proper language, too, or at least the consistency of perspective. The first line uses *ating* (*atin* "us" + ligature *-g*), which is listener/audience/addressee inclusive (me, possibly others, and you included). But the second line uses *kaming* (*kami* "we" + ligature *-ng*), which is listener exclusive (only others and I, you excluded: just *kami*). Such an instance of perspective shift, as any writing teacher or student knows, is bad writing and should be avoided.

Although many publications show the lyrics with *Kami(-)/ Kaming palaging* (We + ligature) [We who are always]—when one listens, however, to the original recording, the second line registers as *kining palaging,* instead of *kaming palaging*. *Kining* makes better sense than *kaming*—except that *kini(-)* ("this" + ligature *ng*) is a Sugbuanong Bisaya word (Cebuano), not Winaráy Bisaya. If *kini* is the correct word in the song and not *kami*, then that is still another error,

a lapse in simple language research, if the aim is to include Waráy words in the song.

Then describing the *paraluman* [maiden/-s], the first two lines say that women are naturally always giving or indulging, *mapagbigay*—a stereotyping that may not please some people.

The third line signals a contrast to this natural female characteristic, saying that the Waráy, particularly the women, are *iba* [different] from other women. Hence, if the Waráy women are different, one may then ask, "How different?" or "Why different?" No one knows the answer, so far as the song is concerned, even if it suggests otherwise. The audience is instead simply forced to accept that the answer is the fourth line, which follows the posing of the contrast in the third line. According to the fourth line, the Waráy women are different because they do not fear anyone: *walang sindak kanino man* [no fear of anyone]. But is this really the appropriate trait that separates the Waray women from the others, as far as the stanza is concerned?

The stanza opens by saying "We women are naturally always giving," then says "but the Waráy is different." Following the line of argument, from premise one to premise two of the first three lines, the Waráy woman should be different because she is "not naturally giving or indulging"—not a flattering portrayal of Waráys, as it entails selfishness and egoism. However, in fairness to the song, this is not really the answer that the fourth "answering" line provides. It says instead that the Waráy woman is different because she does not fear anybody, which is a good trait. But then again, that whole stanza is bad writing, with logic all over the place: It lays out the premises quite well in the first through third lines, but in the fourth line, it deviates from all those premises—in Winaráy, *natipas* [a sudden turn to the side]; in Latin, *non sequitur*; in psychology, even schizophrenic for such a line or argument progression.

Stanza 4

Kaming babaeng Waray-Waray
Ay siga-siga kahit saan
'Pagkat kami ay lumalaban
Kapag hinamon ng away

[We Waray-Waray women
Are braggarts wherever
Because we fight
When challenged to a fight]

In the fourth stanza, whoever the speaker in the song is, is finally clear: a Waráy woman. In the first stanza, the speaker is generally the Waráys, as is with the second stanza. The third stanza is schizophrenic, shifting from the listener-inclusive *atin* [us, with you included], to the listener-exclusive *kami* [we, with you excluded]—but already hinting at the Waráy woman as the speaker. The fourth stanza is no longer vague or ambiguous: the speaker is a Waráy woman. Again, the stanza makes it very clear that it is she and her troop of Waráy women that cause trouble everywhere. They are *siga-siga* [boasters]. This harkens back to the second stanza where the speaker refers to some people challenging (*hinamon*) her and her troop. Who the challenger to the Waray is, is not clearly identified by the speaker. There seems to be no one challenging the speaker and her cohorts at all. Instead, these Waráy women start all troubles around, wherever they are (*kahit saan*). They are *siga-siga* after all. Thugs.

To say that they are *siga-siga* because they fight when challenged even by a thug or *maton* (of the second stanza) is also questionable logic. *Siga-sigas* are the thugs themselves. A person does not need to be challenged to become *siga-siga*; similarly, being challenged to a fight does not turn a person into a thug. (If a pusillanimous person is challenged to a hand fight, does that person suddenly become a thug?) The statement "We are thugs because we fight when challenged" is again, non sequitur—the line of reasoning is broken. If one is simply living life peacefully in one corner, and then is

unrightfully challenged, peace is disturbed, and so one fights back, one does not qualify as a thug, as *siga-siga* just by defending oneself. Such a move is simply fighting for one's right, for one's peace. That is not hooliganism, not being *siga-siga*. Once again, the logic of this last stanza is doubtful, at best.

As the preceding paragraphs have shown, even a cursory look at (i.e., without doing deeper critical analysis of) the phrasing and basic reasoning of the Tagalog song "Waray-Waray" reveals that while it might have helped in popularizing the hooligan image of Waráys, women and men alike, it has words and general content that might not have been well-chosen or well-put together.

The Binisayâ Folk Song[2]

The Binisayâ original "Waray-Waray" song might have an actual composer, but nothing is known about her or him. So, this song is largely considered as a folksong. A search into the origins of this song could be productive, but that is not within the purview of this paper.

Stanza 1 (Winaráy)

Waray-Waray, pirme may upay.
May 'da lubi, may 'da pa humay.
Ton dagat damo it' isda
Ha bungto han mga Waray.

[The Waray-Waray is never without.
He's got coconuts aplenty, and rice.
The seas around are teeming with fish.
This is the land of the Warays.]

First of all, unlike the Tagalog appropriation which opens with, and is all about Waráy hooliganism throughout, the original Binisayâ opens by establishing the good among the Waráy people—*Waray-waray, pirme may upay* (there is always something good among the Waráys). That is what the first line literally says. Then the first stanza's second and third lines juxtapose the wealth of the land (the plenitude of coconuts and rice) with that of the sea (the abundance of fish), all these found in the region of the Warays.

Unlike the whole Tagalog version whose lines are often only paraphrased versions of the same idea that Warays are thugs, the original Winaráy song, meanwhile, manages to tackle various topics. The first stanza, for instance, covers both land and sea as prolific (and complementary) sources of sustenance and wealth, with specific examples or representatives of that wealth. In effect, this stanza covers the economic side of the Waray life, which is largely about coconuts, rice, and fish.

Stanza 2 (Winaráy)

Waray-Waray, pirme malipay*,*
Di makuri igkasarangkay.
Nag-ionomer kon nagkikita
Bas' kamingaw mawara!

[The Waray-Waray is always happy,
He's easy to befriend,
Drink is always ready when you meet,
To drive loneliness away.]

If the first stanza talks about how good the surroundings of the Waráys are, the second stanza, in turn, talks about how good these people, the Waráys themselves, are. It says that the Waráy people are constantly happy (unlike, once again, the Tagalog version which says these people are constantly surly). The original song even proceeds to say that it is not difficult for a Waráy to befriend others, or for others to befriend a Waráy.

Additionally, if the first stanza of the original is about the economic aspect of Waráy life, the second stanza is about the social aspect, socialization, and relations with others, which the song depicts as good and easy flowing. This socialization, the song suggests, is integral to the Waráys, especially because of the inclusion of the *kamingaw* factor, that feeling of missing some entity. With *kamingaw*, one holds someone, some place, or something so special as to miss that object of *kamingaw*, that person, place, or thing. One would not feel that *mingaw* if one does not have beautiful memories of that entity.

Stanza 3 (Winaráy)

Lugar han mga Waray-Waray
Kadto-a naton, pasyadaha.
Diri birilngon an kalipay
Labi na gud kon may fiesta.

[Let's make a visit, take a trip
To the land of the Waray-Warays,
Joy is easy to find there,
Especially on fiesta time.]

The third stanza expounds further on the place of the Waráys as a land of happiness, worth visiting. This is rather notable, as some people, either seriously or flippantly, sometimes say that they fear going to the place of Waráy speakers because of the latter's image as thugs, and even as murderous people. This stanza says, instead, that happiness is so ubiquitous in the land of the Waráys, that "one need not even have to 'look' for joy in there" (*Diri birilngon an kalipay*). Joy is simply everywhere, suffusing people's lives.

If the first stanza of the Bisayan original is about the Waráys' economic aspect, and the second is about the social aspect, the third is about the religious aspect, that is, the "fiesta." Certainly, the Waráys are big on fiestas, especially in April, and particularly in May, when people would joke that one could leave one's house and thrive for a whole month without going home, just by attending fiestas day to day,

from one barangay to the next. Some places even have more than one fiesta throughout the year. Indeed, fiestas are occasions where the economic aspect of the first stanza, the social aspect of the second, and the religious aspect of the third stanza come together; fiestas are religious and spiritual in essence, but they also are opportunities for socialization and coming together, to party or feast over dishes made out of the produce or the profit from the abundant land.

At this point, let us return briefly to the first stanza. As noted, each stanza of the original Binisayâ song individually speaks about economics, socialization, and religiosity, but with connections among them all: the fruits of the abundant land and sea become items for people to socialize over—a socializing that reaches its peak during fiesta gatherings. However, more than the specifics of each stanza, the whole song talks of history, of bearing some historical narrative.

Copy of Stanza 1 above
(*Winaráy)*

Waray-Waray, pirme may upay.
May 'da lubi, may 'da pa humay.
Ton dagat damo it' isda
Ha bungto han mga Waray.

[The Waray-Waray is never without.
He's got coconuts aplenty, and rice.
The seas around are teeming with fish.
This is the land of the Warays.]

Returning to the first stanza, one notes that the use of the *lubi* (coconut) and the *humáy* (unhusked rice) is quite specific. A helpful way of reading texts is answering the question why a certain detail appears in it. For example, "Why is the pebble on the ledge?" "Why a pebble?" Additionally, one can also connect some detail with other details related to it, or being in the same category, but not (necessarily) appearing in the text itself. It is like applying Ferdinand de Saussure's point about the linguistic sign, that signs or words get their meaning

partly from their association with other related signs or words. For instance, one understands what a cat is, partly because it is not a dog. One recognizes a sunflower, partly because it is not a rose. So, if the text shows a pebble, indeed, the question "Why a pebble" is very valid. Why not a play marble? Or a pen? Or something else entirely?

The same principle and asking about the specificity of details can also be applied to *lubi* and *humáy* [coconut and unhusked rice grains] in the first stanza. Why these specific details? The song could have used other crops—if they have to be crops—such as *maís* or *kamote* [corn or sweet potato], especially because for many people, these are the more common food sources—not *humáy* [unhusked rice grains] turned into *bugas* [milled rice grain], then into *kan-on* [cooked rice]. Of course, the other consideration is that rice is more expensive. *Maís* and *kamote* [corn and sweet potato], therefore, are more representative of the common people, the masses—and so are better choices for the song. But *lubi* and *humáy* [coconut and unhusked rice grains], often the produce of the landed gentry, may, in effect, be seen as representatives of the better-off, not the masses.

The reasoning that *humáy* [unhusked rice grains] was used because it rhymes with the end words of the other lines, does not hold water:

One, the rhyme could have been altered to cater, for instance, to the *maís* or *kamote* [corn or sweet potato].

Two, *maís* or *kamote* [corn or sweet potato] could be placed elsewhere in the line, instead of at the end, so that rhyming would not be necessary for either.

Three, the word *humáy* [unhusked rice grains] could have been retained, but *lubi* [coconut], which is not an end word, could have been replaced by other crops, like *maís* or *kamote* [corn and sweet potato]. So again, why *lubi* and *humáy* [coconut and unhusked rice grains]?

The answer could be "history." The Bisayan original *Waray Waray* song carries a historical narrative, maybe even a very long one, that predates humans or at least the peopling of the Philippine islands. With that said, the *lubi* [coconut] and the *humáy* [unhusked rice grains] then become representatives of the natives. Both are crops native to the Philippines, or at least have been here for a very long time, predating historical records. *Maís* and *kamote* [corn and sweet potato], on the other hand, only became known to these islands when they were introduced by the Spanish colonists from the New World. Thus, the first stanza covers a period of precolonial Philippines.

Interestingly, the first stanza is also all about the place of the Waráys. These Bisayan people only come into the picture in the second stanza. Indeed, earth history says that first came the places, the geologic features, plants, and animals, before humans which are recent additions to the history of the earth's biodiversity.

Additionally, while the Tagalog version's first stanza (and the entire song, in fact) is very straightforward, unequivocal in what it wants to convey, the first stanza of the Bisayan original, on the other hand, makes use of polysemy, the multiplicity of meanings that enriches the song's meaning. The word *upay* in the first stanza's first line does mean "good," but it can also mean "party," "banquet," or the "provisions" prepared during such an occasion. When one says "*Mayda upay kanda Fulana*," he means there is a party going on in Fulana's place. *Upay* [party], then, is a word also used for social gatherings, and it is a native word, strengthening the idea of the first stanza as a representation of precolonial Philippines with its native coconuts and rice.

Now this *upay* [party] seems to be an integral part of the Waráy culture, as depicted by the original song. Waráys, as the song says, love a good party. This *upay* is so integral to the Warays that in the song, this party always appears everywhere, perhaps the only idea that consistently appears in all parts of the song other than the word *Waráy* or *Waray-Waray* itself. In the second stanza, *upay* [party] is still there, this time only referred to by a different word, *inom*:

"*Nag-iinom kun nagkikita*" [Drinking when seeing each other]. Yes, *inóm* means "drink." But *ínom* – with stress on the first syllable (*i-*), instead of on the second syllable *(-nom*), thus: I nom; not i NOM—is a different word. It is a noun, whereas *inóm* [to drink] is a verb, although in *ínom* [drinking], the noun, there could be a lot of drinking, too, because *ínom* is just another Binisayâ word for the idea of "party."

Copy of Stanza 2 above
(Winaráy)

Waray-Waray, pirme malipay,
Di makuri igkasarangkay.
Nag-iinom kon nagkikita
Bas' kamingaw mawara!

[The Waray-Waray is always happy,
He is easy to befriend,
Drink is always ready when you meet,
To drive loneliness away.]

Spanish records are unambiguous in relating that Bisayans of the past loved parties, and they called them *inom*, too. Chirino said so at the turn of the 1600s (2010, 139), and so did Alcina less than a century later (1960, 136-137). In agreement with Chirino and Alcina—or more precisely, in repetitive reenactment of what both of them relate in their respective records—among Bisayans nowadays (and perhaps among other Filipino groups, too), when one invites another to a party or a gathering, the inclination is to say *Ínom kita!* [Let us drink!], and not *Kaon kita!* [Let us eat!]. An *Ínom kita!* [Let us drink] invitation implies merriment and partying, fun and even (a feeling of) "honor" (for both the *ínom* giver and the invitee) are almost always to be expected in such invitations. But to say *Kaon kita* [Let us eat] is rather pedestrian, casual, with no specialness, just a simple eating "activity," done because humans need to eat, such as during lunchtime or *merienda*. There is simply that grander ring to the *ínom* [drinking] as an event than to the *kaon* [eating]. *Ínom* [drinking] events usually sound bigger because they also sound more social, involving more

participants, something also hinted upon by the original Binisayâ folk song.

On the contrary, *kaon* [eating] events sound very private, personal, and intimate. These events are like lovers' dates, private dinners, or maybe closed-door meetings. They sound exclusive and maybe too formal. In contrast, *ínom* [drinking] events are often quite participatory, with many people wassailing, loud music playing, loud talking over the music, and much louder laughing. Very informal and welcoming.

Ínom [drinking] events, as noted, too, by foreign observers of the past, are quite effective community-builders. Back home in the countryside, for example, many friendships do start from these *ínoms* [drinkings]. Newcomers and visitors have better chances at community integration if they unhesitatingly take part in these *ínoms* [drinkings]. For instance, suitors can more easily get accepted by the girl's family and friends if they can "gracefully" (a word subject to interpretation) withstand an *ínom* [drinking] session. Friends and relatives of the girl may then be heard to say, half in jest, half in truth, that they will "test" the suitor, meaning, see how this newcomer will fare in an *ínom* [drinking event]. Moreover, it is almost universally viewed that a party, no matter how many the dishes are and how much the quantity of each is, still does not attain a level of prestige if no alcoholic drink is given to the guests (especially *tubâ*). People may be heard talking about such a party as one that is "*Waráy man painóm*" ("Nothing to drink"). And that is not a compliment. Drinking makes all the difference.

Copy of Stanza 3 above
(Winaráy)

Lugar han mga Waray-Waray
Kadto-a naton, pasyadaha.
Diri birilngon an kalipay
Labi na gud kon may fiesta.

[Let's make a visit, take a trip
To the land of the Waray-Warays,
Joy is easy to find there,
Especially on fiesta time.]

So from the first stanza that talks about the Warays' place and the native *upay*, the second stanza that talks about the people and the still native *ínom* [drinking], we then get to the third stanza and the part of our history when we already got into contact with the West, and, hence, the now non-native term for party, *fiesta*: similar idea, different word, a foreign word, Spanish, and these parties now with a Western religious tinge.

Stanza 4 (Winaráy)
[Final stanza—not a copy of any stanza above]

Mga tawo nga Ware-Waray
Basta magkita, may 'da upay.
Diri kabos hit pakig-angay,
Sayod kamo basta Waray.

[The people known as Waray-Waray,
When you meet them, they're always ready.
Open-handed and hospitable,
You got to know, that's the Waray!]

Finally, the fourth stanza is the closing stanza that ties or summarizes everything. It does not add any new information, relatively, but only reiterates what has been said in the earlier stanzas: the friendliness, brotherhood, conviviality—again in contrast to the Tagalog version—of the Waráy people.

Yet, even in this closing stanza, the party still makes an appearance, with the word *upay* again, which is a reference to the first stanza. With it, we could then go back to the beginning of the song, and do the whole thing again, over and over, and always with the party, the *upay*, the *inom*, the *fiesta*. Why not? After all, these are Eastern Bisayans, Waráys in particular (although non-Waráy Eastern Bisayans perhaps also share in the same propensity for carousing). Eastern Bisayas is the place where community dances and fiestas are quite the thing, and where bundles upon bundles of crisp newly bank-withdrawn paper bills rain on the dancefloor during the *Curacha* dance.

So, in the last stanza, everything comes full circle, referring back to the start. In composition writing, it is said that a good closing is one that ties itself to the opening part of the composition, as if it were an envelope that folds itself back into its mouth, to close the whole thing up. This original Binisayâ "Waray-Waray" song somehow does that, again, unlike the Tagalog version that does not have much progression or movement.

In closing, however, let me add that the Tagalog version of the song, of course, may not be a completely bad one. The song is indeed catchy and fun, upbeat and likable overall, characteristics it inherited from the original Bisayan folksong. It is also a personal favorite. Spunky and fun Nida Blanca makes for a remarkable Waráy, and Sylvia la Torre's singing captures these quirks of the role. Also interesting is hearing Eartha Kitt sing the song. She is an American singer-actress, one of the earliest to portray Catwoman in media.

With the Tagalog version, maybe it is a matter of perspective: When one is feeling down and is about to surrender in life, and is a Waráy, one could go back to this Tagalog version and be motivated, maybe even ashamed of giving up, when Waráys, supposedly, would not commit such an abominable crime. Or maybe when being bullied by others, especially by non-Waráys, even if one is generally passive and does not really fight back, one could be encouraged by this version and be possessed by its spirit, finally standing up for oneself and fighting back. Because one is a Waráy. And nobody tramples on a Waráy.

With the Tagalog appropriation, it is also a matter of the Waráys giving their interpretation of the song, perhaps even a matter of owning the image that the song projects of them. What is significant is that the Waráys get to speak about the song themselves, that they get to voice their own views (and be heard) in relation to and in response to the Tagalog-created image. Whether they reject or embrace the image may not be as important as them being able to have a say on what may become of that image, them taking a big part in the song's meaning production; in other words, of the Waráys themselves reterritorializing discourses on the song, and ultimately, on themselves.

With the reading and perspectives presented in this paper, the most important point is awareness that while the Tagalog version is popular, it also, from one angle, perpetuates a non-flattering image of the Waráy people, particularly the women, as thugs. Also, that this version has its own shortcomings, for instance, in the presentation and arrangement of its contents. More importantly, that this Tagalog version is based on a much earlier Binisayâ original that has lyrics that are brighter, more positive, more cheerful, and very much celebratory. It is a song that has more layers of meaning, more encompassing of the Waráy world and history, more nuanced, in a sense, more esemplastic, so that various aspects of life get included well into this one single short Eastern Bisayan song. By raising awareness, the Waráys could take possession (again) of the song and its significations.

Of course, one may also consider both song versions as only singing about two sides of the multifaceted *Bisaya nga Waráy* [Visayan who is a Waráy]. We, Waráys, love to have a good time, and we also do not back down from challenges (doing so, however, with good planning and strategic acting). Some other persons in the very near future may also write more versions of this song, focusing on yet other traits of the Waráy people. Are they romantic? Are they devout? Are they inventive? Or lazy, perhaps? Coquettish? Heartbreakers?

Who knows? *Sayod kamo basta Waray!* [You got to know, that's the Waray!]

Notes

1. Indeed, the song "Waray-Waray" has, for a long time now, been considered as a Binisaya folk song. It is credited as such, for example, in the 2015 Merlie Alunan anthology *Sa Atong Dila: Introduction to Visayan Literature* published by the University of the Philippines Press and in a Novemnber 2013 opinion piece by Ma. Ceres P. Doyo titled "'Waray Waray,' let's rock!" in Inquirer.net. Doyo mentions she learned of the song's folkloric origins from web sources. Internet sources do generally consider this song as an Eastern Bisayan old folk song.

   However, the real story behind the songs—both the Tagalog version and the Winaray one, together—is much less clear. Some people, including Eastern Bisayans themselves, doubt that there truly was a Waray original that the Tagalog version based on later. Some older folks from the region say they first heard of the song from the Blanca-de Villa film and heard it first in Tagalog; the Winaray version they only heard afterwards, and much less frequently than the Tagalog movie soundtrack. In this regard, the credibility of "Waray-Waray" as an authentic Waray folk song, and one that predates the popular 1950s movie, becomes questionable. There are speculations about the history of both the Tagalog and Waray versions (e.g., that the Waray version was created only as a reaction to the Tagalog's portrayal of the Waray people), but

nothing is certain at this point. Surely, an investigation into the backgrounds of these song versions would be an exciting enterprise with results that promise to be quite interesting.

But until such an investigation is launched and with conclusions that would establish that "Waray-Waray" is an original Tagalog pop song specially created for the movie and not based on an earlier Waray folkloric music, the more widespread belief holds up, i.e., that "Waray-Waray" is an old Bisayan folk song. Up to this moment, this is the claim that gets published in different sources, both printed materials and electronic sources. This is the claim that is taught in schools and the claim that is believed in the streets. And as the dominant and accepted claim, this is also the claim from which this article takes off.

If the song does get proven to be a Tagalog original and not derived from a Waray folkloric ditty, some of what this article says would, admittedly, become moot. However, the analyses and interpretations of both songs' lyrics (especially of the Tagalog version), which form much of the substantial part of this piece, would (and perhaps with certain caveats) largely remain applicable whatever conclusion a search into the songs' histories would end up with.

2. The Bisayan original lyrics and their English translations are taken from the book *Sa Atong Dila*, edited by Merlie M. Alunan.

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