

RIDDLES in FILIPINO FOLKLORE

An Anthropological Analysis

DONN V. HART

Riddles in Filipino Folklore

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL
ANALYSIS

DONN V. HART



SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PRESS 1964

Copyright © 1964
by SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PRESS
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
CATALOG CARD: 64-23338

Manufactured in the United States of America

Riddles in Filipino Folklore

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL
ANALYSIS



Plowing the field in preparation for planting corn in Barrio Caticugan. In the background a farmer rides a harrow, and some of the scattered dwellings of the village may be seen. All photographs are by the author.

128. The head is an animal,
The body is wood,
And the tail is human.
Plowing with a carabao.

For Valentín G. Montes: A Colleague

VALENTIN G. MONTES was born in Llorente, eastern Samar, in 1912. After graduating from Silliman University, he obtained a Bachelor of Law degree. Mr. Montes was practicing law in Boroñgan when we first met. Though we were strangers, he welcomed us with gracious hospitality. As an honored member of his community, Mr. Montes facilitated our residence and research in eastern Samar.

Because of a compelling urge to serve his people, Mr. Montes relinquished a profitable legal practice. He was appointed Secretary of the Department of Public Welfare of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. To his new post he brought a keen mind, an alert social conscience, and an imaginative approach to the socioeconomic responsibilities of Protestantism in Southeast Asia. By 1962, Mr. Montes was a nationally recognized leader in his chosen field.

In that year, Mr. Montes left Manila on what was to be a world tour, a crowded journey of many conferences and visitations. He died, at the height of an expanding career, in a violent airplane crash near Bombay, India, July 6, 1962. His tragic death denied his nation and his many friends the continued inspiration of this truly splendid Filipino.

Preface

A modest renaissance has occurred in the collection and, particularly, the functional analysis of riddles. This apparently universal segment of folklore is attracting the interest of an increasing number of anthropologists and folklorists. New research indicates that riddling is more than a pleasant pastime of leisure moments. Recent studies document the role of riddles in the socialization process, their use in the reduction of interpersonal aggression, and their covert reinforcement of basic societal values. The traditional definition of the riddle has been challenged. This rejuvenescence in the study of the riddle and its cultural context merely reflects an exciting ferment in the general field of folklore.

Slowly, over the past five years, this study evolved from what was originally planned as a short, unanalytical article on Bisayan riddles. Field work in the Philippines, by my wife and myself, resulted in the collection of considerable folklore materials, including riddles. Through the encouragement of Professor Archer Taylor, a decision was made to prepare our riddles first for publication. As research background material on Philippine riddles progressed, it was obvious that the time was appropriate for a general comparative and summary study of present knowledge of Christian Filipino riddles and riddling. As our fascination with this topic grew, the survey of riddling expanded to Southeast Asia and, finally, to Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

There were five basic purposes in writing this book: first, to expand the existing Christian Filipino corpus with a significant addition of unpublished riddles for an almost unrepresented cultural-linguistic group, the Bisayan Samarans; second, to explore the nature of the social context of riddling as far as available materials permitted; third, to assemble for a comparative subject analysis all Christian Filipino riddles that were scattered in published and manuscript sources; fourth, to present some hypotheses regarding the selection of riddle subjects and the riddling process in general; and finally, to investigate the value of Christian Filipino riddles in augmenting or refining the known contours of Christian Filipino culture and society.

My original research programs in the Philippines did not include any major interest in folklore. Field work in southern Negros was not focused on folklore; riddles were gathered mainly because they amused me. In eastern Samar, my research was concentrated on social organization. My wife, however, devoted all her time to the collection

RIDDLES IN FILIPINO FOLKLORE

of folklore. Exposure to her increasing body of materials gradually redirected part of my personal investigations toward folklore. In fact, and as was true for another field researcher in Africa, "the study of riddles was merely a sideline in the main stream of my work . . ." (Blacking 1961:8).

This collection of Bisayan riddles differs from other Filipino collections in both area and language. In 1950-51 (Hart 1954) and again in 1955-56, I made detailed studies of two Christian Filipino barrios (villages), one in southern Negros, the other in eastern Samar. In the latter community, my wife, Harriett Colegrove Hart, collaborated with me. Most of the Bisayan riddles presented here were gathered during these two periods of field research. Through the cooperation of Mr. Benjamin Alvarez, history teacher, St. Joseph College, Borong-an, students collected riddles on their home communities in eastern Samar.

Additional Bisayan riddles were located in published and manuscript sources. Mimeographed copies of Samaritan village histories and folk songs, written and compiled by the local teachers, contained a considerable number of riddles (Anonymous 1953 and Anonymous 1955). During our travels in the central Philippines, we searched for and examined collections of Bisayan folklore materials. These often turned out to be term reports or masters' theses of Filipino college students. Whenever these manuscripts contained desired data, a copy was requested or the riddles were excerpted. We are grateful to these young collectors and the cooperative faculties of Silliman (Dumaguete City) and San Carlos (Cebu City) Universities. After our return to the United States, a Filipino friend laboriously typed for us nearly three hundred Cebuano riddles from a little booklet printed in Cebu (De la Riente 1954). A small number of Filipino riddles published in rare French, Spanish, and German sources also are included since they are hard to obtain.

This book is organized in two parts. Part One describes the Bisayan region, with particular reference to southern Negros and eastern Samar, and our procedures for field collection in these two areas. Other major topics in Part One are the methods used to classify the riddles, their annotation, and the role of "nonsense words," and the age and sex of riddlers. These general subdivisions are followed by an analysis of the many occasions when riddles are exchanged and a discussion of the various functions of riddles. The final section presents certain principles that are crucial in the selection of Christian Filipino riddle subjects.

Part Two contains the texts of the new riddles collected in Negros and Samar or located in rare published or manuscript sources. The riddles are arranged in nineteen different subject and one miscellaneous categories. The remainder of Part Two includes the Com-

Preface

parative Notes for these riddles, an Index of Solutions, and the Appendix which is a tabular listing of all Christian Filipino riddle subjects and the number of riddles for each. A Bibliography and an Index complete the study.

A summary of general research techniques for field work done in southern Negros is part of my doctoral dissertation, processed by the Human Relations Area Files (Hart 1954). Field research techniques and problems in collecting Samaran folklore are discussed here and in another publication (Hart and Hart 1956b:207-36). Our Philippine research was made possible by Fulbright Research Fellowships. Of valued assistance in preparing the study were Mary Belle-Isle, Syracuse University; H. Otley Beyer, Museum of Archeology and Ethnography, Manila; Alan Dundes, University of California, Berkeley; Fred Eggan, University of Chicago; John Fischer, Tulane University; Ann Hayes, Syracuse University; Paul Kirkpatrick, Stanford University; John C. Messenger, Jr., Michigan State University; John Musgrave, Yale University Library; Donald Simmons, University of Connecticut; Ethel Nurge, *Current Anthropology*; Dioscoro Rabor, Timoteo Oración, and Agaton Pal, Silliman University; Mario Zamora, University of the Philippines; Valentin G. Montes; Dioscoro Ragay; Felipe Dala; Cecilia Viñas; and Lilia Hernandez-Chung. Research was facilitated by the capable staff of Syracuse University Library, particularly Marion L. Mullen.

This comparative study would not have been made if a reprint of the above-mentioned article (Hart and Hart 1956b) had not been sent to Archer Taylor, now emeritus professor of the University of California, Berkeley. His alert eye caught a footnote reference to the Samaran riddle collection, and an air-mail letter to Manila urged the publication of these riddles. His enthusiasm for riddles is irresistible. What was planned as an article on Samaran riddles grew gradually into this study. Though we had no claims on his time or expert advice, he offered both with generous abundance. He gave us Starr's rare book on Filipino riddles and lent us materials from his private library. Over the years this study was in progress, Professor Taylor sent long letters of detailed advice; in fact, we received a superb correspondence course in riddles. Always an indefatigable mentor, he furnished both guidance and encouragement. We are very grateful.

Professor Alan Dundes was most generous in responding to our ungenerous demands on his busy schedule. We are indebted to him and his impressive knowledge of riddles.

As previously stated, folklore had not been an important aspect of my original research plans for the Philippines. When we settled in eastern Samar, my wife, Harriett Colegrove Hart, began to gather folklore materials in the *población*. Each evening we discussed our day's work. As a result, more time was devoted to folklore research

RIDDLES IN FILIPINO FOLKLORE

in the barrio than was first planned. In the last analysis, this book grew out of her excellent field research and stimulation.

The publication of the field research of most cultural anthropologists should include a lengthy list of their informants' names. For many reasons, this is usually impossible. In both Negros and Samar—in fact, from Aparri to Jolo—our Filipino hosts treated us with kindness, thoughtfulness, and an almost unlimited amount of patience. Our initial ignorance of local customs resulted in some unintentional infractions that were amiably forgiven. In this sense, this book is also their book. It is not, of course, to be considered a repayment for that which cannot be repaid.

DONN V. HART

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Syracuse University
Syracuse, New York

Summer 1964

Contents

Preface	vii
---------	-----

PART ONE

The Cultural Milieu of Riddling

I. Introduction	3
II. The Bisayas: Cultural Contours and Field Collection	14
III. Riddle Definition, Classification, and Annotation	24
IV. Some Characteristics of Riddlers and Riddles	32
V. The Functions of Riddles	42
VI. The Process of Selecting Riddle Subjects	67

PART TWO

Annotated Filipino Riddles

VII. A Collection of Filipino Riddles	79
VIII. Comparative Notes	239
IX. Index of Solutions and Comparisons	268
Appendix: Subjects of Christian Filipino Riddles	283
Bibliography	291
Index	311

Tables

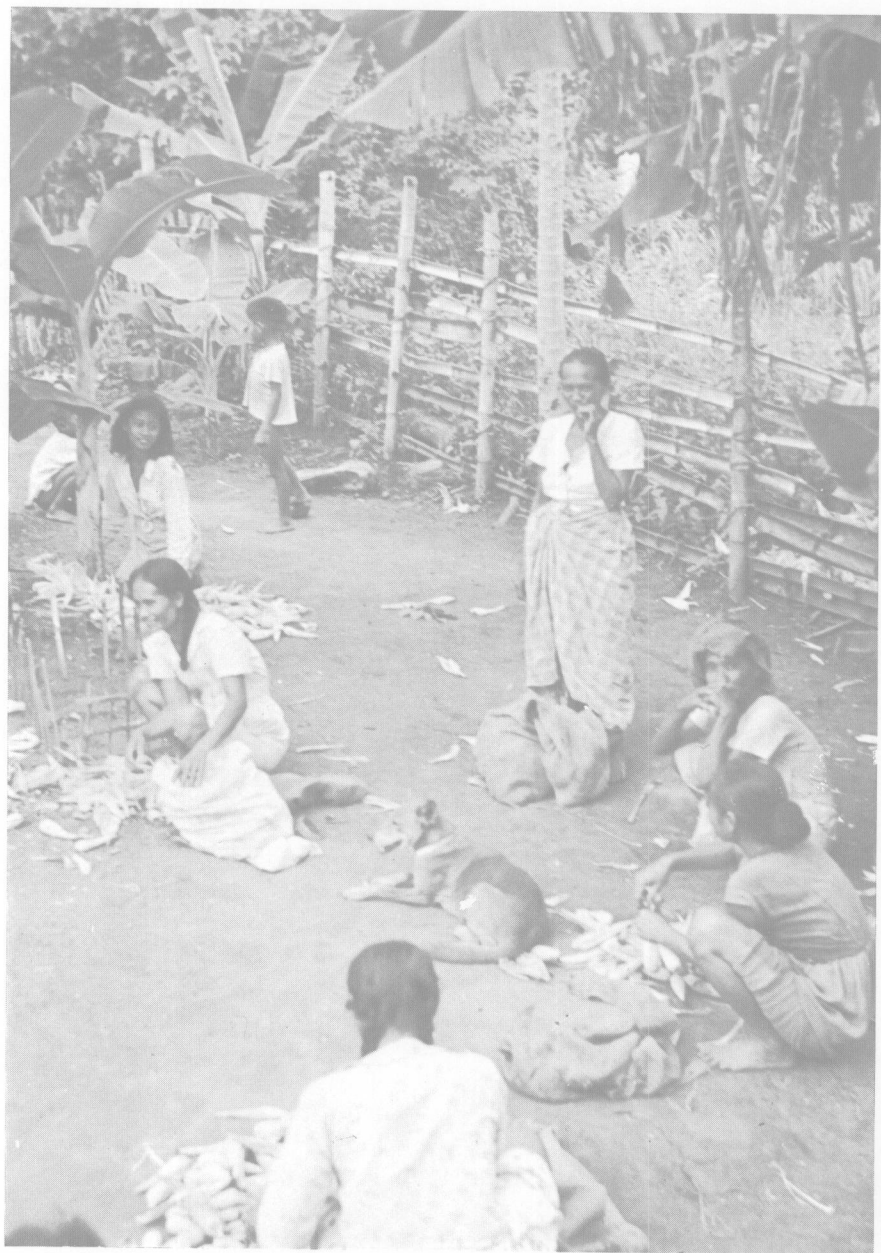
1 Christian Filipino Riddles: Sources, Cultural-Linguistic Groups, and Number of Riddles	8
2 Age and Sex of Riddle Informants in Samar and Negros	39
3 Ten Largest Riddle Subject Categories and Their Most Frequent Subjects	81
4 Holy Mary, Adam, and the Saints and Key Terms Used in Riddle Comparisons	189

Illustrations

Plowing a cornfield with carabaos	frontispiece
Women dividing harvest payment	2
Map of Christian Filipino Cultural-Linguistic Groups	16
Climbing coconut tree to obtain tuba	78
Woman weaving sleeping mat	124
Men carrying bamboo coffin	124
Trapping fish with the <i>bobo</i>	125
Muddy carabao, the village farmer's "horse"	125

PART ONE

The Cultural Milieu of Riddling



A group of women in Barrio Caticugan with their share of the corn received for harvest assistance.

121. The leaves are like swords,
The fruit are like bottles.
Corn.

I. Introduction

The past collection of riddles in the Philippines, as elsewhere, "has been casual and unsystematic" (Taylor 1951:2). Only a handful of riddles have been published for several major Filipino cultural-linguistic groups. No riddles are available for Muslim Filipinos (Moros), and collections exist for only a few of the many pagan groups. Most published riddle lists are unannotated, some appear in only English translation, and few describe the specific region or method of collection. Riddles are scattered as "fillers" in out-of-print dictionaries, defunct popular magazines, newspapers, and theses of Filipino college students. Pamphlets of riddles are printed by provincial presses for marketplace sale. Riddles are included in some local histories prepared and mimeographed by public school teachers.

More than half a century has passed since any folklorist has shown scholarly concern for Christian Filipino riddles. The majority of published Filipino riddles are limited mainly to Tagalogs and Ilokans. Riddles from the numerically largest group of Christian Filipinos, the Bisayans, are scarce. Important, analytical studies of Christian Filipino riddles are nonexistent. Only tantalizingly vague references have been made regarding the varied uses and social context of riddling.

This book presents 570 hitherto unpublished Bisayan (Cebuan, Panayan, and Samaritan) riddles collected in southern Negros and eastern Samar or obtained from manuscripts. An additional 374 Bisayan riddles, gathered from rare published sources, are also included. Published Bisayan riddles were obtained from six sources (Akean 1957; Cruz 1952; De la Riarde 1954; Sánchez 1914; Scheerer 1921; and Starr 1909). Six of the eight riddles listed in Cruz' thesis (1952) were later published. The difficulty of examining these fugitive collections, not reprinted in more recent sources, justified their inclusion. For the same reason, three small non-Bisayan riddle collections are also added (Ayer MS 1716; Giovanetti 1911; and Reyes y Florentino 1889).

These new Bisayan riddles give a better balance to this segment of Philippine folklore, for Bisayan Filipinos are the country's largest group. The outer dimensions of our ignorance of Bisayan ethnography have contracted significantly during the last decade. Bisayan folklore, however, has been grossly neglected, and "... any ethnographic study which does not consider folklore can be only a partial and incomplete description of the culture as a whole" (Bascom 1953:284). Hopefully, this systematic body of riddle collectanea will stimulate

RIDDLES IN FILIPINO FOLKLORE

others, particularly Filipinos, to investigate more thoroughly for the Philippines what is generally "an unexplored field in the topography ... of popular literature" (Taylor 1951:7).

The earliest located reference to riddling in the Philippines was found in Alzina's *History of the Bisayan Islands* (1668). He reports:

Nor do they [Samarans] lack stories and riddles for the evening in the house. They call the [riddles] *Titigoon*. They have many of them and they are very clever and difficult to solve. (Lietz 1960:142)

The earliest located Christian Filipino riddle texts (two Ilokan riddles) appear in a 1716 manuscript (Ayer). The Tagalog dictionary of Noceda and Sanlucar, first published in 1754, contains seventeen riddles (Gardner 1941:viii and also Noceda and Sanlucar 1860). Shortly before the Spanish-American War, José Rizal, the martyred patriot of the Filipinos, published a short collection of Tagalog riddles (Rizal 1889). In the same year, Isabelo de los Reyes y Florentino included thirty Ilokan riddles in his book on Filipino folklore. These short collections of the Spanish period, solely from Luzon, furnish us, at best, with a vague baseline.

During the first decade of the American period, Christian Filipino riddles attracted the attention of Dr. Frederick Starr who came to the Philippines to teach. His university students from Luzon and an American schoolteacher in Panay collected riddles for *A Little Book of Filipino Riddles* (1909). The preface to this notable collection of 416 riddles was the first attempt to analyze some of their characteristics. His little book has now become rare and does not appear to have stimulated further investigation of riddles.

Published collections of Christian Filipino riddles occasionally appeared in the years prior to World War II. A visiting European published a handful of riddles, collected from "un Américain qui étudie le folk-lore publie des devinettes des habitants des îles Philippines" (Giovanetti 1911). Scheerer included some Aklan riddles in his analysis of the Aklan language. An American schoolteacher in the Philippines published a short collection of riddles from Mindoro in *The Journal of American Folklore*. A series of riddle collections appeared in the prewar *Philippine Magazine*, reflecting the editor's (A. V. H. Hartendorp) intense interest in Filipino peasant culture.

After the war, several folklore theses of Filipino students contained brief sections devoted to riddles (Pajo 1954 and Dignadice 1955). During this period, the most extensive collection of riddles from pagan groups was published. Recently, two riddle collections, one in Cebuan, the other in Tagalog, have been printed in the Philippines (De la Riarte 1954 and Santos 1958). Unfortunately, these two sources neither identify the specific collection localities, nor

Introduction

annotate the riddles, nor do they discuss riddling. It is impossible to be sure that some riddles in these collections were not taken from previously published sources without acknowledgement.

Whereas a large number of riddles for pagan Filipinos has been published, the groups represented are extremely limited. Father Vanoverbergh gathered riddles from the Isneg and Kankanay of northern Luzon (Vanoverbergh 1952 and 1953). The Kalinga are represented by twenty-four riddles in the Lubuagan dialect (Wilson 1954). A list of fifteen "Igorot" and forty-two riddles from the Besao area in the Mountain Province exist (Sibayan 1939; Anonymous 1956). Riddles were collected recently from the primitive Bagobo of Mindanao (Manuel 1962b). Adult Bataks (Palawan) disclaimed knowledge of riddles, but *pa'igumun* is their word for riddle (Warren 1964:113).

No riddles or references to riddling were located for Muslim Filipinos residing in the southern Philippines. *Antūka* is the word, however, for "riddle" for the Magindanao Muslims of Cotabato, Mindanao (Porter 1903:57). Charles Meeker's little-known *Folk Tales from the Far East* (i.e., the Philippines), first brought to our attention by Morton J. Netzorg, contains a tale, "The Wise Moro and the Hindu Riddle Guesser" (Meeker 1927). In this story, a Muslim Filipino from Sulu asks riddles of a Hindu fakir. These riddles, however, appear later in another publication by the same author (1933), and are, undoubtedly, of Tagalog origin.

Our field work did not include studying pagan Filipinos. Since an ethnographic analysis of riddles requires detailed knowledge of the group's culture and language, only Christian Filipino riddles have been extensively utilized for comparative purposes. Nevertheless, some limited references are made to this corpus.

The Philippines was a Spanish colony for nearly four hundred years. Spanish influence lays heavily on all Christian Filipino folklore. Fansler has commented on this problem in *Filipino Popular Tales*:

While the most obvious sources of importation from the Occident have been Spain and Portugal, the possibility of the introduction of French, Italian, and even Belgian stories through the medium of priests of those nationalities must not be overlooked. Furthermore, there is a not inconsiderable number of Basque sailors to be found on the small inter-island steamers that connect one end of the archipelago with the other . . . How or when this material reached the Philippines is hard to say. The importation of Arabian stories, for example, might have been made over many routes. The Hindoo beast-tales, too, might have quite circled the globe in their progress from east to west, and thus have been introduced to the Filipinos by the Spaniards and Portuguese. Again,