

JUAN PUSONG: THE FILIPINO TRICKSTER REVISITED¹

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Introduction

One of the most popular characters in Filipino folklore, Juan Pusong (or Tamad), has been largely disregarded by Filipino folklorists and those interested in the oral literature of the Philippines. This article re-examines, and adds too, the extensive existing corpus concerning this mercurial figure. The basic data are 141 tales, some published, some from unpublished manuscript sources, and the rest collected in the field by the authors. Among the topics which this article discusses are Pusong's physical appearance, family background, social class and personality traits. Basic motifs of these tales are also examined, including Pusong's success in his contests with others and his means of achieving victory. The distribution of Pusong tales among different Filipino cultural linguistic groups is briefly surveyed. A comparison is made between Pusong and other folkloristic tricksters. Finally, new Pusong tales, gathered in rural and urban communities in Samar and Negros, are presented with commentary on their relationships to the entire corpus.

The Philippines: Background Sketch²

Three is a significant number for most Filipinos. It represents the three major geographical divisions of the archipelago as symbo-

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² Donn V. Hart, "Christian Filipino Society Approaching the 21st Century," *Silliman Journal* 18 (1971):21-55.

lized in the nation's flag — the northern island of Luzon, the central cluster of islands known collectively as the Bisayas, and the southern island of Mindanao and its appendage, the Sulu Archipelago. The population of the Philippines traditionally is divided into three broad categories. The largest group is composed of Christian Filipinos who occupy the lowlands of the nation and its cities. The second largest group, concentrated almost entirely in southern Mindanao and Sulu, is the Muslim Filipinos or Moros. The last group is the smallest, the hill or mountain people (primitives) who live mainly in the forested uplands of northern Luzon, Mindoro, Negros, Panay and Mindanao.

All Philippine languages are similar in phonetic and grammatical structure; they belong to the Austronesian linguistic family, with their closest affinity to Indonesian languages. There are approximately 75 main linguistic groups in the country. However, linguistic diversity should not obscure the fact that most Christian Filipinos will find their mother tongue on this list of eight — Ilokano, Tagalog, Pampango, Bikolano, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, and Samareño. English is still widely spoken in the country but today a slightly larger percentage of Filipinos speaks Filipino, the national language based on Tagalog.

Three, as a symbol of the Trinity, is of additional significance because most Filipinos are Catholics. This is their heritage of nearly 400 years of Spanish contact (1521-1898). Spain's greatest impact on the Philippines was to transform the archipelago into the only Christian nation in Asia. Although Filipinos were extensively Hispanized, the process of acculturation was not uni-directional. There was both the Hispanization of lowland Filipino culture and society and the Filipinization of diffused Spanish customs. This dual process is of utmost importance in understanding Philippine folklore.

As a result of a series of complex later events, with the end of the Spanish-American war, the Philippines became the United States' sole possession in Southeast Asia. In the four decades the United States governed the Philippines, Americans established a national public educational system based on instruction in English. Church and state were separate. Giant steps were taken to improve sanitation, expand medical facilities, and end epidemics. After the destruc-

five Japanese occupation of the country during the Second World War and an equally ruinous liberation of the nation, the Philippines gained independence in 1946. In 1972, formal democracy's stormy history in the Philippines ended, at least temporarily, in a "benevolent" dictatorship by its president — after a hectic period of crises (both real and managed).

Research Areas

Bisayan Filipinos are the largest cultural-linguistic group in the Philippines. They live in the major islands separating Luzon and Mindanao — Panay, Negros, Cebu, Bohol, Leyte and Samar and on many smaller islands. Three major sub-groups of Bisayans are identified; each speaks a related but different language. Those who speak Cebuano reside mainly in Cebu, eastern Negros, Bohol, and western Leyte. Those who speak Ilongo or Hiligaynon are concentrated in Panay and Western Negros. The third group, who speak Samareño live in eastern Leyte and Samar. The northern part on Mindanao is occupied primarily by Cebuano-speaking Bisayans.

In 1955, the authors live in Borongan, a small town of about 5,000 people in eastern Samar. Harriett Hart spent full time collecting folklore in this town and the adjacent rural communities. Donn Hart did collecting in Barrio Lalawigan, a village of nearly 900 peasants about five miles south of Borongan. Elsewhere the authors have written about the corpus of more than 750 tales they collected in eastern Samar, including a detailed description of their field research techniques.³

In 1964, the authors returned to eastern Negros. In 1950, Donn Hart had begun research in Barrio Caticugan, a village of about 750 people 35 miles southwest of Dumaguete, the provincial capital of Negros Oriental province. During 1964, Donn Hart resided in Caticugan, while Harriett Hart collected folklore in Dumaguete and Siaton, a small town about two miles south of Caticugan. Previous pub-

³ Donn V. Hart and Harriett E. Hart, "Collecting Folklore in Eastern Samar," *Silliman Journal* 3 (1956):207-236. This article discusses the selection and training of our assistants in eastern Samar, introduction to the communities, location of informants, collection milieu, problems and interview and questionnaire schedules used with most informants.

lications have described various aspects of life in these communities (and those in Samar), including their folklore.⁴

In 1955, Borongan was a typical small Philippine town with a plaza bordered by an old stone Spanish church, the public hall, and a post-war private Catholic college. Although most residents of Borongan were Catholics, there was a small Protestant church in the town. Eastern Samar, then and now, is isolated from its western shores by a central mountain complex that is forested and largely uninhabited. Bus transportation provided minimal services to towns along the eastern coast and to nearby Leyte, to the west, ferrying the narrow strait between the two islands.

The residents of Lalawigan were all Catholics whose livelihood depended on fishing and rice agriculture. The main cash crop was Manila hemp (abaca). Residences were made of bamboo and palm thatch, raised several feet above the ground on poles. In each house was a family altar with saint figures, usually including the patron saint of the village. Community life centered around church affairs, the annual patron saint's fiesta, school programs, and the rituals and festivities associated with baptism, marriage, and death.

Dumaguete had a population of 35,000 in 1964. It consisted of several major streets of movie houses and stores — hardware, tailor, grocery, and general merchandizing. There were four hospitals and three private colleges and universities in the city. The major educational institution was (and is) Silliman University, founded by American Presbyterians in 1901. The local airport provided flights to nearby Cebu, to Manila, and to cities in Mindanao. The urban core of the city was surrounded by villages some of whose household members worked in the city while others cultivated nearby corn fields.

⁴ Donn V. Hart and Harriett E. Hart, "Sleuthing for *Susumatons* [Folktales]," *The National Police Gazette* (Manila) 4(1956) : 11-12,15; Donn V. Hart, "A Philippine Version of 'The Two Brothers and Dragon Slayer' Tales," *Western Folklore* 19 (1960) : 253-275; Donn V. Hart, *Riddles in Filipino Folklore: An Anthropological Analysis* (Syracuse, New York, 1964); Donn V. Hart and Harriett E. Hart, "Cinderella in the Eastern Bisayas: With a Summary of the Philippine Folktale," *Journal of American Folklore* 79(1966) : 307-337; Donn V. Hart and Harriett E. Hart, "Maka-andog: A Reconstructed Myth from Eastern Samar, Philippines," *The Anthropologist Looks at Myth*, eds. M. Jacobs and J. Greenway (Austin, Texas, 1966) : 84-108; and Donn V. Hart, *Bisayan Filipino and Malayan Humoral Pathologies: Folk Medicine and Ethnohistory in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, New York, 1969).

Siaton municipality is located on the southern tip of Negros. The municipal center, of the same name, was a small town of a few thousand people. The Catholic church dominated Siaton's plaza. Nearby were the public marketplace, a few stores, the elementary school, and a small Catholic college. There were several small Protestant groups in Siaton. In 1964, Siaton was about two hours by bus from Dumaguete.

Caticugan (with about 750 residents in 1964) was reached by wading the shallow Siaton river. The villagers were subsistence-agriculturalists; they primarily grew corn and some rice. Caticugan and Lalawigan did not have electricity or running water. The priest nearest to each barrio (village) was the one who resided in the nearby town. Both villages were peopled by single-class subsistence farmers or fishermen. No drastic social or technological innovations were found to have occurred in these communities during the past several decades. The people shared many characteristics: most still reside in whichever village they were born; mate selection was localized; and the means of living were precariously insecure.

Sources of Tales

It was these Bisayan communities, both rural and urban, that the 56 Pusong tales this article analyzes were collected, primarily by Harriet Hart. The tales were collected either by longhand or a tape recorder. Their translation into English was facilitated by personally trained research assistants who were local residents.

A second source of unpublished tales utilized in this article are Silliman student reports presented to Professor Timoteo Oracion for his introductory folklore course. Students gathered the tales in their home communities during vacation. They were presented in English. Since most Silliman students came from the Bisayas, their tales, with some exceptions, were collected in the vernacular of this region, including northern Mindanao. Two master's theses dealing with folklore were also examined.⁵

⁵ Fe Java Dignadice, "A Critical Study of Folklore in the Western Visayas (Antique, Capiz, Iloilo, and Negros Occidental)" (Dumaguete, Philippines, 1955). M.A. thesis in English. Maria Caseñas Pajo, "Bohol Folklore" (Cebu City, Philippines, 1954). M.A. thesis in English.

A third source of tales was obtained from printed sources, including Dean Fansler, Gardner Fletcher, Mabel Cole, Berton Maxfield, W.H. Millington, H. Arlo Nimmo, Maria Coronel, and others.⁶ Other tales, often taken from those sources and then rewritten, were found in books published primarily for use in the schools or for the general public.⁷

Finally, the published folklore of primitive groups in the Philippines was searched e.g., Bagobo, Bontoc, Ifugao, Tinguian, Nabaloa, Apayao, and Mangyan. With a single specific exception, no tales about Pusong were found in this quite large group of publications. On the other hand, tales about Pusong (and his prototype, Pilandok) appear to be popular among some Muslim Filipino groups.⁸

Since Pusong tales often are boldly erotic, or emphasize scatological themes, student reports and especially published sources intended for public school or popular consumption bowdlerized such tales. However, it is believed that most student reports do not suffer

⁶ Dean S. Fansler, *Filipino Popular Tales* (Hatboro, Penn., reprinted 1965); Harriott E. Fansler, *Types of Prose Narratives: A Textbook for the Story Writer* (Chicago, Illinois, 1916); Berton Maxfield and W. H. Millington, "Visayan Folktales," *Journal of American Folklore* 19 (1906): 97-112; H. Arlo Nimmo, "Pusong, Trickster of Sulu," *Western Folklore* 29 (1970): 185-191; Herminia Q. Meñez, "Juan Tamad: A Philippines Folktale Hero," *Southern Folklore* 35 (1971): 83-92; Maria Delia Coronel, *Stories and Legends from Filipino Folklore* (Manila, Philippines, 1968); Juan Francisco, "Themes in Philippine Folk Tales," *Asian Studies* 10 (1972): 6-17; Clara K. Bayliss, "Philippine Folk-Tales," *Journal of American Folklore* 21 (1908): 46-53; and Lucette Ratcliffe, "Filipino Folktales," *Journal of American Folklore* 62 (1949): 298-308.

⁷ Gaudencio Aquino and others, *Philippine Folktales* (Quezon City, Philippines, 1969); Gaudencio Aquino, *Philippine Legends and Fables* (Manila, Philippines, 1972); Manuel Arguilla and Lyd Arguilla, *Philippine Tales and Fables* (Manila, Philippines, 1965); Ismael V. Mallari, *Tales from the Mountain Province: From Materials Gathered by Laurence L. Wilson* (Manila, Philippines, reprinted 1969); F. Landa Jocano, *Myths and Legends of the Early Filipinos* (Quezon City, Philippines, 1971); Maximo Ramos, *Tales of Long Ago in the Philippines* (Manila, Philippines, 1953); Maximo Ramos, *Philippine Myths and Tales for Young Readers* (Manila, Philippines, 1957); Laurence L. Wilson, *Apayao Life and Legends* (Manila, Philippines, reprinted 1967). The shortcomings of these sources are discussed by E. Arsenio Manuel, "On the Study of Philippine Folklore" in Antonio G. Manuud, ed., *Brown Heritage: Essays on Philippine Cultural Tradition And Literature* (Quezon City, Philippines, 1967): 262.

⁸ Nimmo, *op. cit.*; Coronel, *op. cit.*; Robert D. McAmis, *An Introduction to the Folk Tales of the Maranao Muslims of Mindanao in the Southern Philippines* (Chicago, Illinois, 1966).

greatly from this limitation because the tales that would be told students would be selected to meet their expectations.

Filipino folklore as the folk knows it often deals with excrement, breaking wind, or illicit coition. For many Filipinos, especially those in the villages, these themes are not considered as offensive as they would be to most westerners or urbanized Filipinos. Finally, scholarly works published dealing with Pusong, especially those printed during the early part of the 20th century, did not escape censorship. Gardner suppressed some tales about Pusong he felt were "too coarse for Western ideas."⁹

In summary, it is believed that few Pusong tales published in English have escaped our notice. Moreover, the corpus of these tales has been increased by more than one-third by the addition of stories collected in Samar and Negros.

Pusong's Name

The two most common names for this Filipino trickster are Juan (Suan) Pusong (Posong, Osong, or Puson) or Tamad. He may also be called just Juan with no surnames. Most tales in Fransler refer to him as Juan the Fool or, only in one tale, Juan Loco. Gardner suggests that, in English, Juan Puson translates as "Jack Paunch".¹⁰ Generally speaking, Juan usually is called Pusong by Bisayans, while Tamad is his more popular name among non-Bisayans, e.g., Tagalogs. In six tales he is known as Pilandok, Padol, Masoy, and Andres.¹¹ Finally, in some tales he remains unnamed, but his character and actions quickly identify him as Pusong or Tamad.

Table 1 gives the various meaning of *pusong* or *tamad* in seven Philippine languages. The most detailed definition of *pusong* is in Wolff's dictionary where the word is said to mean

a person who is good in putting up a front of innocence when committing mischief, so called from the character Huwan Pusong of folk tales who is always getting the better of people.¹²

⁹ Gardner, *op. cit.*, 104.

¹⁰ Gardner, *op. cit.*, 104.

¹¹ Ramos, *op. cit.*, (1953); Ramos, *op. cit.*, (1957)192; Coronel, *op. cit.*, 516; Fransler, *op. cit.*, 332; and McAmis, *op. cit.*, 101.

¹² John U. Wolf, *A Dictionary of Cebuano Visayan* (Ithaca, New York, 1972) : Vol. 2 : 811.

As Table 1 indicates *pusong* and *tamad* have common meaning in five Philippine languages. Although the definitions of *pusong* cover a broad range, each is accurate, for Pusong is tricky, arrogant, and mischievous in addition to being a braggart, liar, knave and arrogant rogue. As will be demonstrated shortly, Pusong neither always bests his opponents nor is he always lazy and indolent. The definitions of *pusong* in Table 1 omit, based on an analysis of our corpus, such meanings as shrewd, witty, immoral, etc. The Pusong of our tales is truly a "man for all seasons."

TABLE 1
MEANINGS OF PUSONG AND JUAN TAMAD IN SEVEN PHILIPPINE LANGUAGES

Language	<i>Pusong</i>	<i>Tamad</i>
Ilokano	Arrogant, haughty, proud, lordly, imperious ¹³	*
Tagalog	Knave, arrant rogue, saucy, buffonery, foolishness, impudent, insolent, arrogant, proud, lofty, overbearing ^{14, 15, 16}	Lazy, indolent ¹⁵
Pampango	*	Lazy, indolent ^{15, 17}
Bicolano	*	Lazy, indolent ¹⁵
Cebuano	To pretend to be innocent, michievous, ¹⁸ tricky, prankster, bluffer	To feel too lazy to do ¹⁹
Hiligaynon	Liar, boaster, braggart, teller of invented stories ²⁰	Idle, lazy, indolent ²⁰ *
Samaraeño	Buffonery, foolishness ¹⁵	

* Term not used in the dictionaries consulted.

Most of our informants in Samar and Negros orally defined *pusong* as meaning tricky, cunning, unscrupulous, liar, funny, im-

¹³ Andres Carro, *Iloko-English Dictionary* (Baguio, Philippines, 195-251).

¹⁴ Pedro S. Laktaw, *Diccionario Tagalog-Hispano* (Madrid, reprinted 1965) 3 : 1100.

¹⁵ Jose Villa Panganiban, *Diksiyunaryo-Tesaurus Pilipino-Ingles* (Quezon City, Philippines, 1972) : 836.

¹⁶ Maria Odulio de Guzman, *An English-Tagalog and Tagalog-English Dictionary* (Manila, Philippines, 1966) : 642.

¹⁷ Michael L. Forman, *Kapampangan Dictionary* (Honolulu, Hawaii, 1971) : 221.

¹⁸ Wolff, *op. cit.*, 2 : 811, 975.

¹⁹ Thomas V. Hermosisima and Pedro S. Lopez, Jr., *Dictionary Bisayan-English-Tagalog* (Manila, Philippines, 1966) : 486.

²⁰ Panganiban, *op. cit.*, 836, 951.

moral, etc. Some better-educated, more "Americanized" urban informants thought we should not collect stories about Pusong since they often were concerned with immoral activities. They would reflect unfavorably on Filipinos when read by Americans.

Rural informants, however, always considered Pusong's amatory adventures hilarious and never criticized them, for he was behaving like a "normal young Filipino male." Filipinos known for telling "tall tales" are said to be nicknamed Pusong. Dignadice's survey of the folklore of the Western Bisayas (Panay and Negros Occidental) described Pusong as a rustic, uncouth simpleton, but added that he was entertaining and amusing.²¹

Pusong's Physical Features, Family and Social Background and Personality Traits

With a few exceptions, Pusong's physical features, and most of his personality characteristics, are not specifically described or emphasized in the tales. His traits emerged as each tale's action unfolds. This topic, therefore, is discussed on two levels. First, on the basis of direct statements made in the tales, usually during the opening paragraphs. Second, this character delineation is expanded by an analysis of Pusong's activities in the stories. The two accounts, one based on direct statements and the other implied by Pusong's adventures, are usually but not always in agreement.

All tales were read and every direct statement about Pusong's physical appearance, age, social class, family life, and personality was recorded and collated. This is the basis for the assertion that certain features or traits were mentioned in specific tales.

Storytellers in eastern Samar and southern Negros rarely gave titles to their tales. It is assumed, therefore, that when published tales have titles, they were added by the collector or editor. For this reason, titles were excluded as sources of data in this analysis.

Pusong's age rarely is mentioned in the stories. In one tale he is a "small boy," in three tales he is seven years old, and in one tale apiece he is eight, twelve, sixteen and twenty years old. However, in most of the tales Pusong must be assumed to be a young married adult. At the start of many tales he is unmarried, although often at their conclusions he weds the princess (or rich girl) whose hand he has won through trickery or achievements. In several tales

²¹ Dignadice, *op. cit.*, 47-48.

the plot centers on his search for a wife at the behest of Pusong's worried mother.

Four tales state that Pusong is "handsome," while one tale indicates he is so ugly the princess will not marry him. Since he usually wins the girls, most listeners must assume he is physically attractive. One tale presents a detailed and certainly inaccurate (based on our corpus) description of Pusong's person — a most unflattering picture of a Filipino.

Juan is twenty years old He is short in stature. His eyes are neither bright nor dull; they are very black, and slowly roll in their sockets. His mouth is narrow. He has a double chin, and a short flat nose. His forehead is broad, and his lips are thick. His hair is black and straight. His body is round like a pumpkin and his legs are short.²²

In six tales Pusong is said to be an only child (in one, the "favorite"). Three tales state Juan lives with his widowed mother; however, numerous tales mention only his mother, although several indicate Pusong lives with his family. In a few tales Pusong's father is the main protagonist. In one tale Pusong resides with his grandmother. On the whole, Juan appears to be an only child of a widowed mother; siblings are rarely mentioned.

Invariably Pusong is a peasant, usually a farmer who lives in a village. Although some tales specifically state that Pusong, or his family, is poor, their poverty is only implied in most stories. Pusong's lower class status is everywhere made obvious in the tales. For example, in one story he must learn to wear shoes since he always had gone barefooted. The listeners are always delighted when Juan marries the princess for it is a case of a "poor boy making good."

The three most prominent personality traits of Pusong, based on specific statements in the tales, are laziness (21 tales), stupidity (12) and cleverness (9). He is also said to be a liar (6), rudiculously obedient (4), mischievous (4), a drunkard (2) and a braggart or boaster (2). Other characteristics each mentioned only once in the stories are Pusong's criminality, deceitfulness, bravery, compassion, and possession of miraculous powers. An analysis of Juan's behavior in these tales underlines these qualities but also indicates that he is immoral, selfish, greedy, generous, honest, cruel, kind, crude, disrespectful to his parents and elders, a laughable dupe, a victorious contestant, witty, rich, and a glutton.

Pusong's personality is one of mixed opposites. Although he is a complete fool or a native dupe, he is also clever, shrewd, and

²² Fansler, *op. cit.*, 339.

wise. He acts both honestly and dishonestly, humanely and cruelly, generously and selfishly. Pusong is a poor peasant yet often he marries a member of the royal family or elite class. However, there are two sides of Juan's personality that are not balanced by positive opposites. First, lazy Juan rarely is industrious, although his indolence may bring him profit. Second, his sexual immorality as a young unmarried man lacks any counterbalance. However, as already mentioned, this last aspect of Pusong's personality probably is not as negative a trait in the minds of rural Filipinos as it would be for many Americans.

Meñez's analysis of these trickster tales claims that "The emphasis in the Philippine versions is on the laziness of Juan Tamad while the Spanish analogues stress Juan's stupidity..."²³ Our analysis, based on a more comprehensive corpus for the Philippines, does not support this finding. Frequently Pusong is as stupid in his behavior as he is lazy; moreover, his laziness often is rewarded. Finally, Juan's laziness often is mixed with shrewdness and luck.

Meñez, in comparing Spanish and Philippine trickster stories, found in the former "... the conclusion is always negative. Juan gets scolded, beaten, punished, or even killed."²⁴ The conclusions of the Philippine stories are "always positive" for "... in the end, Juan becomes master of the situation and definitely subdue both [mother or wife]."²⁵ Table 2 presents data regarding the conclusions of Pusong tales analyzed in this article. Table 2 supports Meñez's statement in the sense that when Pusong is involved in a debate, he wins much oftener than he loses. However, this table underlines another crucial aspect of the tales: namely, that in about one-third of all tales, *no contest occurs*. This feature of the corpus reflects the large number of numskull tales.

TABLE 2
THE CONTEST THEME IN PUSONG TALES²⁶

<i>Wins Contest</i>	<i>Loses Contest</i>	<i>No Contest Involved</i>	<i>Total</i>
92	13	58	163

²³ Meñez, *op. cit.*, 87.

²⁴ Meñez, *op. cit.*, 87.

²⁵ Meñez, *op. cit.*, 88.

²⁶ The total of Table 2 is larger than the corpus since some tales include several contests; each contest was counted separately. A contest was defined as an event in which Pusong struggled with others for a certain goal, e.g., wealth, marriage with a princess, seduction, community prestige, besting an opponent in a verbal duel, etc.

Table 3 indicates the means by which Pusong wins his contests and the results of his victories.²⁷ In addition to many and varied tricks, the most common means are soothsaying, the substitute of another person for himself, and helpful animals. One might argue that in the tales where Pusong is aided by helpful animals, the ultimate victory should not be credited to him. His most popular rewards are marrying the princess (or rich girl), or wealth, illicit sexual intercourse, prestige, or merely the pleasure of defeating his opponent.

TABLE 3
HOW PUSONG WINS HIS CONTESTS AND THEIR ASSOCIATED RESULTS*

<i>How Contests Were Won</i>	<i>Number of Times</i>	<i>Rewards</i>	<i>Number of Occasions</i>
Trickery	20	Marries princess or rich girl	33
Substitute another for himself	14	Wealth	12
Pretends to be a soothsayer	15	Illicit coition	12
Helpful animals (dogs, cat, monkey, eel, crab, snake, horse and bird)	11	Defeats opponent (victory is sole reward)	12
Lying	11	Gains prestige (praise from parents, community helped, local fame, etc.)	12
Disguises himself	5	Food (often in excessive amounts)	10
Uses magical objects	5	Sells wares	6
Wisdom	2	Escapes execution	5
Miscellaneous (one apiece, bribery, laziness, honesty, frightens opponents)	4	Miscellaneous (one apiece, freed from slavery, becomes sultan, gets class dismissed early)	3

* Since in many single tales Pusong wins dual or triple rewards, the totals for the two columns in Table 3 are not identical.

²⁷ Various difficulties occurred in constructing Table 3. First, trickery is a broad topic. It is an element in other means by which Pusong wins his contests, e.g., pretending to be a soothsayer. However, it was sometimes difficult to be more specific; for example, trickery in some instances was an accident, etc. Second, the numerous variants focused on one motif (e.g., how Pusong escapes from the cage by convincing another

The Philippine Distribution of Pusong Tales

With some exaggeration one might claim the distribution of Pusong tales to be pan-Philippine. They have been collected from the north to the south in the archipelago, for primitive, Christian and Muslim Filipinos. However, only one Pusong tale has been published for a primitive group, the Mangyan of Mindoro.²⁸ This tale, collected by an anthropologist, is a popular one in the Philippines — Juan sells to a gullible king an animal that is purported to defecate money. When the animal does not perform as promised, the King imprisons Pusong in a cage for his fraud. (See I: *Pusong and The Cage-in-the Sea Trick*).

Several stories were located for other primitive groups in Luzon that are quite similar to Pusong tales, although the main character is neither identified as Pusong nor Tamad. One common motif in Pusong stories is how Juan tricks his parents or friends so he may enjoy feast. The Apayao (of northern Luzon) tell about Ekkon, a "naughty boy," who tells his mother a friend blind in one eye is coming to slaughter their pig. He leaves, returns with a sticky substance he has put in one eye, fools his mother, and kills the pig. "That was the best supper that Ekkon ever had in his life."²⁹ The Tinguian and Kankanay, also of northern Luzon, tell a brief story about a man who visits a town where people replied, when their visitor asks what they were eating, that it is *labon* or bamboo sprouts. He returns home, cuts and cooks his bamboo house ladder, thinking the people had said they were eating *aldan* or the house ladder.³⁰ Numerous Pusong stories are based on the confusion over the meaning of words or purposely giving incorrect names to objects or terms.

Moss published a large number of "Trickster Stories and Fables" for the Nabaloi, again from Northern Luzon.³¹ All the tricksters

to be his innocent substitute) were counted separately; they might have been counted only once. Third, in some tales additional rewards are indirectly implied, e.g., when Juan marries the princess he eventually would become the king. However, this and other rewards are listed in Table 3 only when specifically mentioned in the tales.

²⁸ Coronel, *op. cit.*, 151-154.

²⁹ Wilson, *op. cit.*, 230.

³⁰ Fay-Cooper Cole, *Traditions of the Tinguian. A Study in Philippine Folklore* (Chicago, Illinois 1915) 14 : 198-199. In the Kankanay version the man dies from eating his residence bamboo ladder. Morice Vanoverbergh, C.I.C.M., "Tales in Lepanto-Igorot as it is Spoken at Baco," *University of Manila Journal of East Asiatic Studies* 1(1952) : 6-118.

³¹ C. R. Moss, "Nabaloi Tales," *University of California Publications in Archaeology and Ethnology* 17(1924) : 296-353.

in his published selection are animals and no tale is a variant or duplication of our Pusong corpus. However, Moss states "A few [tales] which were told to me were not recorded on account of their similarity to lowland Filipino myths that had previously been published."³²

Although most of the standard published folklore sources for the major primitive societies in the Philippines were examined, a more comprehensive search might locate additional Pusong tales. It is our opinion, however, that Pusong tales are rarely told among these groups. Of all Filipinos, they have lived and continue to live in the most isolated areas of the country. For this reason they were the least influenced by the Spaniards and Americans or the people of folklore of these groups was "no more 'uncontaminated'" than that of Christian Filipinos.³³ The final word on this subject is yet to be written.

According to anthropologist Nimmo, "Stories of a comic trickster called Pusong are told by both the [Muslim] Taosug and Samal inhabitants of the Sulu Islands of the Philippines."³⁴ Coronel writes that

The stories of Pilandok are very many and varied. Each story shows how he manages to escape a complicated situation by his wit or lack of it. Many a situation happens due to his being a half-wit. Though generally considered a funny man, Pilandok now and then shows brilliance of mind and wit . . . He is the Muslim counterpart of Juan Tamad.³⁵

Unfortunately, Coronel published only one tale about Pilandok, collected from an informant (Muslim?) in Zamboanga city in Southern Mindanao.³⁶ Finally, the Muslim Maranao (Western Mindanao) tell trickster tales in which the central character is a man called Pilandok.³⁷ One Filipino writer equates the Maranao Pilandok with Juan Tamad.³⁸

A popular trickster of Sabah is the clever mouse-deer (Malay: Pelandok) who outwits larger animals but usually is beaten by smaller ones. The numerous tales about Pelandok (Pilandok or P'landok)

³² *Ibid.*, p. 320.

³³ Fansler, *op. cit.*, xviii.

³⁴ Nimmo, *op. cit.*, 185.

³⁵ Coronel, *op. cit.*, 30.

³⁶ Coronel, *op. cit.*, 30-32.

³⁷ McAmis, *op. cit.*, 101.

³⁸ Abdullah T. Madale, "Pilandok of the Maranaws," *This Week Magazine* (Manila, May 8, 1960).

have many parallels with stories told by Muslim Filipinos in Mindanao and Sulu.³⁹ Francisco speculates that Juan Tamad may be a "modern Tagalog adaptation of the Pilandok character."⁴⁰

Pusong as a Trickster

In discussing Coyote tales, Thompson states this trickster has three roles: the beneficent cultural hero, the clever deceiver and the numbskull.⁴¹ Pusong is never a cultural hero but the tales in this article vividly illustrates that he is both a clever deceiver and a numbskull. As indicated earlier, Pusong's personality is that of thesis and anti-thesis; like other tricksters he is both smart and stupid, he cheats and is cheated.⁴² He shares another trait of American Indian and African tricksters — he is a glutton.⁴³ The plots of various tales are centered on the tricks Pusong plays to obtain food to satisfy a voracious appetite. He, like other tricksters, also has his helpful companions or stooges⁴⁴ and often appears as a "retarded" child in his "... preoccupation with the humor of elemental incongruities, scatology, and cruelty..."⁴⁵

Yet the Filipino trickster differs from the general pattern of tricksters in other cultures. Pusong is human, and normally without supernatural qualities. Our Filipino trickster does not give Filipinos their basic cultural equipment (e.g., fire, plants, etc.) or important customs that determine and guide their behavior.⁴⁶ But it is not "inaccurate to call him a 'Trickster'"⁴⁷ for he is both intelligent and clever. Pusong often plays wilful tricks on his opponents, displaying both brilliance and cunning.

³⁹ Juan R. Francisco, "Some Philippine Tales Compared with Parallels in North Borneo," *Sarawak Museum Journal* 10(1962) : 511-523. Also see George Jamuh, Tom Harrisson, and Benedict Sandin, "Pelandok, The Villain-Hero—In Sarawak and Interior Kalimantan (South Borneo)," *Sarawak Museum Journal* 10(1962) : 524-534.

⁴⁰ Francisco, *op. cit.*, 518-519; McAmis, *op. cit.*, 101.

⁴¹ Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (New York, 1951) : 319.

⁴² Linda Degh, "Folk Narrative" in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed. Richard Dorson (Chicago, Illinois, 1972) : 68.

⁴³ Thompson, *op. cit.*, 326; Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York, 1956) : 155-156; Susan Feldman, ed., *African Myths and Tales* (New York, 1963) : 15-16.

⁴⁴ Maria Leach, ed., *Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Tales* (New York, 1936) : 1124.

⁴⁵ John Greenway, ed., *The Primitive Reader. An Anthology of Myths, Tales, Songs, Riddles, and Proverbs of Aboriginal Peoples Around the World* (Hatboro, Penn., 1965) : 57.

⁴⁶ Radin, *op. cit.*, 156.

⁴⁷ John Greenway, *Literature Among the Primitive* (Hatboro, Penn., 1964) : 72.

Greenway concludes that of all primitive narratives, Trickster tales are the most offensive to Euramerican readers because of his habit of committing unnatural sexual acts and wallowing in excrement.⁴⁸

Pusong tales discussed in this article (and others not included) illustrate the prominence of excrement in their plots. The feature is a common characteristic of Filipino folktales that do not involve Pusong. Yet Pusong for all his sexiness never commits an unnatural sexual act. This is not because deviant sexual practices are unknown in the Philippines. Male and female homosexuality, including transvestism, are part of life in Caticugan and Dumaguete.⁴⁹

Finally, Pusong has another prominent trait usually not associated with trickster stories in other societies — his abnormal indolence. In one tale collected from a female informant in Eastern Samar, Pusong was so lazy that he did not brush his teeth or wipe his mouth after eating. During the night the rats smelled the odor of food in his mouth as he slept in bed.

The rats began to eat Juan's lips. He expected his wife to drive them away. His wife was watching and expecting her husband to drive them away. In the morning Juan's lips had been eaten by the rats.

"Why did you not drive the rats away?," asked his wife. "Look at your handsome face now!"

The wife was so angry she left Juan. They were separated because of Juan's laziness.

Yet Pusong's laziness may be rewarded. In one tale (collected in Samar) he was so lazy that he threw his wife's valuable golden hairpin at the thieving birds in their fields. Later the hairpin was found in a bush that grew where a buried treasure was found. So in some tales Pusong's indolence is profitable either through luck or shrewdness.

One Pusong tale ends by the storyteller commenting on his character. But are there different Juans asked the granddaughter?

Oh yes there are many kinds. There is Juan whom they sometimes call Suan who is lazy and full of bragging lies and other Juans who are not as lazy or stupid as they seem. How can you tell which Juan is which? You can never tell chuckled the grandmother. You only wait and see.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁴⁹ Donn V. Hart, "Homosexuality and Transvestism in the Philippines: The Cebuan *Bayot* and *Lakin-on*," *Behavior Science Notes* 3 (1969) : 211-248.

⁵⁰ Arguilla and Arguilla, *op. cit.*, (1965) : 81.

In conclusion the Juan Pusong (or Tamad) stories remain a luxuriant and relatively unexplored field for folklorists interested in trickster tales. Numerous generalizations about Trickster tales remain either inaccurate or incomplete since they do not include data from the Philippines — and the rest of insular Southeast Asia. Juan Pusong urgently needs to be “revisited” by folklorists.

New Pusong Tales from the Bisayas

Space prohibits the inclusion in this article of all 56 Pusong tales collected in Eastern Samar and Southern Negros. This section presents a selection of these stories arranged around popular Pusong plots. When variants were collected for the same tale, the “best” example is given, e.g., the longest tale that has the greatest detail, internal consistency, etc. The footnotes indicate the variants for each tale, as found in student reports, theses, and published sources. A brief summary of the basic plots of all the tales in each group precedes the presentation of the story actually gathered in Samar or Negros.

I. Pusong and the Cage-in-the-Sea Switch

Fifteen variants of this tale were collected in Samar or Negros and located in the other sources previously described. Versions of this tale occur among Christians, Muslim, and primitive (Mangyan) Filipinos.

Pusong is imprisoned in a cage (fish trap or chicken coop) by the king (paymaster or captain of a ship) because he: 1) courted a princess; 2) had illicit sexual relations with a queen; 3) sold an animal (carabao, chicken, etc.) that he fraudulently claimed defecated money; 4) claimed the owner's cows he watched were buried in the ground (when only their severed tails had been covered); or 5) broke the law.

Pusong is placed in a cage to be dropped into the sea. He manages to trick someone (executor, judge, friend, student, fisherman, etc.) to enter the cage as a substitute (often falsely claiming he was in the cage because he refused to marry the princess). Pusong “miraculously” returns from the sea, claiming his executor's deceased parents or other relatives lived under the sea, possessed great wealth, and wanted to see their kinsman. After the cage with the executor is thrown into the sea, Pusong claims the bubbles, feces, blood (said

to be wine) and other signs indicated he was being welcomed by his relatives. Actually, he drowns. Pusong marries the princess, becomes rich, and, by implication or direct statement, is proclaimed king or sultan.

Story No. 1

There is a story from the olden days about Juan Pusong. Juan Pusong was a watcher of cows. The cows were in a corral along the beach. One day Pusong went to the corral to inspect the cows. What he did was to cut off the tails of all the cows and bury them in the ground so only their tips showed. He then opened the corral and drove the cows into the forest. After this he reported to the king. He told the king:

‘Señor, all the cows in the corral burrowed into the sand except for their tails that are still sticking out.’

The king walked to the corral with Pusong; there were no trucks [i.e. buses] then. The king was worried what to do when he saw only the tails of his cows exposed. He ordered Pusong to go to the queen to borrow a *sadol*. [*Sadol* in Samarang means a type of pick but also, by double-entendre, coition]. Pusong went to the queen. On his arrival at the palace he told the queen:

‘Señora, I was told to come for the *sadol*.’

‘Oh, you foolish Pusong, get out of here,’ the queen said.

Pusong went to the king at the corral and told him:

‘The queen does not want to give me the *sadol*.’

‘Go again and get the *sadol* from the queen,’ ordered the king.

Pusong ran to the palace and said to the queen:

‘Señora, I was told to *sadol* by the king. So the queen permitted him to “*sadol*” her.

‘Where is the *sadol*?,’ the king asked Pusong.

‘Oh, I lost it on my way. I don’t know where it is now.’

The king returned home with Pusong. The queen told the king that Juan Pusong had come and ‘made foolishness’ [coition].

‘He asked for *sadol* and I gave him *sadol*,’ said the queen.

The king imprisoned Pusong in a cage. The cage was built along a path. To the many who walked past along the path, Pusong kept shouting:

‘I don’t want to marry the princess!’

The princess was the most beautiful girl in the city. She was like Miss Philippines. Friends of Pusong passed while he cried out:

‘I don’t want to marry the princess.’ A prince asked Pusong:

‘What did you say?’

‘The princess is forcing me to marry her but I don’t want to,’ answered Pusong. They agreed to change places on the next day.

‘I’ll come and take your place. Will that be all right?’ said the prince.

‘Well, if you would like to marry the princess, that’s all right with me,’ Pusong said. [Here the informant commented: ‘Pusong is very tricky.’]

Early the next day, about 5 a.m., the prince came in full uniform. Pusong gave him the key and he opened the cage.

The prince took off his uniform and exchanged it for Pusong's clothes. He took Pusong's place. Pusong closed the cage.

'Be sure to say you want to marry the princess,' Pusong said.

Then Pusong strutted around in the uniform with its sword like a real prince. Many people passed the cage saying:

'Pusong will soon be killed by the king.' The prince kept saying:

'I want to marry the princess.'

Around 4 p.m. the King rode around in his coach. When he passed by the cage he heard the prince say:

'I'd like to marry the princess.'

The king got out and scolded the prince.

'You had better keep still, Pusong, and get ready for what will happen to you tomorrow.'

'I want to marry the princess,' said the prince.

The next day the king called his ministers and policemen and told the policemen to throw Pusong into the ocean. The policemen brought the prince in the cage and threw him into the ocean. When Pusong heard the prince was thrown into the ocean he visited the palace. When the king saw him he was surprised.

'Why, Pusong,' said the king. 'Why are you here?' Pusong told the king:

'I went to the place where your parents are living. They are rich and have a big store. They are lonesome for you. I was told to tell you to visit them.'

'Oh, what a nice place to have been to. I wish I could see my parents,' the king said.

'You can go as long as you do what you did to me,' said Pusong.

The king ordered the policemen to build a cage for him. The following day the cage was ready. The king ordered the policemen to bring him to the queen. Pusong went with him. The king said goodbye to the queen.

'I'll go with you and show you the right way to get to your parents,' Pusong said.

While sailing on the ocean Pusong tied a rope and iron bar around the king's neck. The king asked Pusong:

'Why are you tying a rope and iron bar around my neck?'

'Well, I am doing this so you will immediately sink to the place where your parents are living. Otherwise you might be eaten by the big fish around there.'

In the middle of the ocean the king was thrown into the water. Later bubbles and feces came up to the surface.

'Oh, the king is enjoying himself with his parents,' said Juan. 'They have eaten so much food that feces are floating up.'⁵¹

⁵¹ This tale was collected from a 27-year old married male Filipino, one of our best storytellers, who lived in the rural outskirts of Borongan. He said the tale was first told him by his grandfather when he was five years old. He had not retold the tale since learning it! The "moral" of the story, according to his grandfather, was that he should not grow up to be a liar like Juan Pusong. In later questioning, he said Pusong did not marry the princess — "he just went away." Pusong had buried the tails of the king's cows "to see if the king could see through his trick." Six similar versions of this tale were collected in Borongan and two in Dumaguete. Two versions were found in Oracion, *op. cit.*, 92-93, 94-101.

II. *Pusong and His Obedient Monkey Servant*

Seven versions of this tale were located, of which one was collected in Samar and another in Negros.

Juan Pusong captures (in several tales he used a tar-baby) a monkey raiding his fruit trees or field (corn or camotes). He spares the monkey's life since he promises to be his faithful servant. Several times, the monkey borrows a measure from the king (rich man) on the pretext it is required to count Juan's great wealth. Each time the measure is returned, the monkey sticks to it a silver or gold or coins of increasingly larger denominations. The king is convinced Pusong is a wealthy man; so Pusong marries the princess.

In some versions the king says that before he will agree to the proposed marriage, Pusong must own a palace, land, and animals. The monkey goes to a witch (*ingkanto* or environmental spirit or a king whose subjects are animals) who owns a palace and digs a large hole in the ground. The owner of the palace is tricked into jumping into the hole (to hear sweet music or escape a fictitious invading army) where the monkey kills and buries him. On the way to see Pusong's palace, the people he passes tells the king (on the instructions of the monkey) that their animals land belong to Pusong. Juan usually marries the princess; however, in one tale the princess refuses to wed him because he is ugly. The monkey either returns to the forest or remains a valued friend of Pusong.

Once there was a family who owned a camote field. This family has a son named Juan Pusong. He watched their camotes because monkeys often stole them. Juan made some traps to catch the monkeys. He caught one in his trap. When he caught the monkey he went to it with his *bolo* [a broad-bladed multi-purpose knife most farmers carry]. He intended to kill the monkey.

'Juan, please do not kill me. I'll be your servant,' said the monkey.

Juan still intended to kill the monkey and moved toward him. The closer Juan came the more the monkey pleaded. So Juan did not kill the monkey but brought it home with him. The other monkey in the forest no longer raided his camote field because they saw that the monkey had been caught in the trap, so they were taught a lesson.

Most of the time Juan went to the sea to fish. The monkey, because it was tame, often went to town for a walk. He did this for a long time. One day the monkey found a 50-centavo coin.

Published versions are included in Maxfield and Millington, *op. cit.*, 108-109; two versions in Coronel, *op. cit.*, 151-154, 30-32; and one version in Nimmo, *op. cit.*, 188-189.

He did not give the money to Juan. The next day he found a one-peso bill. He kept the bill, too. One day he said:

'Juan, you'll have to prepare our meals because I have a job in the town as a clerk and can no longer cook.'

Juan believed the monkey; so he no longer went to the sea, because he had to have the meals ready as soon as the monkey came home.

One day the monkey went to the king to borrow a measure. When he was before the king, he said:

"King, may I borrow your measure because Juan is going to measure his money?"

The king lent him the measure. On the following afternoon the monkey returned the measure, putting the 50-centavo coin inside it. The king saw the coin in the measure and asked:

'What does this coin you left here mean?'

'That is the money Juan wants to pay you for the use of your measure,' answered the monkey.

'No, you do not have to pay me, for I have plenty of money,' the king said.

'Juan has more money than you have,' replied the monkey.

[The informant chuckled most of the time while telling this story.]

So the king kept the coin. The following morning the monkey again went to the king to borrow the measure.

'King,' he said, 'may I borrow the measure again because Juan is going to count his money?'

'Yes, I'll lend you my measure.'

The following afternoon when the monkey returned the measure he put the one peso bill inside. The king saw the one peso bill in the measure.

'What does this one peso bill mean?,' he asked.

'That is payment for the use of your measure.'

The king told the monkey that he had plenty of money and did not need the peso.

'Juan has plenty of money, more than you have,' answered the monkey.

The monkey went back to Juan's house and asked permission to be away for a week. Juan gave him permission. So the monkey left. He went to a palace where the king was a human but his subjects were animals. He thought the palace must be enchanted because the subjects were animals. Before he entered the palace he dug a deep hole. He then went before the king.

'King, come and hear sweet music. I hear sweet music. Do you want to hear it?'

'Certainly I do. Where is it?'

'Come with me,' said the monkey.

The king followed the monkey to the hole.

'Put your ear to this hole and you will hear the sweet music,' said the monkey.

When the king put his ear to the hole the monkey pushed him into it and quickly buried him. He then went to the dead king's palace. There he found some keys and a bell. He rang the bell. As soon as he rang it the animals gathered before him. He said to the animals:

'You must be very obedient now, for you have a new king.'

He rang the bell again and another group of animals appeared before him and he told them the same thing.

The monkey then returned to Juan's house.

'Come with me. You will marry the princess,' he said.

'I will not be accepted by the king. He is a king and we are lowly persons.'

'Believe me, the king will accept you as the husband of his daughter.'

So Juan went with the monkey to the palace. True enough, the king liked Juan because he believed the monkey when he said that Juan had plenty of money. Juan was married to the princess.

After their marriage, the monkey told Juan about the kingdom of animals. He said Juan was going to be their king. So Juan and his wife went to that kingdom to live. Juan became their king. From that time on Juan was very rich through the monkey's cleverness.

Then the monkey asked Juan's permission to go home to the forest. Juan gave him permission. When the monkey arrived in the forest the other monkeys did not recognize him. Maybe it was his bad odor. [The informant, when asked about this odor, said it was a different odor than the other monkeys. It was the odor of humans for the monkey had lived with people for a long time]. So he lived by himself. He never went back to Juan.⁵²

III. *Pusong, The Stupid Yet Successful Vendor*

Six versions of this tale were located, including two collected in Samar and one in the Caticugan.

Juan Pusong is sent to the market (by either his mother or father to sell pork or rice cakes. On the way he "sells" his food to various animals (dog, cat, housefly, frogs, and a pig) and to his reflection in the water in a well.

The next day Juan returns to be paid. By threatening the owner of the animals and the well (or the person on whom a housefly had lighted), Juan collects. In one tale, Juan is praised by his father as a skillful vendor. In another tale, Juan "sells" his rice cakes to some frogs, fails to collect, and his mother promises never again to send him alone to the market.

Story No. 3

Pusong's father had a pig. Pusong once said to him: '*Tatay* [address term of respect, also Daddy], kill the pig so we can sell it.'

His father agreed. He killed the pig. Juan left to sell the meat in the market. On his way a housefly lighted on his meat. He spoke to the fly:

⁵² This tale was collected from a 65-year old spinster who lived in Boroñgan and first heard this story from her mother. She had rarely retold this tale. Another version was collected in Boroñgan and one in Caticugan. Versions are also given in Fansler, *op. cit.*, 352-353; Oracion, *op. cit.*, 61-62; and Arguilla and Arguilla, *op. cit.*, (1965):69.

'Do you want some of my meat? Here it is. I'll give you the meat, but you must pay me on Thursday.' He put some meat on the ground.

He went on his way. He met a dog and said to the dog: 'What, do you want some of my meat? Here is some, but you must pay me on Thursday.'

He continued and came across a well. He looked down and saw his reflection on the water.

'What are you looking at? My meat? Do you want the rest of it? You must pay me on Thursday.' He threw the meat into the water.

Pusong went home. When he arrived he said to his father: 'Tatay, my meat was bought on credit. I sold it ahead of the rest. They are all going to pay me on Thursday.'

When Thursday came Pusong went to collect his money for the meat. He saw a housefly on the head of a Chinese. He said to the fly:

'You must now pay for my meat. Give me your money.'

The Chinese thought Pusong was speaking to him.

'No, I did not buy any meat from you.'

'Yes you did,' said Juan. 'You must pay now!' He was talking to the housefly.

'If you do not pay me I shall kill you with this stick.'

The Chinese, fearing for his life, paid Pusong.

Pusong continued until he saw a dog. He said:

'You pay me. This is Thursday.' The dog ran away. Pusong ran after him until they arrived at the house of the dog's owner.

'What is wrong?' asked the owner.

'He bought some of my meat and he is supposed to pay me today. If he does not pay me I shall kill him,' answered Pusong.

The owner did not want his dog killed so he paid Pusong what the dog supposedly owed him.

Pusong continued. He came to a well. He looked down and saw his reflection in the water. He said:

'Don't look at me! Pay me! You are supposed to pay me today.'

His reflection did not answer. Pusong became angry. The owner of the well saw him. He did not want Pusong to make his well dirty so he paid Juan the amount the well was supposed to pay.

Pusong went home after he had collected all the money owed him.⁵³

IV. *Pusong: The Trickster Farmer and the "Pig Nest"*

Nine versions of this tale were located, of which four were collected in Boroñgan and Lalawigan and one in Caticugan.

⁵² This tale was collected from a 70-year old married male informant who lived in Boroñgan and first heard this story from an aunt of his father. The aunt, a schoolteacher during the Spanish period, told stories after the evening prayers. Although he has told this story many times, he has never told it to his children. Another version was collected in Negros. Two versions can be found in Fansler, *op. cit.*, 326-328; and one apiece in Gardner, *op. cit.*, 108-109; Ramos, *op. cit.*, 192-203; and Ratcliffe, *op. cit.*, 289.

Juan Pusong tricks his parents (or only his mother) into believing he has hired workers (in one tale 100 farmers) to work their field. He does this by putting hats on stumps and a *bolo* along each hat. At Juan's request his parents prepare a large feast for the workers. Juan eats the food. As a result of over-eating, he defecates, creating a large pile of excrement. He covers the pile with leaves and twigs, and returns home.

There he tells his father he has found a nest where a wild pig is delivering. He urges father to capture the pig. When his father jumps on the "nest" he is covered with Juan's feces. Realizing he has been tricked, the father lets the feces on his body dry. Later he serves the dried feces to his son, claiming they are *pili-pig* (roasted, pounded rice, a Filipino delicacy).

In one version Pusong is sent to the forest to gather *egot*, a wild edible tuber. He fills the basket with only a few tubers, gets inside, covers himself with leaves. Later his unsuspecting father carries the basket home. Juan is again sent to the forest on the same errand. This time he fills the basket with tubers but his father, thinking Pusong again has tricked him, stabs the basket with his fish spear. The tubers emit a red juice that is mistaken for Juan's blood. When he thinks his father is no longer angry with him for his trick, Pusong returns home to tell him he has discovered a wild pig's "nest," etc.

In two versions Juan is punished by his father but is not fed his own feces. In another tale he hides when his mother comes to the field where she finds out his ruse and sees the great pile of feces Juan made by eating the food for the workers.

Story No. 4

On one occasion Pusong asked permission from his father to go to their *kaingin* [a semi-permanent field cleared in the forest] that they had harvested earlier so as only grass remained. His purpose was to clear the field so they could plant camotes.

There were many big stumps in the field. What Pusong did was to make many big hats (*sadok*) from broad shaped leaves of *anahao* and put them on each stump. In the distance it looked like many persons were working in the field. As soon as he was finished he went home.

'Father, I have many workers. If I were you I would kill a big pig for them.'

Pusong and his father went near to their field. The father saw many hats and believed Pusong.

His father, being an honest man, killed one of their pigs for Pusong's workers. Pusong kept on going back and forth from the field to his father's place to see what his father was doing. When he saw his father was through cooking the pig, he told him:

'Father, it is best to bring the food to the place were my workers are.' It was almost noon and time to eat.

When they were some distance from the field, Pusong said to his father:

'Let's place the food here.'

His father followed Pusong's advice. They brought not only a cooked pig but also other food. After this his father went home and Pusong carried the food further away from the place where his father had put it. He put the food near a bent tree. He sat on the bent tree and ate and ate the food. He became full and moved his bowels. While eating he moved his bowels, ate some more, moved his bowels again, etc. But he could not eat all the food, for there was too much. The extra food was returned to where his father had put it earlier.

Pusong had made a big pile of feces. He covered it with some leaves and small branches so it looked like a nest where a wild pig was delivering. Pusong went home and told his father:

'Father, I saw a *dogmon*' [nest where a wild pig delivers].

His father went with Pusong to the *dogmon*. On their arrival Pusong told his father to jump on the *dogmon* but to do it carefully and to be sure to jump on the top for otherwise the wild pig might run away. The father jumped on what he thought was a *dogmon* and was covered with feces. Pusong ran away for he feared his father would punish him.

His father was angry but Pusong was gone.

'My goodness, how foolish is Pusong!'

His father went to the field and found the 'workers' were only stumps on which Pusong had put hats. His father got angrier. His father went home without cleaning his body. On his way home he kept thinking how to take revenge on Pusong. He stayed under the sun. After a long time the feces on his body were hard and brittle like *pilipig*.

He took the feces off his body and dried them again in the sun. The feces became more brittle. His father put the feces in a small basket and brought it home, hanging it from a rafter.

Pusong did not return home for nearly two weeks. The *pilipig* still was in the basket. After two weeks Pusong returned home.

'Father, do you have food for me to eat?' he asked.

Oh, Pusong, we have no food.' His father answered slowly to hide his anger.

'Don't you have anything to eat?' Pusong asked.

'There is a basket hanging from the rafter where you will find *pilipig*,' replied the father.

His father said it was even *linubi* [*pilipig* repounded with grated coconut and sugar].

Pusong got the basket and began to eat the '*linubi*.' While eating he said:

'Father, this smells bad.'

'Oh, maybe it is because we have been saving it for a long time,' his father said.

After Pusong ate all the 'inubi,' his father laughed and said:

'What you have eaten was your own feces. Because you tricked me earlier, now I have tricked you more.'⁵⁴

V. *Pusong, The Seducer*

Eight tales were collected whose plots center on how Pusong seduces women (usually princesses). Three versions come from Boroñgan, and one apiece from Lalawigan and Caticugan.

The seduction methods used, in addition to that given in the following tale, were: 1) luring the girls to bend over to listen to "sweet music" coming from a hole in the ground; 2) disguising himself as a pregnant woman to gain entrance to their bedroom; 3) tricking the princesses into permitting him to enter their warm quarters by pretending a terrible chill (two versions); and 4) telling the princesses they can go to "paradise" only after being "nailed", i.e. coition. In one additional story, Pusong actually is seduced by the princess who unties his penis when he sleeps with her. He had tied his penis to his waist so he would be unable to have intercourse, and would thereby gain her hand in marriage.

Story No. 5

One time Juan Pusong made a boat from the trunk of the *badyang*. The *badyang* is a tree whose sap makes one itch and have to scratch. After the boat was built Juan invited some young unmarried ladies (*daraga*) to accompany him on an excursion. The girls were glad to go because Juan said he had plenty of food. So they went with Juan in his boat on the river.

Before they started Juan told the ladies to pull up their dresses around their waists before sitting down. This was so their dresses would not get wet. [Informant acted out how the girls raised their dresses to their waists]. The ladies did as Juan advised. After a short time the girls' bottoms and sexual organs began to itch from the sap of the *badyang*. The girls were very uncomfortable, scratching and moving around inside the boat.

⁵⁴ This version was collected from a 56-year old married male informant living in Boroñgan; he had first heard the story when residing in Suribao, southern Samar. The last time he told the story was several months earlier to his grandchildren, the eldest being 14 years old. He said the moral of the story was not to trick people, especially your parents, for one would eventually be tricked more by the person fooled. Three versions were found in Oracion. *op. cit.*, 116-117, 58, and 78-79. The sole printed version is in Arguilla and Arguilla, *op. cit.*, (1965): 79-81. In this story lazy Juan actually plants and harvests the rice field, to the great surprise of his mother and neighbors.

Juan paddled the boat to the river bank. The girls got out. When they were out of the boat, Juan found a tree called *malobago*. He removed the bark from the tree so its trunk was barkless. When this tree has no bark it is very slippery. Juan then told the girls to climb to the top of this barkless tree so their itching would stop.

The girls climbed the tree, one by one. Because the trunk was slippery, when one almost got to the top, she would slide down. What Juan had done was to sit at the base of the tree, straddling the trunk with his legs, penis erect. As each girl slid down the tree his penis went inside her womb and they had coition. After this the girls went home and the excursion ended.

This is why Juan made his boat from the *badyang* tree and told the girls to pull their dresses up before they sat in the boat. Later the girls found out he had no food but was only bluffing.⁵⁵

No versions of the next three Pusong stories were located in published or manuscript sources. Apparently they are new additions to the Pusong corpus. Although variants of the first two stories were collected in either Samar or Negros, the tale of how Pusong killed Maka-andog was not duplicated in Negros. The many tales Samarans tell about the mythical Maka-andog have been analyzed elsewhere.⁵⁶

VI. *Pusong Wins the Princess*

Only one similar version of this tale was collected in Samar. In this version Pusong was the handsome houseboy of the king. He successfully met three challenges before he could wed the princess. First, through the help of a fish, he found the ring the princess had dropped in the sea. Second, through the help of a cat, he located a horse with wings. Finally, he was able to survive in a caldron of boiling water, emerging from this test dressed as a prince. The king beheaded his three competitors, all princes, and Pusong married the princess.

⁵⁵ This tale was collected from a 70-year old married male resident of Boroñgan who first heard the story from his father when he was a small boy. He had told it one afternoon about five years earlier when his audience consisted of children, but no girls. The audience during the time this story was collected included the informant's two married daughters and a visiting female cousin. They all thought the story amusing. This story is quite similar to one of the three variants collected by Nimmo, *op. cit.*, 186-189. The Muslim version has Pusong overhearing the seven daughters of the Sultan planning to go to their farm. He hurries there, buries himself under a tree with only his erect penis above the ground. The daughters climb the slippery tree, only to slide down onto Juan's penis. Finally the youngest girl told her sisters that the "delicious stick" was Juan's penis. This tale then continues with how Juan escapes from drowning in a fish trap by obtaining an innocent substitute.

⁵⁶ Hart and Hart, *op. cit.*, (1966).

Story No. 6

Juan was 16 years old and his mother was 53 years old. The mother supported Juan and they were very poor. There was a famine in the land so all the people were poor.

One day Juan Pusong's mother told him to cook a cup of ground corn while she went to a distant village to look for food. She told Juan not to leave the house. Juan followed her orders. He sat by the window watching the people pass. He was attracted by an old man carrying a cat. Juan asked the man where he was going with the cat.

'I'm going to throw the cat into the sea. He is not a good cat for he eats our food and chickens.'

Juan pitied the cat so he exchanged his cup of ground corn for the cat.

When his mother came home she was very angry to learn that Juan had exchanged their only cup of ground corn for a foolish cat. Juan explained he felt sorry for the cat. The next day he was again left alone in the house and told not to leave while his mother went to look for food. Again he sat by the window. This time he saw a man with a dog. He asked him where he was going with the dog. The man told him he was going to throw the dog into the sea because it ate his food. Juan offered to exchange a cup of ground corn for the dog.

The next day while he was again by the window he saw another man with a snake.

'Where are you going?,' asked Pusong.

'I am going to throw the snake into the sea. It ate six of my roosters last night.'

Juan said he would exchange a cup of ground corn for the snake. The two made the trade.

When his mother came home she was again very angry with Juan. But Juan explained that the cat, dog, and snake were very unhappy in their former homes. This was why they ate all the food. Now in their new home they would never eat any of their master's food because they would always be fed.

One day the king called a meeting of all the people in his kingdom because he wanted to find out if his dreams were true. All the people came to the palace except Juan. He did not go because he was lazy — he was the laziest person in the kingdom. The king had dreamed that his future wife lived in a kingdom under the sea. At the first meeting the king did not find any one brave enough to go to get his future wife. Then someone said there was a certain person who was the laziest person in the kingdom. He would be the one to go for he was not doing anything else.

The king sent three soldiers to get Pusong. The soldiers arrived while Pusong was eating. Juan said he would follow after he had finished his meal. Later Juan went to the palace. He saluted the king and said:

'Your Majesty, I am here and ready to do what you command.'

'Juan, get my future wife who is in a kingdom under the sea.'

Juan said he could not do this because the kingdom was under the sea. The king became angry and gave him alternative — either get his future wife in three days or be killed.

Juan went home. He was crying so loudly that when his mother returned she asked him why. He said he was commanded by the king to get his future wife from a kingdom under the sea.

'*Tatay*,' said the cat, 'I hear you crying. Tell me your troubles for I am ready to help you.'

Because Juan was very angry he threw the cat out of the window. The cat returned and said:

'Tell me what to do, for I am ready to help you.'

Juan told him the king commanded him to get his future wife who lived under the sea. The cat said he could not do that so Juan again threw him out of the window.

The snake said:

'*Tatay*, I heard you and I am ready to help you.'

Juan kicked the snake and said:

'Don't bother me.'

'Tell me what to do, for I am ready to help you.'

Juan said the king commanded him to get his future wife who lived under the sea. The snake replied:

'Very early tomorrow, at dawn, we shall eat breakfast and then go to the sea. You put me on the sand and I'll become a horse. Since you do not know where the kingdom is, listen to my instructions. You ride on my back. Remember we shall pass many houses and many beautiful girls. Do not touch any girl unless she is the right one.' So they did this.

They passed many big houses and saw many beautiful girls under the sea. They finally arrived at a big city. They were walking in the big city when they passed a small house. The snake said:

'See the beautiful girl sewing? Do not leave my back for I'll do some tricks.'

Then the snake, disguised as a horse, jumped in front of the window. The girl saw them and was attracted to the horse and said to the handsome man:

'Where are you going to sell that horse?'

Juan the foolish, pretending to be the son of the king of dry land, said:

'I'll not sell the horse because my father will get angry.'

'Who is your father?'

'The king of dry land,' said Juan.

'Well, I am attracted by the well-built body of that horse,' said the girl.

Juan invited the girl to take a ride with him. The horse whispered that once the girl was on his back they would run as fast as they could to dry land. When they were on dry land the girl could not go back to her house. She cried. They continued to the king's palace. All the people were surprised to learn how Juan had gotten the girl who lived under the sea.

The king said she would be his wife. The girl said she wanted to marry Juan since he had got her from under the sea. The king said that Juan was only one of his subjects. The girl said:

'All right, I will marry you but first you must get my ring that fell in the sea on my way here.'

The king commanded Juan to get the girl's ring lost in the sea. Juan refused but the king said:

'I'll kill you if you do not do as I tell you.'

Juan went home and cried again. The cat came and said:

'*Tatay*, tell me your troubles. I will help you.'

Juan said the king wanted him to look in the sea for the girl's lost ring. The cat said:

'Early tomorrow we will eat breakfast and then you get on my back and we will go to the sea.'

When they arrived at the sea the cat suddenly dived into the sea looking for the ring. They could not find the ring but they met a fish called *botiti*. The cat said:

'Juan, since this is a big fish I'll tickle him and he will vomit the ring.'

The fish vomited the ring. They got the ring and went to the palace, returning it to the girl. The king said to her:

'Now will you marry me?'

'I have a last request. Look for a caldron, fill it with boiling pig fat and have Juan swim in the fat,' asked the girl.

The king called Juan and commanded him to swim the next day in the boiling fat. Juan went home and cried and cried. The dog said:

'*Tatay*, tell me your troubles for I'll help you.'

'The king said I must swim in boiling fat,' said Juan.

The dog told him not to worry. Pusong was told to cut one of the veins in the dog's neck and to massage the blood over his body. He could then enjoy swimming in the boiling fat.

Early the next morning Juan cut one of the veins in the dog's neck and massaged his own body with the blood. He went to the king's palace. The king was surprised to see how happy Juan looked facing death in the boiling fat. With the sound of the trumpet Juan swim in the fat.

After swimming for one hour in the boiling fat, Juan said:

'Give me some soap. I enjoy swimming.'

The people were surprised because while swimming in the fat Juan also had become very handsome. The girl said to the king: 'Now it is your turn to swim in the boiling fat so you will become more handsome.'

The king, however, was not brave enough to swim in the boiling fat right away. He said he would do it tomorrow. That afternoon the king sent for Juan and asked him what trick he did to survive in the boiling fat.

'You have a very big dog in your palace. Cut one of its veins and massage the blood on your body,' Juan replied.

Early the next morning the king cut one of the veins of his bulldog and massaged its blood on his body. He called the girl and said he was ready for the swim. At the sound of the trumpet the king jumped into the boiling fat and died. The girl announced to the people of the kingdom that Juan was now king. All the soldiers respected Pusong because of his great deeds.⁵⁷

VII. *Pusong Pretends to be a Live Saint*

Two similar versions of this tale were collected in Lalawigan.

In one story Pusong poses as a saint when the fisherman husband of an unfaithful wife unexpectedly returns home. The husband, while

⁵⁷ The informant was a 59-year old married male residing in Siaton poblacion who had been a municipal official of Siaton for most of his adult life.

lighting a lamp on the altar, sets fire to Pusong's pubic hair as he poses there. Pusong runs away. In the second version Pusong hears a young girl tell her father she would like to have a large image. Juan gets the woodcarver, ordered by the father to make a large image, to paint him as a saint and sell him to the girl's father. One day while the girl was dusting, she raised Pusong's robe and saw his penis. The father thought the woodcarver had not finished the image. He remarked he would get a saw to remove the "unfinished piece of wood"; on hearing him Juan runs away.

Story No. 6

There was a rich king who was fond of collecting different types of images. He had many. But he was not contented with his collection. He wanted to collect more but different images. He thought of getting a living saint. He told Pedro, his house-boy, to look for a living saint. For three weeks Pedro went about the town looking for a living saint. After three weeks he returned and told the king that he could not find one.

The king could not get the desire to have a living saint out of his mind. So he asked Juan Pusong to try for another week. Juan and Pedro talked to each other about how they could find a living saint. Juan had an idea. He said:

'I will paint all of my body and pretend to be a living saint,' Pedro agreed.

Pedro told the king the following day that he had found a living saint. The king was happy and gave Pedro five hundred pesos. Juan immediately went to a store and bought different colored paints. In the afternoon Pedro painted Juan's body. Three days later the paint on Juan's body was dry. Pedro carried Juan to the palace. The king was happy to have a living saint, not knowing it was Pusong. The king told Pedro to put the image on the altar.

The following day the king left for Manila to attend a conference. He was to stay there for a long time because he would also tour the island. Before he left he told his three daughters to take good care of the living saint. Whatever he asked for should be given him. The three princesses listened carefully to their father's instructions.

After the king left that morning Juan became hungry. In a loud voice, he said:

'I am hungry. Give me some food. I am used to eating good food in heaven.'

The eldest princess quickly ran to the kitchen and got food for him. Pedro, who was listening to Juan, laughed.

During lunch time Juan again asked for food. The second princess ran to the kitchen to get food for him. In the evening Juan asked for his supper. It was the turn of the youngest princess.

The following day, early in the morning, Juan shouted that he had to move his bowels. This time Pedro carried him downstairs. The two were laughing at Juan's naughtiness. The three princess took turns in feeding Juan.

In the evening Juan thought of more foolishness. He said to the eldest princess that he wanted to sleep in her room. The eldest princess was afraid that her father might be angry with her but she consented because he had told them before leaving to give the saint all he wanted. In the morning Juan went back to the altar.

The next night Juan told the second princess that he wanted to sleep in her room. The second princess agreed. On the third night, Juan told the youngest princess he would sleep in her room. The youngest princess did not like him to stay in her room. The two elder sisters told the youngest sister that their father might be angry if she did not agree. They said:

'Remember what our father told us. He said that whatever the living saint wanted should be given him.'

The youngest princess consented because otherwise she might be scolded by her father. They took turns having Juan sleep in their rooms.

Four months later the king returned home. He was surprised to see all his daughters were pregnant. He asked them what happened. The princesses told him that it was because of the saint. The king went to his room to get a gun. Juan saw him so he left the palace as fast as he could. He went to the river and took a bath. He rubbed all parts of his body. Then he went home in time for the arrival of Pedro from the palace.

'Juan, you are called by the king,' said Pedro.

Juan and Pedro went to the palace. The king asked Juan what kind of saint he had brought him. He told the king that he did not know who the living saint was. The king could not do anything. It was his fault for wanting a living saint.

The three princesses delivered at the same time. The children of the princesses were the ones who told the king who their father was. They said.

'Our father is Juan Pusong.'

Juan was summoned by the king and told that he would be hanged because he was the father of his grandchildren. Juan said:

'Señor Hari [Mr. King], first let me explain. It was by your order that I looked for a living saint. You told me that if I did not find one you would hang me. So my life would be spared, I thought of painting myself so you would be happy.'

The king agreed that Juan was right.

'But you must marry one of my daughters,' he protested.

Juan chose the youngest princess and they were married a week later.⁵⁸

VIII. *Pusong and Friends Kill Maka-andog*

A major mythical figure in eastern Samar is the benevolent giant known as Maka-andog (Samaran, "a person who when walking creates a loud noise like thunder and shakes the earth like an earthquake"). According to our informants, he was the first inhabitant of Samar

⁵⁸ The informant was a 68-year old married resident of Boroñgan who did not remember when he first heard this story.

and also the founder of Boroñgan. He had supernatural powers, an enormous appetite, and his adventures in eastern Samar explain many local landmarks, e.g., indentations in the coral where the sinkers of his fish net rested and his "footprints" can still be seen in certain rocky coastal formations. Many stories are told by the older people of Lalawigan and Boroñgan about Maka-andog; it is not unusual that some Pusong tales would adhere to this cycle.

Story No. 7

A story is told about Maka-andog and Juan Pusong who were friends. One day the two friends had an angry dispute. Both claimed that they were stronger than any animal in the world. To settle their argument they agreed to fight to see who was stronger; the loser would become the slave of the winner. So the two men fought. Pusong struggled with all his might but to no avail. Maka-andog, famous for his physical strength and supernatural powers, merely tapped Pusong with a finger and he fell at once prostrate to the ground. Maka-andog won so Pusong became his slave.

Pusong was a faithful and obedient slave to his master. He was given a field to cultivate. He went there to work each day. Maka-andog brought his food everyday. One day Maka-andog failed to bring food, for he slept all day. Pusong became very angry with him. So he started to his home in a boat with a plan to kill his master.

On his way he met a whetstone [*kamanga*].

'Good afternoon, Pusong' said the whetstone.

'Good afternoon,' answered Pusong.

'Where are you going?'

'I'm going home to kill my master. He did not bring me food this noon and I'm very hungry. Perhaps he is still asleep.'

'If you'll only let me ride in your boat I will help you kill your master,' the whetstone requested.

Pusong permitted him to ride and the two sailed on.

While they were sailing they met an eel. Like the whetstone, the eel asked Pusong where he was going. Pusong told him the story.

'If you'll let me ride in your boat I'll help you kill your master,' said the eel.

'All right, get in the boat,' said Pusong.

The three friends then sailed on until they met a bird called *getget*.

'Good afternoon, Pusong. Where are you going?' asked the bird.

'I'm going to kill my master because he did not bring me food this noon while I was at work.'

'Will you let me ride in your boat? I will help you kill Maka-andog,' said the bird. Pusong, happy to have him, allowed the bird to ride with them.

The four friends continued sailing until they met a *copapa* [a fern frond used as a fan]. Like the other passengers *copapa* asked Pusong where he was going. Pusong told him the story.

Finally the five friends sailed on together. At last they met a big bee.

'Good afternoon, Pusong. Where are you going?,' asked the big bee.

'I'm going to kill my master because he did not bring me food this noon.'

'May I ride in your boat? I'll help you kill your master.'

'Yes, you may,' replied Pusong.

So the six continued sailing. [The informant forgot in the first telling to include the meeting with the crab, making six members for the group.] As they sailed they planned how they would kill Maka-andog. As the leader, Pusong said:

'All right, please listen to me. I'll tell you what each and everyone of us will do. Maka-andog is still sleeping. So what we will do is — we will arrange ourselves in the house. *Getget* will stay on a rafter above the place where Maka-andog is sleeping. The fan will stay by the cooking hearth. The crab will hide inside the drinking water jar. The big bee will stay by the door. The eel will lie flat on the top rung of the house ladder. The whetstone will stay on the ground, at the bottom of the house ladder. I shall shout as loud as I can in the yard to awaken the snoring Maka-andog. As he awakens he will yawn. As he opens his mouth *Getget*, on the rafter will drop his waste in his mouth as it opens.' Pusong then told the rest what their respective duties would be.

Soon they arrived at Maka-andog's house. The members of the group at once went to their assigned places while Pusong stayed in the yard. Seeing all of them were ready, Pusong began to shout as loud as he could to awaken his master. As his master opened his eyes, he yawned and yawned. Then the bird who was on the rafter began to drop his waste into Maka-andog's mouth. This forced him to rise. He ran to the kitchen. As he passed by the door, the big bee stung him. He went to the cooking hearth to build a fire for he was going to kill the bee. When he got there, the fan blew ashes into his eyes, blinding him.

Maka-andog went to the drinking water jar. He was going to wash the ashes out of his eyes. But as he dipped his hand inside the jar, the crab bit his fingers. By now he had many pains in his body so he decided to leave the house. As he stepped on the first rung where the eel was laying, he slipped and fell on the big whetstone on the ground in front of the ladder. Maka-andog broke his head and died.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ The informant was an unmarried Filipina in Boroñgan. She first heard this tale from a 44-year old married male informant who lived in Sorok, a rural area of Boroñgan city.