

Ambahan Poetry

HANUNOO MANGYAN, MINDORO ISLAND PROVINCE, CENTRAL PHILIPPINES. *This is the indigenous poetry of the Hanunoo Mangyan of Mindoro province which is inscribed using an ancient syllabic script. It is now listed in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.*



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THE AMBAHAN IS COMPOSED of poems with seven syllables, inscribed onto bamboo segments and nodes or on musical instruments and other materials using the tip of a knife. It is written using an ancient syllabic script derived from India. Widely used among the Mangyan and still being composed today, the authors are seldom or never known. The poems are descriptions of varying lengths of nature in its widest representation, or symbolic representations of a Mangyan's personal thoughts, feelings or desires.

The ambahan is recited during social occasions and without accompaniment, in courting ceremonies or when requested.

JTP



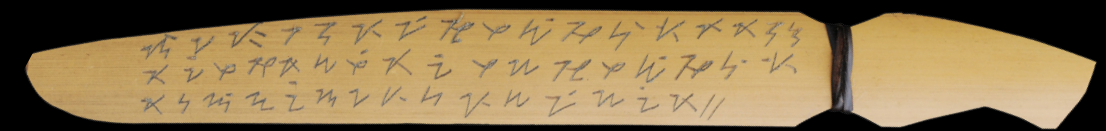
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Inscribed with a knife tip on segments of bamboo, the ambahan poetry of the Hanunoo Mangyan is written in an ancient syllabary still in use today.

Two types of Ambahan

Old – usually of substantial length, with large quantities of archaic words and with the final rhyming of “an”. It is used by adults primarily to express their more serious thoughts.

Modern – usually short, mainly with conversational Mangyan words and a final rhyme in anything besides “an”. It is used mostly by children. This often deals with everyday subjects, frequently humorous. It often appears in doublets or triplets.



*Si ay-pod bay u- pa- dan
No kang ti- na- gin-du- man
May u- lang ma- di kag-nan
May ta- kip ma- di kay-wan
Mo kang ti- na- gin-du- man
Ga si- yon di sa ad- ngan
Ga pag- tang-da- yon di-man*

You, my friend, dearest of all,
thinking of you makes me sad;
rivers deep are in between,
forests vast keep us apart.
But thinking of you with love:
as if you are here nearby
standing, sitting at my side.

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