



Hinilawod - Discovering a Pinoy epic

MANILA, Philippines - Filipino folklorists have lauded *Hinilawod* as representing our own traditions of poetry long before the coming of the Spaniards. As one writer puts it, “Epic poems and songs about the exploits of enchanted folk heroes were performed during festivities and proper occasions. Most often, these epic poems (folk epics or ethno-epics) were titled after the names of the hero involved, except for some which carry traditional titles like the *Kalinga Ullalim*, the *Sulod Hinilawod*, the Maranao *Darangan*, or the Bicol *Ibalon*.”

The story of the discovery of *Hinilawod* by renowned anthropologist F. Landa Jocano is a mini-epic itself encompassing a period of years until this longest known Filipino epic had been translated from its original oral form into the written language. Then a college student, Jocano serendipitously discovered the epic in 1955 while traveling the hinterlands of his home province, Iloilo, collecting folk songs, stories, and riddles. He heard portions of the story sung by Ulang Udig, a former *babaylan* or native priest. The portions he relayed to Jocano and his colleague was five hours on voice record.

Over the next two summers, Jocano returned to complete the recording of the epic. He was introduced to Hugan-an, mountain singer and a leader in his place known to intercede between the spirits and the human world. It took Jocano three weeks to complete the recording of the 30-hour epic poem. This more than 28,340-verse epic, when chanted, took about three days to perform if interrupted only for sleep and meals, but took three weeks when done only in the evening hours after supper. It is one of the longest epics known, even longer than *The Iliad*, which has 15,700 verses.

Jocano had since carved an illustrious career as one of the country’s anthropologist and specialist in Philippine culture. Among the honors he had earned is the rank of Marangal na Pinuno (Grand Officer) in the Philippine Legion of Honor, which was conferred by the Philippine Government. He was also named a Professor Emeritus of Philippine Studies at the University of the Philippines, the highest title that can be conferred to UP professors who made significant contributions to their fields.

A recent staging of *Hinilawod* has been performed in Dumaguete City by a group of artists and culture visionaries, Hiyas Kayumanggi. This series of musical and theatrical performance has been well-received and there has been a public clamor for reruns. Manila audiences have their chance to see this jewel of Filipino pre-Spanish culture at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) on Sept. 3 and 4.

The Manila performance is made possible through the collaborative efforts of Creative Futures Inc., a team of creative professionals venturing into meticulous and out-of-the-box conceptualization and execution of various events and productions ranging from concerts, plays, workshops, seminars, exhibits, festivals, product launches and showcases, among others.

For details about the Manila Hinilawod revival, call Creative Futures Inc. at 374-4822, 0915-4172280 and 0917-8992945, or email info@creativefuturesinc.com.

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