



The Eskaya Script

by [Hector Santos](#)

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The Eskaya of Bohol is an interesting group of people who claim to have direct connections to ancient kingdoms in Butuan, the island of Sumatra, and the Middle East. Although they appear to have very little cultural and physical differences with their neighbors, they still claim to be different. Inasmuch as there is a dearth of reliable information pertaining to this group I will summarize what is known about them— data that has come from only one man and which has not been verified against any other source for the simple reason that I have not found other sources.

Our source of information is Jes B. Tirol, who is affiliated with the University of Bohol in Tagbilaran, Bohol. Tirol had been able to get information because his father, Victoriano Tirol, Sr., was a trusted lawyer of one of the late leaders of the Eskaya society. In spite of his access to informants, Tirol acknowledges that some information is only made available via oral tradition to a few chosen people within the group. What we will be dealing with is "public" or open information that, while not necessarily secret, is not widely disseminated either.

Eskaya Books

What the Eskaya consider to be an official record of their civilization is contained in a few books (notebooks) which include *Unang Katawhan sa Bohol* (First People of Bohol) also known as *Pinay, Rangman* (encyclopedia), *Simplet* (dictionary), *Abadeha* (Origin of the Alphabet), *Cuadra* (Mechanics of the Alphabet), *Atekesis* (Botanical Knowledge), *Daylinda* (Romantic story of one chief), and *Aritmetica* (Arithmetic). The books are not dated so they could be anywhere from a few decades to a few centuries old. The Eskaya claim an ancient date for the books but the publishing date has not been verified. Suffice to say, everything we discuss has the attribute of “deniability.”

In view of the tremendous amount of fantastic information that can be gleaned from these Eskaya “books,” we have to limit ourselves mostly to the subject of the Eskaya script and their number system so we can have a manageable topic. We will also discuss briefly how the Eskaya purportedly got into Bohol.

Eskaya roots

The first Eskaya to settle in Bohol was a certain soldier-king named Dangko. He was originally from Sumatra-Manselis. Dangko, his followers and his twelve children (eleven boys and one girl) left Sumatra for unknown reasons. They first settled in Hindangan, Lanao which is now Sindangan Bay, Zamboanga. Eventually, they moved on to Tambo, Talibon in Bohol. Succeeding generations settled other parts of Bohol.

The only daughter of Dangko married a chieftain of Butuan and spread Eskaya influence in that region according to their accounts.

No dates are given for any of these important Eskaya milestones. Whenever dates are mentioned, it is not clear what calendrical system they are referring to because the dates are inconsistent with any other calendar that we know of. They are also inconsistent relative to other dated events in their accounts. For instance, Jesus Christ was supposed to have been born in 677 and the reign of Sikatuna was supposed to have begun in 1272. These dates are obviously inconsistent with everything we know about Sikatuna and Jesus Christ.

Writing system

The Eskaya writing system was devised by one man named Pinay. Again, there are no dates available for when this invention was developed. We reproduce on another page a [chart showing a subset](#) of the complete list of characters/symbols which is reported to number close to one thousand. This is what they look like:

A	ee	Δ	l.	clē	ŋ	o	o!
a	iss	ɛ	⊙	ʋ	ɔ	ō	f.:
lell	ɣ	gk	⊙	ō	ʋ	ō	ō.
Re	φ	sg	⊙	ʋ	ɛ	ō!	ō.
ur	Ay	er	ɛ	!v.	ʋ	o	u
ur	a	er	f.	ʋ	ʋ	ō	ō

What is obvious is that many symbols represent sounds which do not exist in Philippine languages or even most Austronesian languages. Consonant clusters within syllables are especially interesting as they are not natural sounds in any of the languages spoken in the region. Of course, this is what the Eskaya claim—

their language is totally unrelated to other Philippine languages. However, we know that all languages (except Basque?) are related to and have cognates with others in their family. Someday, somebody might be able to say for sure whether Eskaya is really a unique language or if, like their script, was invented by one man.

I will now try to make a few general comments on the structure of the Eskaya script. This is, of course, the view of an outsider who was never taught the script. This is the best that I can do and will have to suffice until the time comes when somebody who was initiated into the secrets of the script decides to write about it.

The basic structure of the script is that of a syllabary. Like Indic scripts, basic value of certain symbols are modified by ligatures, although only to add a final consonant. There are symbols for V, CV, CVC, CCV, CCVC, VC, VCC, CVCC, CCVCC (C=consonant, V=vowel), and diphthongs. This is why there are so many different symbols in the Eskaya script (estimated to be around one thousand). However, if composite symbols are not counted, the number will be a lot less.

If you examine the [Eskaya symbol chart](#) on another page, you will notice that the shapes for *ba*, *bi*, and *be* are completely unrelated. The same can be said for *ba*, *bla*, and *bra*. This would show that Eskaya is a “pure” syllabary much like Japanese Katakana. Going to the subchart on the lower right-hand corner note that in *sa*, *sa'*, *sab*, *sak*, *sad*, *sag*, *sal*, *sam*, *san*, *sao*, *sap*, *sar*, *sas*, *sat*, *say*, and *sang*, (not all shown) the basic CV symbol *sa* is modified into the other values by the addition of a ligature. The ligature defines the value of the final consonant in the resulting CVC syllable.

But that is not all. The script is also reported to have the characteristics of logograms, with some symbols doubling as representations for words and ideas at the same time they represent sounds. This characteristic is similar to a characteristic of Chinese, Egyptian, and Mayan writing systems.

According to Tirol, the Eskaya symbols represent different positions of Man's head, body, arms, and legs. He adds, “The symbols were derived from ‘As Pormos Minimi’ which is translated in Bisayan as ‘*gikan sa lawas sa tawo* (taken from the body of man).’ Upon closer analysis, ‘As Pormos Minimi’ is actually a corruption of the Latin phrase ‘*ad formus hominem* (from the body of men).’”

Number system

There is nothing extraordinary about the Eskaya number system. It is the same decimal system that we use. What is unusual is that they have symbols for the numbers, something missing from the classic Philippine scripts. They have a symbol but not a name for zero (0) and use a positional system for notation.

Their names for the numbers (0=*no name*, 1=*oy*, 2=*tre*, 3=*koy*, 4=*pan*, 5=*sing*, 6=*nom*, 7=*pin*, 8=*wal*, 9=*sem* and 10=*pon*), except for *wal* and *pon*, are not close to the names used in other Philippine languages. They have unique names corresponding to twenty (*kaw*), thirty (*krat*), hundred (*ten*), and thousand (*man*). Their names for the other numbers are formed from a combination of these unique names so that eleven is *pon oy* (ten=*pon* plus one=*oy*) and twenty-two is *kaw tre* (twenty=*kaw* plus two=*tre*).

Symbols for the numerals are also shown in the [chart](#) on the separate page. Their shapes make it easy to believe that the Eskaya script was invented by one man.

The Eskaya have names for four mathematical operation but their symbols for the operations are suspiciously out of character when you consider their other written symbols:

addition	=	<i>as</i>
subtraction	T	<i>ton</i>
multiplication	%	<i>bret</i>
division	/	<i>pen</i>

The symbol for subtraction cannot be shown as type here; it looks like an *upsilon*, or a cross between a "T" and a "Y." Note that their name for division (*pen*) is close enough to their name for seven (*pin*) to cause confusion.

Calendar system

Whereas the names for the numbers are very different in Eskaya from other languages, their names for the days of the week and the months are not very different from Spanish names. Why is this so?

Days of the week:

<i>Leni</i>	Lunes	Monday
<i>Mimati</i>	Martes	Tuesday
<i>Mibol</i>	Miercoles	Wednesday
<i>Hubir</i>	Jueves	Thursday
?	Viernes	Friday
<i>Sanubi</i>	Sabado	Saturday
<i>Llongo</i>	Domingo	Sunday
?	<i>not shown by Tirol</i>	

Months:

<i>E-mi-o</i>	Enero	January
<i>Hebi-o</i>	Febrero	February
<i>Maso</i>	Marso	March
<i>Kabir</i>	Abril	April
<i>Ma-o</i>	Mayo	May
<i>Hubi</i>	Junio	June
<i>Hubi-on</i>	Julio	July
<i>Tatubi</i>	Agosto	August
<i>Sitibi</i>	Septiembre	September
<i>Oktubi</i>	Octubre	October
<i>Nobi</i>	Noviembre	November
<i>Dibi</i>	Diciembre	December

Eskaya society in hiatus?

According to Tirol, the Eskayas do not have a system for electing leaders. They wait for someone to rise and say that he has received a mandate from God and will lead them. They call this recurring messiah "Ay Sono." He may be a soldier-king or a prophet-teacher, and the Eskayas have had both kinds of leaders off-and-on through their history.

At this time they are without a leader. Their last leader was Mariano Datahan, who died at the age of 107 on January 6, 1949.

Additional Reading

1. Santos, Hector. "Butuan silver strip deciphered?" in *Sulat sa Tansô*, 2:5 (June 1995), 6-7.
2. Tirol, Jes B. "Bohol: a new Jerusalem?" in *The Bohol Chronicle XXXV*: 44 (1988), 1 ff.
3. -----. "Bohol: a new Jerusalem?" (Last Installment) in *The Bohol Chronicle XXXV*: 46 (1988), 7 ff.
4. -----. "Butuan paleograph deciphered using eskaya script," in *UB Update* 1:4 (1990): 6 ff. (Note: A University of Bohol publication.)
5. -----. "ESKAYA OF BOHOL: Its Revered Leaders" in *The Bohol Chronicle XL*: 8 (June 22, 1993), 3 ff.
6. -----. "ESKAYA OF BOHOL: Its System of Writing" in *The Bohol Chronicle XL*: 9 (July 4, 1993), 3 ff.
7. -----. "ESKAYA OF BOHOL: Origin of Its System of Writing" in *The Bohol Chronicle XL*: 10 (July 11, 1993), 3 ff.
8. -----. "ESKAYA OF BOHOL: Its Numerals and Symbols" in *The Bohol*

- Chronicle XL: 11 (July 18, 1993), 4 ff.*
9. -----. "ESKAYA OF BOHOL: Its Abstruse Literature" in *The Bohol Chronicle XL: 12 (July 25, 1993), 3 ff.*
 10. -----. "ESKAYA OF BOHOL: Instilling Discipline" in *The Bohol Chronicle XL: 13 (August 1, 1993), 3 ff.*
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Other Mysterious Philippine Scripts

- [The Calatagan Pot](#), a clay pot with writing around its neck.
- [Errors in Early Calatagan Pot Material](#), be careful when reading early material.
- [Calatagan Pot Translations](#), early attempts to decipher the script.
- [The Butuan Silver Strip](#), a silver bar with writing inscribed by a knife.
- [Butuan Silver Strip Deciphered?](#), an attempt to decipher the writing using the Eskaya script.
- [The Butuan Ivory Seal](#), a seal for making an impression on wax.
- Back to [Mystery Scripts of the Philippines](#), your opening page to the mystery scripts.
- Back to [A Philippine Leaf](#), your introductory page to ancient Philippines.

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