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## Augurio M. Abeto: A Negrense Poet

Regina Garcia-Groyon



Negrense writers in Hiligaynon have followed the lead of the Ilonggo writers of Panay. The patterns of imagery and meter were established by the poets of Iloilo. There was a flurry of literary activity in Iloilo during the first thirty years of this century in contrast to the solitary work done by Procopio Solidum in Negros who published the first collection of poems in English. (See *Philippine Studies* 43 [1995]:139-61)

Lucila V. Hosillos considers the period from 1910 to 1930 as the "Golden Age" of Hiligaynon literature because it was characterized by "a flowering of types of writing that were created and initiated at the turn of the century and which flourished among an audience of all social classes. Writing in Spanish was declining. The introduction of English and its use as a medium of instruction had not yet produced readers and writers who could influence the literature" (Hosillos 1992, 121).

Ms. Hosillos (1992, 123) cites the poetic themes favored by the early poets in Hiligaynon: "patriotism, cultural nationalism, the beauty of nature, love, values, virtues and traditional idealism of Truth, Beauty and Goodness." They continued to dwell on the same themes even as they were writing in the 1940s and the 1950s.

As early as 1934, the young Negrense writer, Lorenzo F. Dilag, bewailed "the old-fashioned ways" of the Hiligaynon poets writing in the tradition of Delfin Gumban and Flavio Zaragoza Cano (noted Ilonggo writers). He rightly discerned the poet's use of "words without thinking of their meaning," and "lengthy irrelevant lines without significance" (Dilag 1992, 208-9). Dilag advocated more careful craftsmanship, the adoption of modern techniques and the elimination of flowery language which often leads to meaningless repetition. He succeeded in provoking the ire of the poets and drew a stinging rebuke from Delfin Gumban who dismissed him as a young upstart, no better than a blind man leading the blind to fall into the gutter.

(Mr. Dilag had not yet gained his pre-eminence in the writing of fiction, a fact which may explain Gumban's pique.)

Gumban's reply is noteworthy in its explanation of the nature of Hiligaynon poetry: "The weaving of poetry in Hiligaynon since the coming of the Spaniards has been based on the standard and style of poetry in Spanish. The innumerable prayers and "moro-moro" show the basic structure of such type of literature. If we are to introduce a certain language pattern, it is not advisable to puzzle new writers by bringing into Hiligaynon the modern methods of other languages which, until now, are not even used by their own expert and conscientious writers." (Gumban, "In My Opinion," from Hosillos 1992, 216.)

Significantly enough, Gumban was all for innovation in the coinage of new words which can enrich the vocabulary of Hiligaynon. "A language progresses according to the times," he stated in the same essay (Hosillos 1992, 216). And yet, for many years, thereafter, Hiligaynon writers clung to the vocabulary of the Golden Age, and today, there is in the "Sumakwelan" (the organization of Hiligaynon writers), a stiff resistance to the inclusion of conversational or street Hiligaynon in serious poetry.

The writers of Iloilo led the way in the writing of poetry and through the publication of their works in vernacular magazines, managed to extend their influence to budding writers in Negros Occidental.

The poet analyzed in this article is Augurio M. Abeto, considered a master in the poetic craft by his peers. The study is limited to a selection of his best works.

### **Augurio M. Abeto: The Life**

The life of Augurio Abeto bears witness to the possibility of a poet becoming completely immersed in politics and public service. He is not the poet locked up in his ivory tower even if his poetry seems an attempt to seclude himself momentarily from his daily activities in order to commune with himself and his Muse. Abeto's poetry is romantic, exhortatory, nostalgic and often repetitious; but his works gained currency since some of them were set to music and thereby became part of the oral tradition of Negros. He has exerted such a dominant influence on his contemporaries that he won for himself the title, "King of Hiligaynon Poetry."

Augurio Abeto was born in the town of Binalbagan, Negros Occidental on 21 January 1903, the son of Severo Abeto and Albina Maranon. His father, Severo, was a *Kapitan* of the town during the Spanish period, a Justice of the Peace of Binalbagan and Ilog, as well as the mayor of Binalbagan during the American colonial period.

Augurio Abeto manifested early his intellectual gifts, graduating valedictorian in the primary and intermediate levels at the Binalbagan public school as well as in high school at the Jaro Seminary in Iloilo. He received his Bachelor of Laws at the University of Santo Tomas and became a member of the Philippine Bar in 1933.

He was appointed assistant provincial fiscal of Negros Occidental, a position he held from 1933 to 1938. He was elected mayor of Binalbagan in 1939 and served in that office up to 1947. During the war, he set up a Resistance Force Government in the mountains of Binalbagan which lasted the three years of the Japanese Occupation. This government consisted of the evacuees of Binalbagan and the guerrillas of that region. At this historic spot, which he named "Verobina" in honor of his parents, were conceived and set to music the lyric poems which came to be known collectively as *Dalawidaw*.

In 1949, Augurio Abeto was elected congressman of the third district of Negros Occidental, and served for one term, during which he co-authored several bills such as the Sugar Crop Sharing Law, the Workmen's Compensation Law and the Magna Carta of Labor. He was responsible for the creation of the town of Magallon (now Moises Padilla) and the establishment of the National College of Fisheries in Isla Serena, Binalbagan.

He devoted himself to his law practice from 1954 to 1964 and gained a reputation for being a brilliant defense lawyer. He was appointed regional Judge of the Court of Agrarian Relations in Negros Oriental in 1965 and served for a year. Failing to win a seat in the Constitutional Convention in 1970, he then ran for municipal councilor and won in the election of 1971. His concern shifted to history. He was instrumental in the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Binalbagan which was declared a settlement on 15 May 1572. He delighted in renaming places such as Crossing Sumakwel and Crossing Dandansoy to honor the notable Bornean datu and to perpetuate a folk song.

Augurio Abeto died on 27 January 1977 at the age of seventy-four. His funeral was attended by the tearful townspeople of Binalbagan. A choir of schoolteachers sang three songs whose lyrics were Abeto's very own, namely "Dalawidaw" "Banwang Binalbagan," and "Bulak

Sang Handumanan." It was a fitting tribute to a man whose life of service was infused with the creative force of poetry (Cordova n.d.).

### The Bi-ao Poems

In his analysis of the *balitaw* (song), "Dalawidaw," another poet, Gerardo Cordova, traces the genesis of four lyric poems which were composed in Bi-ao, a portion of the Binalbagan mountains where Abeto set up his municipal seat during the Japanese Occupation. Cordova calls the two poems, "Verobina" and "Payag" the father and mother of the twin poems, "Maragtas" and "Dalawidaw." There are those who consider these lyric poems resistance poetry since they present in disguise the poet's call to arms. This is only partially correct, because the more dominant themes are the poet's anguish over the hardships of war and his discovery of an inspiring force in the maiden he sees bathing at a nearby spring. In his fancy, she seems kin to the goddesses of the forests; but then, recognizing her as an ordinary mountain lass, he then sees in her the endurance and heroism of women from the Spanish past: Urduja, Gabriela Silang and Tandang Sora.

In these lyric poems, Abeto uses the quatrain with the rhyming pattern *abab*. In the first poem, "Verobina," the persona narrates how he has brought the townspeople to a remote place in the mountain as a rejection of any form of collaboration which is tantamount to slavery. He names this haven "Verobina," the combined form of his parents' names, to serve as a kind of talisman to infuse his spirit with the courage never to submit to the enemy. He then notes the beauty of the waterfall and the many springs, the sound of which are akin to song. These waters have been bestowed by God on these mountains, a monument of a heroic nation. The last stanza notes the transformation of this thickly wooded spot into a place of worship and a garden with the blossoming of tiny nipa huts. Indeed, Abeto equates the place with a new Eden provided by God for him and the people of Binalbagan.

#### Verobina

(Halad sa Banwang Baganihan)

Dire sining bukid mari-it nga talon  
 Di-in ko linigwin pangulohan-banwa  
 Pagsikway sang singkaw sa pagka-ulipon  
 Pag-apin sang dungog, mga kasimanwa.

Ngalan nga matam-is ni Tatay ni Nanay  
Ang akon pangalap paghatag kaisog  
Sa akon nga kalag nga dile malumay  
Haylo sang kasumpong kag mga pamahog.

Matahum nga busay kag mga tuburan  
Nga ang ila lagpak daw naga-ambahan  
Sang Diwa ginbugay sining kabukiran  
Kag nangin batda-an banwang baganihan.

Talon nga mari-it, masi-ot nga banglid  
Nga nangin simbahan sang akon nga banwa  
Nangin pamulakan ang palhi nga bukid  
Payag namukadkad sa bukid VEROBINA.

Verobina  
(Gift To A Heroic Nation)

In this mountain, this forbidden woodland  
I found a secluded haven for my town  
That I may reject the yoke of slavery  
And preserve our dignity, my people.

The sweet names of Father and Mother  
Talismans to give courage  
To my spirit impervious to the beguiling  
Enticements of the enemy and all his threats.

Lovely waterfall and crystalline springs  
With sounds that seem to sing  
You were bestowed by God on these mountains  
A monument of a heroic nation.

Forbidden woodland, mountains thick with trees  
A temple of worship for my people  
This forbidden mountain has become a garden in bloom  
As nipa huts blossomed on this mountain named VEROBINA.

The six stanzas of "Payag" (Nipa Hut) glorify the traditional home of the rural poor. The persona sees the nipa hut as the refuge of pure suffering and unending anguish, the repository of the tears of a suffering nation. The nipa hut is like a flower blooming in the wilderness, unfolding its beauty to welcome and embrace the nation. The nipa hut nurtures the nation which has taken up arms—the bolo and

the spear. It has cradled a wounded nation. Thus, it is the sweet nest of mutual understanding, the symbol of the nation's destiny and the foundation of true love of country. There is no history without the nipa hut. The nipa hut is a gift of God which will remain in men's minds because it has witnessed the birth of true nationalism in a nation's outpouring of blood. In the last stanza, the persona sums up his ideas on the nipa hut: the hut as the nest of first love, the hut as a church in which vows are pledged and the hut as witness to both sorrow and joy, to sobs and terms of endearment, mournful wails and songs.

### Payag

PAYAG naghamil-ay sang putling pagbatas  
Kag sang balakhu-on nga walay dulonan  
Ginsalud mong' luha sang banwang' tigbatas  
Daw bulak nga danggas sa mga lubnganan.

Katulad mo bulak nga nagpamukadkad  
Sa katung-an, patag, kag sa kabukiran  
Gukop mong' ma-anyag, imo nga ginhumlad  
Sa banwang bansagon kag sa kapalaran.

PAYAG nag-alila sa mabinatason  
Banwa nga bumakyaw binangon kag bangkaw  
Sumabak-sumapnay, sa banwang' pilason  
Banwang' baganihan, sumikway sang singkaw.

Pugad sang kahirup kag sang paghangpanay  
Sang kapalaran sang banwa nangin layag  
Kag nangin sadsaran panghimanwang' tunay  
Walay sing MARAGTAS kon wala ang PAYAG.

Sa tungang' inaway ginbugay sang DIWA  
Ang dagway sang PAYAG dili gid madula  
Kay diri nabun-ag putling' pangimanwa  
Sang banwang' isganan sang dugo nag-ula.

PAYAG nangin pugad sang gugmang' panganay  
Kag sang sumpa-anay daw nangin simbahan  
Saksi sang hibubun-ot kag sang angga-anay  
Sang panalambiton kag mga ambahan.

### Nipa Hut

Nipa hut, cradle of noble suffering  
And groans without number,  
You received the tears of a free nation  
You are like the flower strewn piecemeal on a graveyard.

You are like the flower which blooms  
On valley, shore and mountain  
Your beauty you unfolded to welcome  
This heroic nation and destiny.

Nipa hut, you cared for the suffering  
Nation which had taken up bolo and spear  
You cradled, you bore this wounded nation  
This heroic nation which rejected the yoke.

Sweet nest of mutual understanding  
You embody this nation's destiny,  
You are the foundation of true love of country,  
There is no history without the nipa hut.

In the midst of war, God has bestowed  
The immortal image of the nipa hut,  
Where true nationalism was born  
Out of a courageous nation's outpouring of blood.

Nipa hut became the nest of first love,  
Pledges of love transformed it into a church,  
It bore witness to grief and affection  
To mournful wailing and to songs.

The poem, "Maragtas," (History) is also a song, its music composed by Teodulfo Villa. Here, Abeto weaves images and notions from the preceding poems to present the idea that a nation may have a great history only if its people defend its sovereignty. The poem begins with the question: What is freedom if it is gained through betrayal? Happiness is still to be found in suffering which ennoble human character and ensures a nation's greatness. The thought of a nation bravely confronting catastrophe in defense of its sovereignty sweetens the pain of suffering. The refrain repeats similes from the preceding poems: mountain becoming town, field and shore and nipa huts multiplying like a garden of flowers. Next is expressed the idea

that the history of a great nation is not written with the honey of bliss but with the blood and tears of its people in the sacrificial offering of their lives. Thus, suffering engenders valor and iron resolution. The final stanza pays homage to those who have died for love of country, and pictures their graves as gardens which will forever be venerated in our history.

Maragtas

Anhon kahilwayan kon maglampingasan  
Malipayon gihapon ang magtigbatas  
Kay magadungganon aton pamantasan  
Kay mangin bilidhon ang aton MARAGTAS;

Banwang' nagsugata sadtong kalalat-an  
Nagapakatam-is nga kasingkasing  
Agud ining duta naton nga namat-an  
Dungog niyang putli dili mahalitan;

REFRAIN:

Bukid nangin banwa, katungan kag baybay  
Talon nga mari-it nangin pamulakan  
Payag nangin pugad, gugma, binalaybay  
Kag nagpamukadkad nga daw kabulakan;

Maragtas sang banwa nga nangin bansagon  
Dile ginasulat dugos sang himaya  
Kabuhi ang halad pananglit bihagon  
Dugo ginadaga kag luhang' dagaya.

(Subong sang nahauna nga mga hugpong)

Pagbatas pumilas sang dughan sang banwa  
Ugon nanalingsing kaisog kag dumot  
Namunga sing gahum binugna sang Diwa  
Kag nangin salsalon kalag ta kag kamot.

Baganihan naton nga nagkalapukan  
Sang banwa nagtubos sa mga pagbatas  
Ang ila lubunganan nangin pamulakan  
Nga paga simbahan sang aton MARAGTAS.

### History

What matters freedom without honor?  
Happier it is to suffer  
That our character we may ennoble  
And our history become celebrated.

A nation meeting catastrophe head-on  
Is a thought to sweeten the soul,  
All for the sake of our native land  
That her pure honor may never be tarnished.

#### REFRAIN:

Mountain became town, valley and sea,  
Forbidden woodland became a garden,  
Nipa hut became nest, love, poetry  
And blossomed like so many flowers.

The history of a great nation  
Is not written with the honey of bliss  
But in the sacrifice of life in the face of defeat  
The outpouring of blood and tears in profusion.

(As in the first two stanzas)

Suffering pierced the heart of this nation  
And engendered valor and the desire for vengeance,  
A power bestowed by God  
To become the iron of our spirit and our hands.

Our heroes who died in battle  
Saved our nation from suffering,  
Their graves have become gardens  
Which will be venerated by history.

The poem, "Dalawidaw," is a simple love song when it is not placed in tandem with the three other poems. However, Abeto himself explained his poetic intention with regard to its meaning in a letter he wrote to Atty. Emma Labayen. Dated 10 February 1975, the letter states: "[*"Dalawidaw"*] was dedicated to the firmness of conviction for a political and noble cause of democracy, fortitude of character to bravely face all trials, tribulation and vicissitudes of the

evacuees' life and the courage of soul of our Filipino women to resist and fight to the death the invading superior forces of our common enemy for love of country."

He cited the Christian virtue of resignation typified by Rizal's mother, Teodora Alonzo, as well as the heroism of Tandang Sora and Gabriela Silang. He wished to present Dalawidaw as the personification of the Filipino woman. However, he admitted in the same letter that the idea "is briefly stated" only in the fifth, fifteenth and sixteenth stanzas. This view was reinforced by the exegesis written by Gerardo Cordova who was able to discuss the work with Abeto himself. Cordova's interpretation serves to recreate the poetic impulse and the circumstances which led to the composition of the poem.

Cordova begins his analysis of the poem by enumerating the epithets which describe Dalawidaw. This mountain maiden, whose song resembles that of the bird, is the Queen of the Woodland, the Muse of Song and the Woman of Negros (Babaeng Buglasanon). In effect, she is the Muse of Poetry whose beauty "sharpened the golden tongue of Augurio Abeto."

Cordova presents two stanzas, said to be the song of Dalawidaw, which Abeto heard on the morning of 15 November 1943, Commonwealth Day. The song is an appeal to God to grant peace and freedom to a wounded nation. She prays for the light of dawn to bring beautiful skies and the blessing of Heaven to a suffering people almost bereft of hope.

Diwa ko nga may ka-awa,  
 Tamda ang Banwang gabalakhu-on  
 Nga may sakit sa tagipusuon  
 Kag itugot nga magahawa,  
 Kag yanang lupok sa pag-away  
 Ibosli sang kahilwayan  
 Gud' ma-agum ko ang kapawa.

Kag sa baylo sang kasakitan  
 Ang kalu-oy mo ipahayag  
 Ipalapit sa amon mga payag  
 Ang magayon nga kalangitan  
 Gud' mabunyagan sang himaya  
 Ang paglaum nga daw sa malaya  
 Kag matubos sa kangingitan.

A rough translation follows:

My merciful God,  
Look upon this grieving nation,  
So sick at heart,  
And allow peace to reign.  
The din of war  
Supplant with peace  
That I may have light.

In place of pain  
Your mercy reveal  
Bring to our nipa huts  
Beautiful skies  
To shower us with bliss  
And revive a fading hope  
Liberation from misery.

In his essay, Cordova narrates how Dalawidaw fell asleep in the darkness, how she dreamed of that bright future and how she awoke on the morning of 29 March 1945 (the day the American forces arrived to liberate Negros). She heard a heavenly voice praising her for her loyalty to her country. Cordova claims that her song became the "budyong" (a conch formerly used to summon people) which inspired Filipinos to desire freedom.

Cordova then narrates the encounter of maiden and poet on that morning when he was bathing at a spring and heard the sad song of the *dalawidaw* (a bird) from deep within the forest. Birdsong merges with the sad song of a young girl bathing at a nearby spring. At first glimpse, he assumes her to be a *diwata* (goddess) of the forest, but soon he identifies her as the daughter of a family living on the other side of the mountain. Her song seems to be a mournful cry, but its sweetness intimates bliss. The poet sees her beauty but is more impressed by her virtues. Thus, Cordova translates the poetic intention of Abeto which he wrote about in his letter to Atty. Labayan.

The poem, "Dalawidaw" consists of two parts: the love song of the poet on the beauty and virtues of Dalawidaw and the exchange of pledges of love; and the response of the maiden, speaking of her simple life, her mythical origin and her anguish over a suffering nation aching to be free.

In the first stanza, the poet speaks of the maiden as the singing dalawidaw. Her smile communicates poetry. She seems to be the incarnation of the goddess of the mountain and the siren of the sea. In the second stanza, he realizes she is a native of the mountain, born and bred in a simple hut. She is a vision of loveliness as she bathes in the crystalline water of the spring. The first stanza of the refrain reiterates her double identity as goddess and wild rose of the sierras, submissive to the vagaries of destiny, while the second stanza celebrates that blissful night when maiden and poet pledge their undying love for each other.

It is in the fifth stanza that the poet suggests how the maiden's rustic modesty and her affectionate nature are as soothing as the music of both the sea and the bird, mainly because she has the capacity to transcend any kind of pain. These virtues have been commended by the ancient *datus*, *Sumakwel* and *Bankaya*. She is the quintessential *Maria Clara*, the immortal flower which will never fade. He ends with the plea that she remain faithful to her pledge of love.

In her response, the maiden proclaims herself the siren cast ashore by the sea. Her song harmonizes with the song of the dalawidaw, merges with the rushing water music of waterfall, spring and ocean. Such music expresses her sadness over flowers which bloom all too briefly. She has heard the cries of a nation prostrate with the suffering of war, yet glorious in its fortitude. She, who walks the mountain and the shore, will then sing of her nation's pain and its history replete with poetry. She will sing in particular of the tiny settlement flourishing in this awesome mountain. As mermaid, flower and goddess, she will offer herself to the new nation which has been enriched with the blood of its people. The sweetness of her song springs from her love for her native land, so rooted in courage that it has produced a generation of even more courageous men. In the last stanza, she speaks of the butterflies so presumptuous as to seek union with her. She is impervious to them because all of herself has been offered to her native land.

It must be pointed out that *Dalawidaw* makes no reference to the vows of love mentioned earlier by the poet. Has *Abeto* forgotten that the poet has narrated how he has won the love of this mountain lass? The response prompts a re-evaluation of the poet-lover's identity. He is not only a young man in love with a beautiful girl; he is also a representation of the whole nation, as it were, and in particular, the young men fighting for its freedom.

Dalawidaw  
(Balitaw)

Dalawidaw ikaw kon mag-ambahanon  
Yuhum mong' balani-on may binalaybay  
Duhang'larawan mo sa dalamguhanon  
Diwata sa bukid kag kataw sa baybay.

Tumandok sa bukid nabun-ag sa payag  
Nayon sa tuburan nga daw handurawan  
Tubig nagatigay sang imo kaanyag  
Kag nangin salaming hublas mong' larawan.

REFRAIN:

Diwata sa talon, bulak nga ilahas  
Sa kapalaran ka daw ga-pasimpalad  
Alibangbang lamang nga labing makahas  
Makasuyop sang kayuyum sinang sipad.

Sadtong kagab-ihon nga puno'y himaya  
Sa isang' payag kita nagsumpa-anay  
Didto ta pinanggan ang dili malaya  
Putling' handumanan sang gugmang' panganay.

(Subong sang sa nahauna nga mga hugpong)

Babayeng' bukidnon, maugdang magkadlaw  
May angga sang punay kag sang talon mutya  
May amba sang balud kag sang dalawidaw  
Sa kagha gayuhum kag wala paghaya.

Dalawidaw nagpukaw gugmang' panganay  
Didto sa tuburan aton nga ginbalay  
Hinuman sang angga kag sang sumpa-anay  
Namulak ambahan kag sang binalaybay.

Bukidnon mong' gawi may yarang kaugdang  
Nga ginsimba nanday Sumakwel-Bankaya:  
Maria Clara ikaw nga labing maugdang  
Bulak sining banwa nga dile malaya.

Ayaw pagkalimti mutyang malahalón  
Ining handumanan sang paghagdu-anay  
Saksi ang tuburan kag palhi nga talon  
Sang duhang' kalağ ta nga nag-angga-anay.

Sabat Sang Babae

Ako ining kataw sang dagat palangga  
Gasangya sa amba sining Dalawidaw  
Sang balud gindapya sa balas sumangga  
Sa akon ga-angga sa wala pag-ugdaw.

Ambahan sa bukid sinang Dalawidaw  
Samay sang huganas, busay kag tuburan,  
Tingog nga malulot nga gapanalawdaw  
Kag ginasayawan sinang kabaluran.

Tulalay sa bukid tunay nga himaya  
Daw pananalambiton sang akon kahidlaw  
Sinang mga bulak nga nagkalalaya  
Nga sadto naghaya, kag karon nagkadlaw.

Dalawidaw ako sining kabukiran  
Saksi sang paghibi kag paghalaya-on  
Sang banwa sa kagha nga nangin-sanghiran  
Sang mga pagbatas nga mahimaya-on.

Ang gab-i kag aga akon ginasimba  
Akon ginalatas ang bukid kag baybay  
Pag-antus sang banwa akon gina-amba  
Kag iyang' Maragtas nga may binalaybay.

Akon gina-amba sa pagpasimpalad  
Sa banglid kag bukid nga makakulonyag  
Samtang kataw, bulak, diwata ga halad  
Sa bag-o nga banwa dugo ang ginbunyag.

Ang duga kag dugos sang akon ambahan  
Nagikan sa kalag kag sa kasing-kasing  
Duta kong' namat-an banwang baganihan  
Nanggamut kaisog nga nagpanalingsing.

Mga alibangbang nga labing makahas  
Nga sa akon bu-ot makigtambi-palad  
Wala makahalit ang pagkakahas  
Kay putling gugma ko sa banwa ginhalad.

The four stanzas of the translation which follows were rendered in English by Augurio Abeto himself.

Dalawidaw  
(Song)

Dalawidaw you are with your sweet song of love  
Your smile has spell and charm, and rhythm of verse  
I saw you in my dreams in the garden of love:  
Goddess of the mountains and Siren of the sea.

Native of the woodland; born in the humble hut  
Near chanting rivulet and singing waterfalls  
Whose crystalline water fondles you as you bathe  
Caressing as it slides, kissing you as it falls.

REFRAIN:

Sylvan queen of beauty, wild rose of the valley  
Gliding on Destiny, reckless rustic sweetheart  
Only the butterfly with heroic bravery  
Could sip nectar of love from petals of your heart.

We were seduced to yield to that one night of love  
Mute witness was the hut, — love-nest of surrender  
Where we sealed with kisses, — bliss of our first love  
We have sworn to cherish and to bless forever!

(As in the first two stanzas)

Maid of the sierra, with your modest laughter  
As sweet as the punay and the gem of the woodland,  
With the song of the waves and the dalawidaw,  
You smile, in your pain, without surrender.

That dalawidaw song awakened first love  
Which bloomed into love beneath the waterfall  
Where we pledged love eternal  
To blossom into song and poetry.

Your rustic ways, so full of modesty  
Exalted by Sumakwel and Bankaya  
You are Maria Clara, most modest of women  
Immortal flower of this nation.

Never forget, most precious gem,  
This day of our troth  
This waterfall and this forbidden woodland are witness  
To our two souls' deep affection.

Reply of the Maiden

I am the siren of the sea, my love,  
Who sings with the song of the dalawidaw,  
Washed ashores on the sand by the waves  
Which caress me without ceasing.

Song in the mountain of Dalawidaw  
Weaving with the rushing waters of waterfall and spring  
Voice so sweet and melodious  
As it merges with the rhythm of ocean waves.

Music in the mountain is true bliss  
So much like my longing, my grief for  
Those flowers which have withered,  
Once wailing in sorrow, and now laughing in joy.

I am Dalawidaw of these mountains  
Witness to the crying and the keening  
Of a nation's anguish which has become the foundation  
Of glorious endurance.

I worship the night and the day  
I traverse mountain and sea  
I sing this nation's suffering  
And its history replete with poetry.

I sing of the encounter with destiny  
On this precipice and this mountain so awesome  
As siren, flower, goddess, I pay homage  
To this new nation which has sacrificed its blood.

The nectar, honey of my song  
Springs from my spirit and my heart,  
Land of my birth, my heroic land  
Rooted in courage, you have generated more courage.

Butterflies so presumptuous  
Which seek union with me  
Their desire has not harmed me  
Because my pure love has been offered to my country.

Commemorative Poems

Augurio Abeto was in great demand as orator at political meetings and town fiestas. Sometimes he rendered in verse the eulogy to a hero or the joy attendant on the founding of a new town, i.e.,

"Halad sa Baganihan: Gen. Juan T. Araneta" and "Magallon." He derived inspiration from the mytho-historical account of the history of Western Visayas in Pedro Monteclaro's *Maragtas*. The poem, "Panay Kag Negros," is Abeto's version of part of that history.

The variations in the stanza form do not alter the basic quatrain with its *abab* rhyme scheme. The intent seems to be to establish three thought divisions in the poem: the migration of people from Panay to Negros, the settlement of Negros and the union forged between the two islands by the common language, Hiligaynon.

The first four stanzas encapsulate the migration in the fanciful terms of legend: how the people of Panay, from the heights of Madyaas, see the tall mountain of Kanlaon, how they are inspired by the spirit of Madyaas to seek the goddess of Kanlaon, how they sail across the sea and reach the shores of Buglasan (the ancient name of Negros). The body of the poem narrates how Buglasan is ruled by Datu Mamagtal and protected by the goddess Panas. The wilderness is cleared and cultivated, and in quick succession, towns are established. Prosperity reigns on sea, mountain and forest. The Spanish conquest is not mentioned except for the reference to wars which prove the people's valor in the defense of their land. No clarification is made as to the enemies against whom the people raise their crude weapons. The poet mentions four new towns and makes special note of the huts of nipa and bamboo of these pioneers, the models for a worthy life. He glorifies the poor as the true nobility, although he seems to think that whether rich or poor, all the inhabitants of Negros are united by their love of country. Some may think this a naive view of Philippine society, but Abeto can only sing in praise of the bounty God has provided for everyone. The last part deals with the language of his parents, Hiligaynon, which has its origin in Panay but which has become the language of Negros as well. He exults in this language of the datos, Sumakwel, Paiburong and Bankaya. Hiligaynon has taken root in the hearts of the people to become the songs of mothers and the poetry of fathers. Hiligaynon—the epitome of gentleness, the mother tongue of both Panay and Negros.

#### Panay Kag Negros

Daw sa tinalikdan lamang nga Kahapon  
 Nga ang mga Panaynon nagpasimpalad  
 Kag sining baybay sila naghalapon  
 Diri sa Buglasan nagtalambipalad.

Kay sangsa panulok nila nian maladlad  
Kutob sa Madyaas ini ang Kanlaon  
Sila naghiliuyon nga magahalad  
Bulak sang ila gugma kay Diwang Laon!

Sa Mandu sang Diwa sang palhing' Madyaas  
Sa tuyo nga sila magpatambipalad  
Sa Diwata sinang bukid nga mataas  
Ang panyong palaran ila ginpaladlad.

Nga sa mga balod kag sa Kahanginan  
Nanungsong dayon sa gahumlad nga dagat  
Sa kuyos sang habagat kag sang amihan  
Tubtob sa Buglasan sila ang nagdangat.

Kag nian sa Buglasan ni Datu Mamagtal  
Kag sadtong maanyag nga diwata Panas  
Ang Kabukiran ila nga ginpamungkal  
Kag mga talunan ila ginpanglatas.

Kag sa madasig nga tikang sang inadlaw  
Napasad ang madamong'kabanhawanan  
Ang mga kauswagan nagpanalawdaw  
Sa baybay, sa bukid kag mga talunan.

Nag-alaging ribok kag mga inaway  
Nga nagbilin sang bilidhon nga Maragtas  
Sang maisog ta nga mga taliaway  
Nga sang Kalalat-an sila ang naglagtas.

Sa tigbatas nga mga anak nagikan  
Dungog ta nga inapinan sa binangon  
Kag yadtong bansagon nga nagkalapukan  
Sa aton amo'ng nagbuhi kag nagbangon!

Banwang Toboso, Sipalay kag Magallon  
Hinubaan, nga mga bag-ong' sinalad  
Kag mga banwa nga anay mga talon  
Sang kabuhi gindagaan kag hinalad.

Yadtong mga ulang nga sadto nagsugod  
Sa mga payag nga nipa kag kawayan  
Nanginsulondan sinang labing mahugod  
Nga mga anak sa palangbudlay.

Sila ang mga kaliwat nga dungganon  
Sadtong mga pinasad nga mga banwa:  
Imol, kasarangan ukon manggaranon  
Putli kag alangay sa pagpanghimanwa.

Yanang pinanubli nga gahom sa Diwa  
Salama tanan kita nga ginbugayan  
Tingog sang tigbatas—tingog man sang banwa  
Kay sa isip laban man ang Kagamayan!

Ang hambal ni Nanay, —putling Hiligaynon  
Sa Panay nabun-ag, sa Negros nagluntad,  
Nangin-dinalayday kag mga ambahanon  
Sadtong sakayanon kag sang manlulontad.

Naglapnag ang pulong ni Datu Sumakwel  
Nanday Paiburong kag Datu Bankaya  
Sa Negros namukag daw bulak nga clavel  
Kay ang HILIGAYNON dili gid malaya.

Ang Hiligaynon lumaton sing dayon  
Sa dughan sang banwa, sa bukid kag baybay  
Sang tanan nga Nanay nangintulalayon  
Kag sang mga Tatay nanginbinalaybay.

Namukadkad dayon—Pulong Hiligaynon  
Sa mga Ambahan kag sa binalaybay  
Pugad sang kalulo, Sabak nga iluynon  
Nga ginayauban sang Negros kag Panay!

### Panay and Negros

It seems only yesterday  
When the people of Panay ventured  
To sail this sea and came  
To Buglasan seeking union.

When they viewed before them  
From the heights of Madyaas, Kanlaon,  
They agreed to offer  
The flower of their love to the god Laon.

On orders of the god of forbidden Madyaas  
To seek union  
With the goddess of tall Kanlaon,  
They unfurled their lucky handkerchief.

With the waves and the winds,  
They glided on the open sea,  
And blown by the south wind and the north wind,  
They eventually reached Buglasan.

In Buglasan, ruled by Datu Mamagtal  
And the beautiful goddess Panas,  
They cleared and cultivated the mountains  
And penetrated the forests.

And with the swift passage of time,  
Many towns sprang up,  
Progress spread everywhere  
In sea, mountain and forest.

Discord and war came to pass  
Which left in their wake the history  
Of our brave warriors  
Who faced up to misfortune.

The free men who were their sons bequeathed  
Honor they had defended with the bolo,  
And those heroes who fell  
Gave us the strength to live and rise!

The towns Toboso, Sipalay and Magallon  
Hinubaan, the latest to be set up,  
Towns which were once wild forest  
Were given life—worthy offerings.

Those ancient first settlers  
In huts of nipa and bamboo,  
Became models most exemplary  
To their sons in life's hardships.

They are of a noble race,  
The people of these towns:  
Whether poor, middling or rich,  
All equal in their pure patriotism.

The power invested by God  
 Was given equally to us all  
 The voice of free men—the voice of the nation  
 The little people were in the majority.

The language of Nanay—noble Hiligaynon  
 Was born in Panay and brought to Negros,  
 It became prose and song  
 Of those early travelers and settlers.

The language of Datu Sumakwel spread,  
 The language of Paiburong and Datu Bankaya,  
 It blossomed in Negros like the clavel flower  
 Because Hiligaynon never will wither.

Hiligaynon instantly became part  
 Of the heart of land, mountain and sea  
 For all the mothers it became song  
 And for the fathers, poetry.

It blossomed instantly—the language Hiligaynon  
 In songs and poetry,  
 Nest of gentleness, the maternal lap,  
 The language adored by Negros and Panay.

Abeto's poem, "Panganinaw," resembles a riddle in its enumeration of details prior to the identification of the place being described. The poet speaks of a place in his hometown where the inhabitants far outnumber the town's actual population. It is a place where no powerful men rule, where all are equal because there are neither rich nor poor, master nor slave. Affection reigns supreme and hatred is unheard of. Only in the last stanza does the poet reveal the answer to the riddle, namely, the town cemetery which he visits and which inspires him to meditate on death.

#### Panganinaw

May pikas nga duta diri sa akon banwa,  
 Indi takos maisip nagapuloyo;  
 Bisan pa tingubon buhing' kasimanwa,  
     Laban pa gihapon pila ka pilu.

Diri sining' duta wala sing gamhanan  
Wala man sing imol kag mga pilakan,  
Tanan alalangay lunsay bulahan,  
Wala sing ni sin-o nga kalahadlukan!

Diri nagahari paghinirupay  
Wala'y bugalon kag malinupigon;  
Ang tanan may pailob ang pagkabigay;  
Wala gapangkig bisan pa wahigon.

Diri sining duog wala sing yaguta,  
Wala sing ulipon kag wala'y agalon;  
Ang takos alangay— puloy-an nga duta,  
Wala'y maglaban sa kinahanglan.

Yana'ng nagahalit sa masigkatao,  
Wala'y patugsiling nga mga gamahan  
Sa kinamatarong sang isigkatao,  
Sa Dutang' Balaan, wala'y kadungganan.

Ining panganinaw akon nga gindihon  
Sa Patyong' naligwin sa binanggianay;  
Sang akon pagduaw sining kagab-ihon  
Didto sa lulubngan ni Tatay kag Nanay.

### Vision

There is a piece of land in my hometown,  
Where the residents are too numerous to count,  
Counting the living population of the town,  
You'll find them outnumbered many times over.

In this land there are no powerful ones,  
Neither poor nor rich,  
All are equally worthy,  
There is no one to be feared.

Here reigns brotherhood  
There are no proud ones and no oppressors,  
All are humbled by their equality,  
There is no anger even if they are swept aside.

Here in this place there is no mockery,  
There are neither slaves nor masters,  
Their measure equal—houses of earth,  
Nothing in excess of what is needed.

Those who inflict harm on their fellowmen,  
The powerful ones who, without scruple, ride roughshod  
On the rights of their fellowmen,  
Lose all their greatness in the sacred earth.

This vision I created  
In the graveyard secluded from all discord,  
Which I have visited this evening,  
There beside the tombs of my father and my mother.

### Love Poems

In the poem, "Dinagsa," the idea of love seems a matter of fate. The experience is equated with the suddenness and intensity of a thunderstorm. There is no recourse but to submit.

#### Dinagsa

Kita nagpaanod nga duha palangga  
Kag nagpasimpalad sa sambo sang baybay  
Sa balod sang gugma nga daw nagaangga  
Sa ugoy sang hanol nga 'gabinalaybay.

Lupok sang amiha kag labad sang kilat  
Tumigib sa bato sang aton maragtas  
Dungan sa daguob bagrong sang habagat  
Gugma sang dinagsa linatom pagbatas.

Chorus:

Gugma sang dinagsa sinulat sa balas  
Sang daghob sang balod sang aton maragtas  
Ang iya handumanan dili gid mapanas  
Sa mga ambahan kag sa binalaybay.

Halos kita lumson sang sinampukanay  
Dinugsing sang balod kag ila sinangya  
Sa dinapyadapya kag hinagduanay  
Kita ang dinagsa sa tungang himaya!

Adrift

We allowed ourselves to be swept away, my love,  
And to submit our destiny to the currents of the sea  
On the waves of love which seemed  
Like the rhythmic melodies of poetry.

The blast of the north wind and the streak of lightning  
Engraved on the rock our story,  
With the crash of thunder and the roar of the south wind  
The love of the drifted intense in its suffering.

Chorus:

Love of the drifted, written on sand  
By the beat of waves of our story,  
Love's memory will never be washed away  
From song and verse.

We were almost overwhelmed by the power,  
The surge of waves,  
Blown hither and yon,  
We were swept into a region of bliss.

Abeto has a tendency to use the same images in his poems. Two songs make use of the "punay," a local bird. Dated 21 January 1958, "Duha Ka Punay" was set to music by Manuel Villaluz. The two birds are likened to two lovers who are moved to build their tiny hut as they watch the birds building their nest. In another poem, "Punay," published in *Hiligaynon* on 13 November 1963, the poet compares the sweetness of his beloved to the "punay." It is her sweet smile which has intoxicated his heart.

Duha Ka Punay

May nagatusikay nga duha ka punay  
Sa sanga sang kahoy nayon sa tuburan  
Ang ila kalulo kag paghagdu-anay  
Sa aton nga duha nangin handurawan.

Kita nagpahuway sa handong sang kahoy  
Kag magpanganinaw sa duha ka punay  
Dabdab sang kahirup kag ila panaghoy  
Kalag ta sinirab sang gugmang'panganay.

Chorus:

Nagpasad sang pugad ang duha ka punay  
Kag kita sing aton nagpasad sang payag  
Pugad namukadkad sang gugma nga tunay  
Samtang sa payag ta ang gugma namuskag.

Maghirupay kita subong duhang' punay  
Nga sa ila pugad may yarang' himaya;  
Huptan ta ang dabdab sang gugmang' panganay  
Agud nga sa dughan dile gid malaya.

### Two Punay Birds

A pair of punay birds, billing and cooing,  
On the branch of a tree beside the spring,  
Their tenderness and affection  
Seem to be an image of the two of us.

We rested in the shade of the tree  
And imagined in the two birds  
The fire of love; their sighs  
Ignited our souls with the fire of first love.

Chorus:

The two birds made a nest  
And we too built our nipa hut,  
The nest bloomed with true love  
Even as in our hut, love bloomed.

Let us love each other like the two punay birds  
Who enjoy true bliss in their nest,  
Let us preserve the fire of first love,  
That in our hearts love will never die.

### Punay

Ang katulad mo Inday  
Kon nagayuhomyuhom,  
Subong sang isang' Punay,  
Nalatom sing kayuyom;  
Dughan nakon sinirab  
Sang yuhom mo ginlumay,  
Sang angga ginpadabdab  
Gugma kong' nagdalisay!

Chorus:

Handumanan nga di gid malaya  
Ang binilin mo Inday  
Dugosnon nga himaya  
Sa gugma kong' panganay;  
Kay ang katam-is sang imo angga  
May kahirop sing Punay  
Sa dughan ko palangga  
Namuskag gugmang' tunay!

Punay

You, Inday,  
When you are all smiles,  
Are like a punay bird  
Filled with sweetness;  
My heart is on fire  
Because of your bewitching smile,  
Enflamed by love,  
A love so sweet!

Chorus:

A memory that will not fade,  
You have left me, Inday,  
Honeyed bliss  
Of my first love;  
Because the sweetness of your love  
Is like the sweetness of the punay,  
In my heart, my love,  
Blossomed true love!

"Natigib sa Dughan" is a *harana*, (serenade) whose pledges of love are echoed in another song, "Pilas sa Dalitan" which is about the inability of the persona to purge himself of the memories of a lost love. In the *harana*, the singer accepts the woman's rejection even as he declares his undying love one last time before he leaves her forever. The other song is about the persona's heartache, his attempts to seek distraction elsewhere; but not even the beauty of the night can ease the pain of loss. In both songs, the same image is used, namely, the image of the sweetheart engraved in the persona's heart.

Natigib Sa Dughan

Sa imo ugsaran sining kagab-ihon  
Akon igabilin ining handumanan  
Sang akon nga kalag nga gahibubun-ot  
Kag ikaw palangga nangin kabangdanan.

Ako magalakat sa paglingawlingaw  
Dughan kong' pinilas sang imo pagsikway  
Sang kagha linatum nga walay pag-ugdaw  
Kay ikaw natigib sa dughan ko Inday.

Chorus:

Saksi inang bulan kag mga bitu-on  
Sa sini nga gab-i nga mahimaya-on  
Nga ang tagsang' pitik sang tagipusu-on  
Tingog kong' masubo nga gahalaya-on.

Ako magalakat kag maga taliwan  
Sa paghilayo sa imo palangga  
Akon nga balunon putling' handumanan  
Dalit sang kalulo kag ang imo angga.

Engraved In The Heart

At your door, this night  
I will leave this memento  
Of my weeping soul  
And you, my love, are the cause of my grief.

I shall leave to find distraction,  
My heart wounded by your rejection,  
Suffused with unrelenting pain,  
Because you are engraved in my heart, Inday.

Chorus:

The moon and stars are witness,  
On this heavenly night,  
That every beat of my heart  
Echoes in my mournful wail.

I shall leave and I shall depart  
To be away from you, my love,  
I shall bring with me a most precious memento,  
The wound of lost tenderness and lost affection.

Pilas Nga Dalitan

Sa paglingawlingaw, ako nanakayon  
Paglimot kahapdi dughan kong' napilas,  
Kag sang handumanan 'gangutngut sing dayon  
Kahidlaw nga lakas nga dili mapanas;

Mga kagab-ihon nga punoy himaya  
Kag amba sang balud sa akon ga-angga  
Dili makapugong kalag kong gahaya  
Kay ikaw natigib sa dughan, palangga.

Refrain:

Bisan pa ang bulan kag mga bitu-on  
Kag ang kalangitan nga mahimaya-on  
Dili makapanas kag makapatugon  
Dalit nga binilen imong' alangga-on;

Walay makabulong dughan kong' pilason  
Kundi yadtong angga nga dili malaya  
Nga sa akon kalag mabudlay kakason  
Kay ikaw gid lamang, ang akon himaya!

Wound

Seeking distraction, I sailed away  
To forget the pain of a wounded heart,  
And memory brings throbbing pain,  
A yearning that will not be effaced;

The glorious nights  
And the song of the waves so endearing,  
Cannot keep my heart from mourning,  
Because you are engraved in my heart, my love.

Refrain:

Even the moon and stars  
And the glorious skies,  
Cannot erase and relieve  
The wound inflicted by lost affection.

Nothing can heal this wounded heart,  
 Except love which will never wither  
 From my spirit will never be displaced,  
 Because you and you alone are my bliss.

"Patadyong Mo Inday" is a delightful song about the native skirt, woven by Mother from hablon fiber. The poet equates its fine weave and color with the qualities of the young miss: modest, pure and patriotic (an allusion to the colors of the Filipino flag). The *patadyong* becomes even more beautiful on the young miss because of the spell-binding swing of her body. The patadyong then is glorified because it enhances the young lady's charms. The singer is moved to love her and to build a love nest, as the punay birds do.

#### Patadyong Mo Inday

Patadyong mo Inday hinabol ni Nanay  
 Sa da-an nga hablon sa diotay nga payag  
 Ma-ugdang sing pile, putli gid ang samay  
 Mabinanwahanon ang iya sing du-ag;

Katahum tulokon Patadyong mo Inday  
 May batobalani ang imo sing hagnon  
 Ki-ay mo kag liki, may kibo sang lulay  
 Kag hanol sang balid sa aton baybayon.

#### Refrain:

Patadyong mo Inday, sukla nga pugawa  
 Sa pugad sang gugma sang duha ka punay  
 Sa akon kabuhi,—sugpon sang ginhawa  
 Himaya sang kalag, liki mong kanunay.

May dabdab sang gugma, kalulo kag lumay  
 Yanang imo ki-ay kag ang imo yuhum  
 Ang kirab sang samay, Patadyong mo Inday  
 May du-ag sang bulak nga labing matahum.

#### Inday's Native Skirt

Your skirt, Inday, was woven by Mother  
 From old hablon in a tiny nipa hut,  
 Modest in hue, finely woven,  
 Patriotic as our flag in color.

How beautiful is your skirt, Inday,  
There is a magnet in your grace,  
Your flirtatious swing has the rhythm of song  
And the beat of waves on our shores.

Refrain:

Your skirt, Inday, with threads woven like  
The nest of love of two punay birds,  
To my life—an extension of the breath of life,  
Bliss to the soul is your coquettish charm.

There is the fire of love, affection and magic  
In your swaying and in your smile,  
The fiery weave of your skirt, Inday,  
Has the color of the loveliest of flowers.

### Abeto's Poetic Credo

On 3 September 1970, *Hiligaynon* published an Abeto poem, "Dalamguhanon Kag Handurawan," which may be considered his poetic credo. In this poem, the persona affirms the continuing existence of imagination despite the weakening of the aging body. After all, the soul never keeps still even when the body is asleep. He compares imagination with the youthful dreams of love which remain forever fresh. It is in imagination where poetry and song have their origin. Imagination embodies the beauty of the moon and the ocean in language.

#### Dalamguhanon Kag Handurawan

Ang dalamguhanon wala pagkalayong  
Bisan pa ang lawas  
Latom sang kaluya  
Kay sa katulogon wala paghimoyong  
Kabuhi sang kalag  
Nga wala pagluya.

Handom nga lamharon ang handurawan  
Bulak nga namuskag  
Tal-os sa nalaya  
Bata kag tigulang nagadalamguhanon  
Kon sa katulogon:  
Lab-as nga himaya.

Damgo nga nagbugay larawan mo, Inday  
Nga nangin-diwata  
Ko ikaw palangga  
Sang akon butkon ikaw ang ginsapnay  
Gintigay sang dabdab  
Kag singkal sang angga.

Sa dalamguhanon yarang' binalaybay  
Kag ang ambahanon  
Nga nagalarawan:  
Katahom sang bulan kag samba sang baybay  
Kay wala paglamod  
Yanang handurawan!

### Dream and Imagination

Dreams do not wither  
Even when the body  
Is consumed by weakness,  
Because in sleep there is no cessation  
Of the life of the soul  
Which suffers no infirmity.

Imagination is a youthful aspiration,  
A flower that blooms,  
Without withering,  
Young and old dream alike  
In their sleep:  
A bliss ever fresh.

Dreams blest with your image, Inday,  
You became my goddess,  
My beloved,  
When I embraced you,  
I was filled with the fire  
And heat of love.

In dreams we find poetry  
And song  
Which image:  
The beauty of the moon and the dance of the sea,  
Because there is no waning  
Of the power of imagination.

A study of all the works of Augurio Abeto will eventually determine his real worth as a poet. It cannot be denied that he was regarded as a master of his craft by his fellow poets. It is a source of wonder that he continued to write despite his very active life in government and the practice of law. He had a vision and the gift to make Hiligaynon sing!

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