DIOS INA (God the Mother) and Philippine Nationalism

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Many people mistake Dios Ina for the Virgin Mary or the Immaculate Conception who is the official patron saint of the Philippines; but to millenarians and initiates of anting-anting (amulet) and to believers of the Doctrine of the Infinite God, She is the Supreme Mother (Kataastaasang Ina), Flower of Heaven (Bulaklak ng Langit), Gumamela Celis, Dios Infinita, Aninasola, Baphomet, Amhuman, Mother of Life (Nanay ng Buhay), Bathalumang Ina (Mother Deity), etc. In these secret names, she has a totally different life history and context from the Catholic Virgin Mary. She is actually Inang Pilipinas (Mother Philippines) or Inang Bayan (Motherland) celebrated in the writings of the revolutionary Andres Bonifacio (Tapunan ng Lingap; Katapusang Hibik ng Pilipinas).

This paper traces how the term came into use in the literature of the reform and the revolution, the political cartoons under U.S. colonialism, the songs of the First Quarter Storm under the Marcos dictatorship and finally in the songs of the millenarians who believe that Dios Ina (God the Mother) is Inang Pilipinas or Inang Bayan.

The Woman as Metaphor for Nation

In the history of Philippine nationalist consciousness, the first time that the term bayan would be given significance was in the
metrical romance of Francisco Balagtas Baltazar, considered one of two literary giants in the 19th century — the other being the Philippines’ national hero Jose Rizal who wrote the two novels _Noli Me Tangere_ and _El Filibusterismo_. The famous poem “ _Florante at Laura_ ,” published in 1838, is believed to have had a profound effect and influence on the movement for reform, the revolution, the movement for independence and nationhood. This _awit_ (song) containing 399 stanzas each consisting of dodecasyllabic quatrains is regarded as an allegory of the cruel Spanish rule in the Philippines. No less than Apolinario Mabini, the “Brains of the Revolution” against the United States wrote it down from memory during his exile in Guam (Subido 1964, 12). Ordinary people used to sing it as they went about their daily chores, tending the carabao, rowing the boat, etc. They read their own suffering under the colonial rule of Spain in this story of two lovers and their fight against the tyrannical rule of Conde Adolfo.

_Sa loob at labas ng bayan kog sawi,_
_kalihha’y siyag nangyayarig hari,_
_kagaliga’t bait ay nahliligami,_
_ininis sa hukay ng dusa’t pighati._

(ca. 1838)

[Inside and outside my unfortunate land,
treachery reigns; goodness and wisdom have fallen
into misfortune, vexed into the grave of sorrow and
grief. — Author’s translation]

_Bayan_ in the Tagalog language means the people, nation, the place or territory, town, the center or capital. In Spanish Philippines, bayan was where the seat of the government, the catholic church, and the _cuartel_ and the civil guards were located — it was the center of progress. It was also the _pueblo_ (Salazar 1999a, 11). Bayan meant the _loob_ — the walled city of Intramuros where the Spanish Governor General resided. It was the little Europe in Manila destroyed when the Americans liberated the Philippines from the Japanese during World War II. In contrast, _labas_ meant the outside, the mountains and the fields, the territory under the control of the