



RENZ JIMWEL S. MINA: ANOTHER MATH GENIUS FROM PANGASINAN

Jerico B. Bacani

This year has left an unforgettable mark in the history of the graduate programs at the University of the Philippines Baguio, particularly in the Ph.D. Mathematics program within the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science at the College of Science. It's due to the graduation of a remarkable mathematical genius, a DOST scholar, who completed a Ph.D. in Mathematics in just three years, achieving this feat at the exceptionally young age of 26. His academic excellence is highlighted by the outstanding grade of 1.00, showing his impressive performance. Our faculty takes immense pride in his achievements. I am deeply privileged to be his instructor for several math courses, as well as serving as a mentor and adviser in his thesis and dissertation. It is truly an honor to have played a part in his educational path. Allow me to boast, even just a bit, about this young, humble, and brilliant mathematician.

Dr. Renz Jimwel Silva Mina, known to many as Renz, hails from Villasis, Pangasinan. He is the son of Estanislao B. Mina Jr., a former overseas worker, and Gemma S. Mina, a dedicated homemaker. He has two siblings: Joemari, a TESDA graduate; and Hans Noe, a third-year Bachelor of Science in Information Technology student.



Renz, the sole PhD Math graduate in 2023

“What sets Renz apart is that he is the inaugural DOST-ASTHRDP scholar at UP Baguio to successfully complete the Ph.D. program within the stipulated three-year timeframe. His academic excellence is further emphasized by the fact that he attained the highest achievable grade at UP.”



Together with former colleagues and MS Math Students [Dr. John Sebastian Simon, Dr. Gervy Marie Angeles, Reymart Lagunero (PhD Candidate), Renz, and me]

From an early age, Renz showed a keen passion for academic excellence, consistently earning honors during his elementary education. His dedication culminated in graduating as the valedictorian at Don Ramon E. Costales Memorial National High School. Despite his commitment to academic pursuits, Renz also found enjoyment in recreational activities such as basketball and chess, which provided a healthy balance to his scholarly endeavors.

Renz's journey in mathematics began when he decided to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics at UP Baguio. This decision was entirely his own. His passion for mathematics was evident from the start, and he knew deep down that this was his calling. As he entered the halls of UP, he carried with him a vision—a vision of becoming a mathematician.

Throughout his undergraduate years, Renz took on diverse roles, serving as an LRC mentor and taking on leadership responsibilities of the Research and Tutorials Committee within the UPB Math-Physics Society. Renz's interests extended beyond academics, as he found enjoyment in online games such as Clash of Clans and MIR4. Additionally, he maintained his love for chess and basketball, showcasing a well-rounded range of interests.



Renz and the MS Math Graduates [Geremae Tibule, Renz, me, Anna Clarice Yanday, Richard Taclay, Criselda Libatique, Jay-Anne Bulauan, Christian Matthew Tandingan, Florida Regine Cruz, Shilden Grail Domilies (not in photo)]

While the idea of conducting research was not always at the forefront of Renz's mind, his interest was genuinely sparked when he did research under my supervision through the DOST-SEI Summer Practical Training Program (SPTP). He had the opportunity to participate in this program as a recipient of DOST-SEI Junior Level Science Scholarship in 2016 until he graduated in 2017, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics, graduating with honors as cum laude.

The SPTP experience ignited Renz's passion for delving into the depths of knowledge through research endeavors. His dream of becoming a mathematician continued to burn brightly as he pursued a Master of Science in Mathematics. Simultaneously, Renz served as a full-time senior high school teacher at Unzad National High School in Villasis, Pangasinan. In December 2019, he defended his master's thesis, titled "On Exponential Diophantine Equations of the Form $px+qy=zn$," officially graduating in 2020.

Since September 2020, Renz has been a dedicated full-time PhD student at UP Baguio, setting a commendable example by balancing his academic pursuits with a fulfilling love life. Even with personal commitments, he remains a steadfast focus on his studies and dissertation, consistently demonstrating exceptional progress during regular consultations with me and Dr. Victor Manuel Aricheta of UP Diliman, who served as a dissertation co-advisor.

On May 29, 2023, Renz successfully defended his dissertation titled "Ranks of Elliptic Curves and the θ -Congruent Number Problem." The panel members, all alumni of UP Baguio, included Dr. Jerome Dimabayao (BS Math graduate of UPB, now teaching at UP Diliman) as the dissertation reader, Dr. Perlas Cabarrubias-Caranay (BS Math and MS Math graduate of UPB, a former DMCS colleague, dissertation examiner), and Dr. Julius Fergy T. Rabago (BS Math and MS Math graduate of UPB, former thesis advisee, post-doctoral researcher at Kanazawa University, dissertation examiner).

Renz's substantial contributions to the field of mathematics stand out prominently, marked by his active engagement in prestigious scientific gatherings. His participation spans a diverse range of events, featuring paper presentations at key conferences such as the National Research Council of

the Philippines Annual Scientific Conference, the National Academy of Science and Technology Annual Scientific Meeting, the Mathematical Society of the Philippines Annual Conventions, and the Kanazawa University - UP Baguio Joint Seminar in Mathematics. These national platforms serve as a testament to his local influence and expertise.

Renz's commitment to research is strikingly evident through his impressive publication track record. His invaluable contributions to the academic realm encompass a multitude of research publications that have garnered noteworthy recognition. Even as a student, Renz has received several International Publication Awards (IPA) for his scientific papers, published in esteemed proceedings and prestigious Web of Science and/or Scopus-indexed journals. Notable titles include the Malaysian Journal of Mathematical Sciences, the Thai Journal of Mathematics, the Italian Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics, and the European Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics, among others.

Remarkably, the year 2023 has proven exceptionally fortunate for Renz. Four papers he submitted as early as 2021 were not only published prior to his defense date but also received IPA recognition. Furthermore, a collaborative paper was honored with the Best Research Award at the Virtual Graduate Student Conference held on March 31, 2023. This distinguished event was hosted by the University of Cordilleras in collaboration with the Commission on Higher Education-CAR. Truly, 'when it Renz, it pours.' :)

Renz's academic journey is not only notable for its rapid pace but also for its pioneering achievements. He holds the distinguished title of being the second Ph.D. in Mathematics graduate from UP Baguio, a testament to his exceptional intellect and dedication to his field. Renz's relentless pursuit of knowledge was made possible through a prestigious government scholarship under the Department of Science and Technology - Science Education Institute Accelerated Science and Technology Human Resource Development Program (DOST-SEI ASTHRDP).

What sets Renz apart is that he is the inaugural DOST-ASTHRDP scholar at UP Baguio to successfully complete the Ph.D. program within the stipulated three-year timeframe. His academic excellence is further emphasized by the fact that he attained the highest achievable grade at UP.



Renz, presenting his work at MSP Annual Convention, AdMU, June 1-4, 2023



Breakfast with some dissertation panel members [Renz, me, Dr. Victor Manuel Aricheta (co-advisor), Dr. Jerome Dimabayao (reader)]

Renz's achievements stand as an inspiration for students, both undergraduate and graduate, demonstrating the boundless potential of UPB talents. His passion for mathematics, evident from the very beginning, guided him on a path where he discovered his true calling. As Renz's academic journey unfolded, he couldn't ignore the desire to give back to UP Baguio — the institution that had played a significant role in shaping his path. He also felt a deep sense of gratitude towards DMCS for the support throughout his academic journey.

Today, Renz is a valued member of the DMCS faculty, ready to impart his extensive knowledge on Number Theory to young, aspiring mathematicians. His decision to contribute to the academic community reflects his commitment to nurturing the next generation of scholars.



Photo op with colleagues (after dissertation defense), May 29, 2023



Me, Renz, Renz's father

BOOK ON VANAW FOLKTALES LAUNCHED IN BALBALASANG, BALBALAN, KALINGA

Cristina B. Villanueva

Our party arrived in Balbalasang in the dark of night. The trip was a long 12-hour drive over a cemented and fairly good road, except for occasional scattering of uncleared landslides caused by the recent super typhoon Egay. The darkness was compounded by a blackout in the village. For a while on the road, I pondered if joining Prof. Scott Saboy's group was even a good idea, as this was my first trip to a remote part of Kalinga, let alone to a Cordillera municipality outside Benguet. My apprehensions were immediately dispelled as we were welcomed by Scott's relatives with a hearty meal of rice, vegetable salad, and boiled meat that more than made up for the gloomy night.

Early the following day, I woke up to a spectacular view of the sunrise over the green mountains, which was clearly visible from our bedroom window. The sight was nothing short of perfect. Outside the Griffiths House where we were staying, high mountains covered with trees skirted the village. The palpable stillness was broken by the soothing sound of a nearby rushing river. The cerulean sky promised an excellent day for a community feast.

Although the book launch for "Documenting Indigenous Tribal Memory: Folktales of the Vanaws, Northern Philippines: Narrated by Barcelon P. Panabang" was scheduled for 3 o'clock in the afternoon, we arrived early at the DENR compound, where the event was held. The book is published by the University of Tokyo and edited by Michiyo Yoneno-Reyes, a Tokyo-based Japanese-Filipino researcher. Prof. Scott Magkachi Saboy, a former faculty

member of UP Baguio College of Arts and Communication, joined her in the editorial role, along with Lawrence A. Reid, a linguist from the University of Hawaii. The writing and publication of the book received generous funding from the Research and Information Center for Asian Center under the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia at The University of Tokyo and from the Toyota Foundation.

It was a well-attended event, with none other than Congressman Allen Jesse Mangaoang of the lone district of Kalinga present, along with municipal, barangay, and civic society leaders. Researchers from the Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University of La Union, workers from an international NGO, as well as community members on vacation from overseas, were also in attendance. A carabao and two pigs were slaughtered for the occasion. Villagers lent a hand in butchering the carabao and pigs and in preparing the food enjoyed after the book launch. The program began with the *pattong* dance to the cadence of the gongs by leaders of the *pangat*. Rev. Elizabeth Budaden, the Episcopalian priestess, invoked a short prayer for the success of the activity.

Community leaders gave their acknowledgments and words of encouragement for similar endeavors that would chronicle their cultural memory. Prof. Tala Aurora Salinas-Ramos, the current Director of the Cordillera Studies Center, delivered the response on behalf of the University of the Philippines Baguio. Serving as the emcee, Ms. Magani Ngadao Aguac provided entertainment through her

spiels, parodies, anecdotes, and jokes, which added a touch of informality to the occasion.

The book contains thirty folktales narrated by Barcelon P. Panabang, a well-known and respected Vanaw (also Banao) storyteller. According to the book's preface and acknowledgments, Prof. Reyes recorded these folktales between 2004 and 2006. Unfortunately, Barcelon passed away without having the chance to see the publication of the book.

Remarkably poignant was Congressman Mangaoang's prepared response, which I would like to quote in part, as it resonates with the challenges faced by indigenous communities due to modernization and societal changes. The commentary also serves as an urgent call to action.

"We are gathered here today in our journey of cultural preservation, knowledge sharing, and unity. We are here today to celebrate the launching of a book that doesn't merely contain pages filled with words, it contains the essence of traditions, of ancestral wisdom and resilience of the Vanaw people.

This book is a testament of our rich heritage, a bridge connecting the past, the present, and the future. As we gathered today, let us remember that we are all part of a larger destiny. Our stories, our languages, and our ways of life have been passed down through generations. Its thread [was] given with care by our ancestors.

Today, we hold this book in our hands, not just as a physical object but as a vessel of our collective memory and a catalyst for the continuation of our traditions. This book embodies the spirit of collaboration. It is the result of countless conversations, extensive research by the authors and a sheer commitment by others to ensuring that our indigenous cultures remain vibrant and alive.

With these pages that reflect the diversity of our experiences and the richness of our folklore. The launching isn't just about the book, it's about acknowledging the importance of preserving our heritage and passing it on to the generations that follow. It is a reminder that our identities rooted in the land and the stories are worth protecting. It is a call to action to celebrate and support the indigenous languages, arts, and practices that have saved us and continued to save our communities.



Pattong dance by the community members

As we read the pages, let us take a moment to honor those that have walked before us, the stewards of our culture who have laid the foundations for who we are today. Let us also recognize the strength of our youth who carry the torch of our traditions forward with determination and pride. This book is a gift to them, an affirmation that their roots run deep and that their voices matter.

In closing, I invite you all to cherish this book not just an object but as a reflection of the spirit of our tribe. Let it inspire us to preserve, protect and promote our culture in the face of change and let it remind us that our stories are worth telling, our languages are worth speaking and our traditions are worth passing on.

Thank you to all of you. Thank you for the publication of this remarkable book. May it serve as a beacon of hope, source of knowledge, and celebration of the indomitable spirit of indigenous people not only here in Banao but all over the Philippines, everywhere and all over the world."



Kalinga Representative Allen Jesse Mangaoang speaking before the congregation

The community's participation was a testament to their desire and encouragement for the researchers to continue their efforts in preserving the Banao language and culture, as well as ensuring the continued use of their language, which marks their Vanaw identity.

As we traveled back to Baguio along mountain ridges, above the Saltan River, I cannot help but think that for the academe to be truly relevant and appropriate, strengthening connections such as these events behooves presence in the community. The reality of indigenous peoples' languages and lifeways on the verge of dying is upon us. Actions to reverse this situation are crucial for their continued existence. Otherwise, just like the river tributaries merging into the Chico River, the mighty river that played a pivotal role in Kalinga's history and raised awareness of indigenous voices that helped shape the course of Cordillera development, the Vanaw people may lose their language, literature, music, traditions, and all that constitutes their unique identity if we do not intervene to preserve their culture.

Cristina B. Villanueva is a staff member of the Cordillera/Northern Luzon Archives and Cordillera Studies Collection Library.



CSC Director Tala Aurora Salinas-Ramos delivering her response



Prof. Michiyo Yoneno-Reyes thanking the community

RETIREMENT PLAN: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF UTANG NA LOOB IN THE PHILIPPINES

Kyle Irish O. Sales

One of the most defining traits of Philippine society is its collective orientation. Collectivism, as defined by Ting-Toomey and Chung (2011), is the tendency of a culture that emphasizes the 'we,' over the 'I,' where its people value group needs over individual wants. This characteristic is evident in many Filipino norms, such as bayanihan, or a community aiding a resident in need, and the tradition where first-borns are expected to 'give way' to their younger siblings, often leaving school to help their parents. However, no cultural trait exhibits collectivism more profoundly than utang na loob. Celestino (2014) defines this concept as the idea that 'a child "owes" his or her parents for providing him an education, clothing, shelter, etc.'

Utang na loob is perpetuated in the country through many forms. One example is the societal expectation that children will care for their parents when they get older. This includes contributing a portion, if not all, of their salaries for household necessities, viewing it as a means to repay their parents' efforts in raising them. This expectation led to the rise of the concept of a 'retirement plan,' where the younger generation feels like investments who are expected to provide financial support for their parents. This support is seen as a return for the basic needs they received during their upbringing. Should a child complain about this responsibility, they are often deemed deviant, and parents

may resort to emotional blackmail, using the common phrases such as, "After everything we've done for you, this is how you repay us?"

Although this practice is deeply embedded in Philippine society, more and more children are voicing their opinions about it. An online article by Rowie Guinhawa (2022) revealed her feeling of indebtedness to her parents, citing that she was 'gaslighted' into believing that she owes them. Such shifts in the social realities of Filipinos warrant a sociological analysis aimed at an in-depth look into this particular phenomenon. This paper will, therefore, explore the trait of utang na loob using a data-gathering technique and five sociological concepts. It seeks to answer the research questions: 1) What is utang na loob? and 2) How do young Filipino people perceive utang na loob? The findings from these analytical systems will form the basis for drawing conclusions about utang na loob, using the sociological imagination.

This study involved six participants aged 20-22, selected using the convenience sampling technique, to respond to two questions. The first question was 'What does *utang na loob* mean for you?' and second was 'How does *utang na loob* make you feel?' Inspired by the teaching method known as meta-cards, this study utilized Google Jamboard, simulating a whiteboard with virtual post-it notes.

Six participants from the youth age group were asked to define utang na loob in their own words and to explain their sentiments regarding this concept. Drawing from the collected data, this study will employ five sociological concepts to interpret the participants' answers and to conduct an analysis of the phenomenon of utang na loob.

Socialization. The concept of utang na loob is taught, learned, and perpetuated through socialization. Charon (2013) describes this as the process by which different societal actors "teach people the ways of society and, in doing so, form their basic qualities." In other words, Filipinos adopt certain cultural traits because it is what they have always lived and been surrounded by. One example of this is the ideology that Filipinos are resilient people. Many media artifacts, such as films and commercials, propagate the thinking that Filipinos remain smiling even after calamities. Ordinary citizens then adopt this trait by trying to 'stay positive' even through floods and storms. This reciprocal process is also seen in utang na loob. One participant stated that utang na loob "refers to how Filipinos live their lives by interpreting compassion as transactional instead of something genuine." Another described it as "a culture that has lost its genuineness because of the burdening expectations and their use of it as an excuse for maltreatment." Two

keywords can be derived from their statements: "Filipinos" and "culture." Taken together, they both contribute to the understanding that utang na loob is not an isolated ideology. Rather, it is a deeply embedded cultural trait in the Philippines, learned and practiced by many citizens. It is passed down from one generation to another through socialization.

Social and cultural beings. Charon (2013) argues that as social and cultural beings, humans are "to a great extent... controlled by other people." Drawing from Marxist teachings, one such example is the bourgeoisie controlling the lives of the proletariat. The latter are compelled to utilize their bodies and sell their labor to survive, while the former, as owners of the means of production, wield the power to exploit the impoverished. Consequently, lower-class families rely on mutual support to sustain themselves. In this exploitative capitalist system, parents consider their children as retirement plans, their actions shaped by the oppressive economic structure in the country. Their poverty, coupled with minimal chances for upward social mobility, instills in them the expectation that their children must repay them in the future. Hence, utang na loob emerges as one of the strategies developed by impoverished families to survive and aspire for financial stability. Charon (2013) supports this assertion, emphasizing the profound impact of socialization on the decision-making of underprivileged individuals. In Filipino culture, a prevalent phrase signifies parental anticipation, framing their children as the pathway to "pag-ahon sa hirap" or rising from poverty. One participant vividly describes utang na loob as "inheriting my parent's debts after I graduate," exemplifying the weight of familial financial responsibilities.

Social institution and deviance. Paulsen (2003) defines social institutions as "sets of norms and rules" that govern societal behavior. Utang na loob falls within this category as an unwritten obligation where children are indebted to their parents for providing basic necessities in childhood, and are expected to reciprocate in the future. One participant expands on this, describing utang na loob as "the sense of being indebted to someone who has

helped you or is helping you, especially felt towards one's family and relatives." Focusing on the family dynamic, Gohu (2022) expresses concern, stating that utang na loob can be toxic within Filipino families as parents tend to guilt-trip their children. An example cited is when a mother uses the "I gave birth to you!" card, causing the child to feel incapable of making mistakes or being hurt by their mother's actions simply because she gave them life.

Challenging this social institution is deemed deviant as it breaches established social norms. Such deviation invites negative sanctions, either from family members themselves, as previously mentioned, or from outsiders who might employ the popular phrase "magulang mo 'yan eh," implying that the child is wrong for opposing their parent, who provides their basic needs.

Unequal life chances. Life chances denote the opportunities available for an individual to improve their social status. Giddens and Sutton (2021) highlighted in *Essential Concepts in Sociology* how one's life chances are often predetermined by the social class they are born into. Wealthy individuals have a greater likelihood of upward mobility due to their access to financial resources beyond basic necessities, unlike those born into poverty. Children from lower-class backgrounds are often expected to support their parents as they age, setting aside their own aspirations. For these children, advancing up the societal hierarchy is a formidable and infrequent feat since a significant portion of their income is often allocated to repaying the investments made by their parents. This expectation of repaying utang na loob induces pressure and fear in the children. As one participant expressed, 'It terrifies me. I'm 21 and I've barely lived, but I have to repay being born for the rest of my life. I'm scared because I've seen it happen to my other relatives, and now it's likely happening to me.'

Examining the link between unequal life chances and utang na loob, it becomes evident that the latter is propelled by the former. Impoverished families feel compelled to rely on their children as they never had the financial means to

sustain themselves independently. Parents hold the belief that they must raise children to secure future economic support.

Symbolic interactionism. Weber argued that to understand another human being's behavior, one must discover how they define the world and how they think and feel about it (as cited in Charon, 2013). As established by the sociological concepts above, 'utang na loob' and the expectation that their children will help them financially in the future matter to a lot of parents. This is due to a) the inherent collectivist culture within the country, and b) the fact that their poor living conditions make them dependent on their offspring. Conversely, their children's resentment of this expectation deserves understanding as well. One participant stated that 'utang na loob' makes them feel like 'helping back the people who helped me is a responsibility and an obligation rather than something that I actually genuinely want to do.' Another added that it pressures them, as they 'don't mind paying it back but it's discouraging when it becomes an obligation.'

Celestino (2014) explains that this kind of resentment stems from the implication of 'utang na loob': that a child was taken care of not out of love, but because they are expected to return the favor in the future. The participants' worldview suggests that love isn't transactional, and repaying help should stem from genuine desire rather than an obligatory feeling. This is why 'utang na loob' upsets them. Their behavior and feelings are shaped by how they perceive the world.

Utang na loob is a multifaceted concept that is influenced by various factors:

- It is learned through socialization.
- Motivated by one's class position.
- Functions as a social institution that can have negative effects on individuals considered deviant.
- Is prompted by one's life chances.
- Represents a norm that holds different implications for both parents and children, demanding thorough analysis.

This comprehensive understanding is achieved through the application of a sociological imagination. It enables a deeper comprehension of human relationships, social phenomena, and the interconnectedness of various societal systems.

BARYA

Jan Jared F. Galano

It was 2017, and I was 12.

My eldest sister was having that moment when she knew nothing was going to stay the same, the night before her canon event. I remember all these people filled with experience who were gathered in a room small enough to contain all the noise and shouting—maybe of anger, excitement, worry, or confidence.

She once had a dream, and the day after that, it was only a reach from her fingertips. She once was a girl, but she was aiming for the greener pasture, not only for herself but for her parents and her siblings. I remember that she was very confident. Maybe she was holding back tears, but she was determined. I knew she could do it. She was and is the most independent and smartest person I know. But she's going away.

That was the night she was preparing her baggage before her flight. Shouts from my auntie, from my mom, and from my dad filled the room. But from all those scattered words, something decided to stay in my mind and lit up like a firefly in the woods. "Coins bring good luck."

Amidst the roaring and chattering in the room, her suitcase, bigger than my silhouette, was placed openly begging for something on top of the weighing scale, whose job is to tell you that no matter where you go, you can't always bring everything.

I stood up, got my coin purse, and scraped its walls, only to find two coins. I counted it; it was 15 pesos, which could've been enough to buy me a snack for tomorrow. But instead, I wanted to use it to wish good luck to someone transitioning in life, unsure of what to do next but still moving forward. I gave those coins, thinking they would help her when the time came and she had no money left. I inserted them into the little opening, hoping she would remember us when she came across the two faces engraved there. As I did that, I muttered to myself, under my breath, "good luck." Then tears were begging to fall as my little heart filled with joy.

It's 2023, and I've turned 18.

I am going to have the moment where I think nothing's going to stay the same.

The night before I move out.

I'm sitting here in the living room, alone, packing my clothes and things.

I think I had a dream, although I was not sure. A door opened, and I find myself just a few feet away from entering. I didn't expect that this would be what my college experience would be like.

On my own.

Similar to my sister, I'm aiming for that greener pasture, but unlike her, I'm scared. I am not confident. I am suppressing my tears. But why should I be scared? I can do it. Can I?

As the rain pours louder than ever, I'm seated here with headphones on, staring at the open suitcase in front of me, whose wings are spread like a butterfly. Unlike my sister's, mine isn't placed on a scale. I had the freedom to bring anything, yet as it lies wide open, it feels like something is still missing. I'm still missing something.

I wonder what it would feel like to find two silver faces without knowing where they came from. I could bring anything I wanted, but to see two simple coins would give me comfort like I never left.

I would treasure them because of the assurance they would give me that someone believes in me. In retrospect, it seems they worked for her.

Today, I'd give anything to find barya in my bag. It would be reassuring to know that I'll be okay.

I LOVE AND HATE MY MOM

Kyle Irish O. Sales

What do you do when you both love and hate your own mother?

This is a question I've grappled with all my life. My mom has both been my biggest fan and my greatest critic; she has told me the most gut-wrenching, heartbreaking comments but she has also been the sweetest person at times. As a kid, she has always conditioned me that I am not allowed to fail. I am an only child; I bear, on the square of my tiny shoulders, the brunt of hauling my family out of poverty. "Ikaw ang pag-asa namin para umahon sa hirap," she would say, as she scolded me for getting low grades that one time in elementary school. I didn't have a choice but to burn myself out studying because I was so scared of her judgment. It didn't matter if I wanted to try and sustain other hobbies — if they came close to impeding my academic standing, I would drop them immediately. The only thing important to me was what my mom said: I needed to give them at least 10% of my salary someday. And my fear of my mom outweighed everything else.

She would tell me the harshest things. "Matalinong bobo ka," she said one time when I wasn't able to follow her instructions on a household chore. She has a habit of highlighting my flaws at every opportunity. I became so self-conscious and insecure about my body because she would criticize every flaw she noticed, whether in my clothes, makeup, hair, and more. Everything was scrutinized and pointed out. I am not allowed to fail. She would also make me feel borderline paranoid whenever I went outside, warning me that she has "eyes everywhere" if I ever decide to do anything "bad." I couldn't fully enjoy my childhood because I was constantly afraid of making mistakes. If she wasn't scolding me, she would resort to giving me the coldest silent treatment. During conflicts, after berating me, she would ignore me for a week. Even during my exam

season, despite my pleas, she consistently prioritized her emotions. My home felt like it was a place made of eggshells for all those years. I had to be overly sensitive to my mom's feelings; I couldn't afford to make mistakes, nor could I confide in her, because she wasn't a safe space for me. Even discussions about my mental health took a negative turn when she once told me that my anxiety and depression were "all in my head," and that I simply needed God to save me.

I wish I could simply hate her. Our mother-child relationship wouldn't be so complicated if she were just a completely horrible person. However, she isn't. She also showed me love. When I wanted to join a beauty contest, she sacrificed the money she was planning to use for a new phone to support my pageant aspirations. During my senior high school years with morning classes, she would wake up at 4:00 AM to prepare packed lunches for me. She exhausted herself to provide for my college education. She always responded to my messages on Facebook without fail. She consistently called me "bebe ko," and it would warm my heart every time. Despite potentially facing verbal abuse, she almost always indulged me with my desires.

In a collectivist country like the Philippines, loving your mother appears to be an unquestioned rule. To feel otherwise is deemed a biblical sin and a moral failure. Describing our relationship has always been a challenging task, as it has perpetually been a dance of love and hate within our household. At 21 years old, I still haven't found an answer to the question I initially posed in this article: What do you do when you find yourself both loving and hating your own mother?

At present, I've come to accept that I'll always hold both love and hate in my heart for her. I can't simply love her, and I can't just hate her either. I am simultaneously grateful for everything she has provided me and resentful for what she has put me through. No one can convincingly argue that it is wrong to feel this way. Contrary to popular belief, mothers, like anyone, can make mistakes. They have the capacity to hurt, to abandon, and to emotionally harm their children. While these actions might mark them as failures, varying standards define what constitutes failure. Yet, I do know that this only makes them perfectly normal human beings with moments of weakness.

My mother once apologized to me, expressing a hope for forgiveness, acknowledging that this is her first life – I am her first (and only) child, so she never truly had the chance to learn how to be a good mother. A mother that I would have wanted. At that time, I couldn't decide if this was an acceptable excuse. I firmly believe that this is also my first life, and I deserved to have a healthy environment while growing up. However, I am certain that this entitles me to feel conflicting emotions about her. It doesn't signify ingratitude or rebellion. I am sincerely thankful to her for providing me with a comfortable lifestyle. But my material possessions can't make up for the years of abuse I endured from her. Maybe I'm shedding tears on a soft bed with a roof over my head, but I'm still shedding tears.

I love you, mom. I wish you had hugged me. I wish you weren't my mother. Have you eaten yet? I want to cook for you. Did you only have a child because you wanted a retirement plan? If you weren't my mom, I think we could have been really good friends. I can't talk to you about anything; I know you will do nothing but judge everything I do. Why did you emotionally abuse and manipulate me all those years? Thank you for supporting my interests. You're both cruel and violently kind at the same time. I love you. I hate you. I don't know how to live without you.

THE FISHMONGER

Jamil Joram D. Caballes

The Fishmonger

wades
 through the gently majestic blue waves.
 Upon the straits; out at tranquil eventide,
 He claws his way down the fishing vessel
 picking the net as another man approaches
 from behind.

taking the shape
 of an old hag: his tumefied face,
 bulky body, the belly bloated,
 unblunted nails, straggly dark hair,
 that protrudes down the boy's mouth
 beguiling his quietude.

humbled by his companion;
 the boy who devoids of top wear
 finds his hands, patting the latter's shoulders
 in what once firmly belonged to his dear paddle.
 Damp and steamy: he thinks of the white beach;
 whilst his aphonic dreams—naive innocence
 have been washed away.

floating atop
 the surface of the Navotas sea
 was a headless body; soaked in blood.
 His dismembered torso, filled with piles of scattered
 festering barnacles
 ...dead, gutted like those of a fish.

the elders say,
 it was the flesh-eating sea creature, Berberoka, all along
 who hurriedly came out of the chasm
 searching for a prey,
 in this city, where even our youth,
 struggles to swim for their lives.

A MANIFESTO FOR KIMATA: THE LITERARY AND VISUAL FOLIO OF UPB COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND THE ARTS

LA Piluden

A gimata consists of a pair of baskets fastened to a pole carried across the shoulders. Rice, kamote, and meat have been transported between fields and homes via this transport basket. One cannot help but glean from it a potent metaphor for the Covid times.

So the poetry of the gimata is that it embodies mobility, balance, burden, cornucopia, the act of love and survival in this manual transfer of food, the effort that goes into nourishment.

This basket takes up the most space in any corner of the Igorot home where the jars and heirlooms have been relegated. Too hefty to be mere home decor. Too bulky to be actually used like the urbane pasiking of everyday. It is the most daunting of baskets.

It is for such oblique reasons that when coming up with a name for a literary and visual folio for UP Baguio that the Committee on Culture and the Arts picked up the gimata.

And in order to not be too on-the-nose about it, we called it Kimata.

Two years after the breakout of a pandemic that upended our lives, we finally launched Kimata in its physical form last September 18: these first two volumes that captured what Baguio City's creatives were feeling at a time of collective trauma. I personally hope that Kimata can be read as both catharsis and cultural resilience.

It is not with tokenism that collections like Kimata are made, though ironically the sixty physical copies of Kimata that got printed so far will most likely serve as a kind of token: all physical copies will after all be given away as donations to local schools and libraries. From UP Baguio, with love.

The folio is also made available in its online version through the UP Baguio website.

May this literary folio also serve as a capsule of a time that stood still — narrated, painted, photographed, sketched, versified, lived and breathed. Call it trauma literature, Baguio art, or Covid byproduct: whatever it is, it will become collective memory.

And a city, especially a Creative City, is made great by memory.

We also hope that, similar to the gimata, our own Kimata continues to take on the manifold act of carrying, transporting, balancing, nurturing, surviving, loving.



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