

The Biblical and Folkloric Elements of the First Tagalog Pasyon

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Introduction

The *Pasyon* or *Pasion* is a form of literature, a poetic composition, which essentially recounts the life and deeds of Jesus Christ in His work of Redemption. Its use in the commemoration of the Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection during the Lenten season is a tradition that has been kept alive for centuries in the Philippines. Particular examples of these narrative verses have appeared in the major languages of the Philippine archipelago, such as Tagalog, Iloko, Pangasinan, Kapampangan, Ibanag, Samareño, Bikol, Hiligaynon and Cebuano.¹

The term also refers to the musical settings in which these verses are chanted as well as the act of chanting itself. The Tagalog makes a distinction between text and chants. The text is known as the *Pasyon* while the chant is called the *Pabasa*.² The *Pasyon* or the *Pabasa* has for many years been used as a Bible-substitute for devout filipinos in the rural areas during the Holy Week. In the past up to the modern days it can be said that for the majority of filipinos the Holy Week is not complete without chanting or listening to the sad and plaintive melody of the *Pabasa*.

¹Rene V. Javellana, *Casaysayan ng Pasiong Mahal ni Jesukristong Panginoon Natin na sucat ipag-alab ng puso ng sinomang Babasa*, (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press, 1988), p. 3.

²*Ibid.*

But, was this true from the very beginning when the first Pasyon was written? In other words, was the first *Pasyon* intended to be the *Pabasa*? Was it composed to be read or chanted during the Lenten season, particularly during the Holy Week? On the other hand, what are the biblical and folkloric elements of the first Pasyon? Which are its enduring values? What has been its contribution to the Inculturation of Christianity in the Philippines? This study is an attempt to clarify these issues on the purpose, features and perennial values of the first Tagalog Pasyon.

Our study shall have three parts, namely, (1) the Literary Genre of the Pasyon; (2) the Content Analysis of the First Tagalog Pasyon, written by Gaspar Aquino de Belen (1703); and (3) the Contribution of the First Tagalog Pasyon to the Inculturation of Christianity in the Philippines.

I. THE LITERARY GENRE OF THE PASYON: FOLK CHRISTIAN POETRY

The Pasyon is a historical-literary product of Spanish christianization and colonization. It is *historical* in the sense that it evolved over a period of about two hundred years; and it is *literary* in the sense that its production required a certain amount and quality of literary skill.

The literary genre of the Pasyon can only be understood and appreciated within a historical and literary framework because "a country's literature is the story of its encounter with reality, immediate or remote: the subsequent interpretation of such contact which could be seen as fraught with or bereft of meaning, and necessarily involves a recording,"³ calls for a historico-literary study.

A. The Historical and Literary Background in Understanding the Tagalog Pasyon.

1. *Pre-Spanish Literature*

The encounter and interpretation of reality by the native filipinos originally brought about the following:

a) A *spoken language*; there are at present more than forty dialects, eight of which are principals: Iloko, Pangasinan, Pampango, Tagalog, Bikol, Hiligaynon, Samar-Leyte and Cebuano.⁴

b) The *native syllabry* is a Sanskrit-based native alphabet which has variations in different parts of the country, from north to south, employing consistently three vowels and four consonants.⁵

³Ben S. Medina, *Confrontations: Past and Present in Philippine Literature*, (Manila: Navotas Press, 1974), p. 10.

⁴Kenneth W. Berger, "Linguistic Study in the Philippines: Brief Bibliographic History," *Siliman Journal*, 18, no. 2, (Second Quarter 1971), p. 164.

⁵William H. Scott, *Prehistoric Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History*, (Manila: UST, 1968), p. 64.

c) A *religion* that is basically animistic.⁶ It is a complex religious phenomenon consisting of myths, legends, rituals and sacrifices, beliefs in gods, high as well as low; noble concepts as well as degenerated ones; worship and adoration as well as magic and control.

This interpretation has been so integrated into the life of Filipinos that it is difficult to distinguish what is social and what is religious in their daily activities.⁷ For the Filipino's concepts of the sacred and the profane are fused.⁸ This religious phenomenon supplies them with the satisfaction of their existential needs, both material and psychic; a longing for a fuller life, a deeper and more satisfying communion with one another; the desire to surpass the human condition, to break away from the bonds of space and time and to contact the deity. It gives them a solace in their beliefs, holding out to them the promise of salvation, of the continuity of the flames of life even after it has been lost in death.⁹

Folk tradition emerged as a result of these encounters and interpretation. Folk tradition is the summary of what comprises the cycle of life in its immediate milieu – birth, work, strife, war, victory, love, courtship, marriage, death and even life thereafter. It is expressed mainly in the forms of Riddles, Proverbs, and Folk tales. The Folk tales can in turn be classified into Myths, Legends, Hero tales, and Epics. In all these narratives the beliefs, customs, ideals and values of the people are embodied.¹⁰

Folk tradition needs to be recorded. Time and circumstances define its recording. Historically, the early Filipinos, though being literate, were faced with the dearth of writing materials, ingenious though they might be at finding the media of expressing themselves. Thus, the transmission of folk tradition was done mainly through oral means. In this manner, an abbreviated yet aesthetic form of communicating oral folk tradition emerged: *Poetry*. Folk tradition was expressed through the *poetic medium*.

Literary folk tradition during the pre-Spanish period was both (a) *poetry-oriented*, as this literary medium used memorizations to preserve ideas and thoughts, and (b) *community-oriented* inasmuch as people participate in reciting, chanting and singing together. Since this medium served to amuse, attract and even instruct them, it became very popular.

⁶Francisco Demetrio, "Engkanto Beliefs: An Essay in Interpretation," *Myths, Symbols, Philippines*, ed. Francisco Demetrio (Cagayan de Oro: Xavier University Press, 1978), p. 104-105.

⁷Landa F. Jocano, *The Sulods of Panay*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1968), p. 213.

⁸Leonardo N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, (Tacloban City: Divine Word College Press, 1975), p. 160.

⁹Francisco Demetrio, *Myths, Symbols, Philippines*, p. 104-105.

¹⁰Arsenio Manuel, "A Survey of Philippine Folk Epics," *Asian Folklore Studies* 22, (December 1963), p. 415.

This was common among the early Tagalogs; they were a singing people. Secular and religious traditions were preserved in songs learned from childhood and heard over and over again when they sailed at sea, worked in the fields, or mourned the dead. During those times, the difference between a poem and the lyrics of a song must have been slight. It is likely that the Tagalogs had their songs classified according to melody and occasions, so that lyrics, when found without music, could easily pass for poetry.¹¹

2. *Spanish Literary Influences on Literature.*

The Spanish missionaries, in their attempt at christianizing of the Islands, found in folk tradition both an obstacle and an instrument for the achievement of their goals at the same time. Aware of it, they undertook the following:

a) *Learning the native language*, in such a way that the task of spreading the Gospel was undertaken by the early missionaries through the vernacular.¹²

If the cross was to be introduced, its mystery, myths and lore had to be taught through the native language, considering that an intimate personal affair such as religion – already present in the natives – had to be presented in a like manner; the friar-conquistador undertook the task of “proselytizing” through the vernacular.

It is true that the natives had their own religion. Being henotheistic and tribalistic in nature, they believed in a Supreme Being called in Tagalog “Bathalang Maykapal”, in Visayan “Laon” (Old Man), and in Ilokano “Kabunian.”¹³ Yet, in order to attain one’s aim, the means of communication was needed.

b. *The Introduction of the Roman alphabet in the printing press.* This made possible the dissemination of the Missionaries’ aims and objectives. Catechetical instructions, hymnals, manuals of prayer. . . could be printed. In 1610, the “Doctrina Cristiana de Belarmino en Lengua Bisaya” appeared in print.¹⁴ Likewise, catechisms and other religious materials were also printed.

Through the native languages and the printing press, the task of integrating folk tradition and Christianization was carried out. Oral lore

¹¹Bienvenido Lumbera, *Poetry: 1570-1898*, (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1986).

¹²Ben S. Medina, *Confrontations*, p. 48.

¹³Pablo Fernández, O.P., *History of the Church in the Philippines*, (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Press, 1976), p. 4.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 141.

collected by the missionaries in their apostolic and parochial work formed the nucleus of a culturally re-oriented literature.

Poetry was used in this integration process. Through poetry, the natives found in the new teachings a fresh approach to salvation.

The first poets were the missionaries themselves and some natives called *ladinos* or persons highly literate in both Spanish and the vernacular.¹⁵ These poets, clinging to folk tradition, became evangelists, moralists and artists at the same time. After having assimilated and adapted themselves to the existing dominant Filipino traditions, they introduced their own concepts of sin and salvation, resulting in an evolving Filipino Christian tradition.¹⁶

Riddles, proverbs, folktales, especially legends and epics were preserved; but Christian contents were added. The "pareado" of early riddles and proverbs evolved into longer structures with balanced lines.¹⁷ Many riddles and proverbs were written by friar-poets under with the pursuing of their own objectives. However, this also stimulated the growth of native talents: written poetry in figurative language specially in Tagalog appeared.

In summary, during the pre-Spanish period, Filipino folk tradition found expression in a literary medium through poetry. The missionaries modified this literature through the integration in it of Christian elements, so as to develop a poetry and community-oriented literature.

B. The Pasyon as *Folk Christian Poetry*.

Folk Christian poetry is a product of the selective assimilation of Christian tradition and its insertion into the existing folk tradition. Folk tradition as expressed in poetry "rested primarily on the intimate relationship between the poet and the audience because the idioms of the former had become, too, the language of the latter".¹⁸ Christian tradition had to follow the same pattern in order to be accepted. The popularity of folk poetry can be attributed to this.

With this selective assimilation of Christian tradition and its insertion into the existing folk tradition, there is now not only an intimate relationship between the poet and the audience, but through the poet, there is in turn an intimate relationship between Christianity and the poet's audience. The eventual enrichment of folk tradition by selective assimilation of Christian tradition in poetry is typically illustrated in the Pasyon.

¹⁵Medina, *Confrontations*, p. 54.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁷Julián Cruz Balmaceda, "Ang Tatlong Panahon ng Tulang Tagalog," *Publication of the Institute of National Language*, 4, no.3, (December, 1965), p. 77.

¹⁸Medina, *Confrontations*, p. 59.

The Pasyon is a product of (1) a pastoral need during the eighteenth century, and of (2) the literary ingenuity of Gaspar Aquino de Belen.

1. *Pastoral Necessity.* The care of the sick and the dying was a constant pastoral problem during the early years of evangelization. In order to meet this need, the missionaries organized the natives, who lived in scattered settlements, into towns and barrios. Preferring to live in their fields rather than in towns, to attend to their pastoral needs the Jesuits evolved two temporary solutions: (a) the *magpa-Hesus* rituals and the (b) *blessing of the sick and reading of the gospel* whenever they were brought to town.

(a) *The Magpa-Hesus rituals.* The Jesuit missionaries organized the *principalia* into sodalities which were given the task of doing good works and helping their fellowmen grow in faith.¹⁹

To the *principalia* fell the task of helping the sick and the dying. Those who were to lead the prayers for the dying came to be known as "magpa-Hesus." The prefix "magpa" means someone who causes other persons to do something. Here, they were to cause the dying to utter the name of Jesus - a practice recommended by the Roman ritual as salutary.

It was also customary for the "magpa-Hesus" to pray the Rosary over the sick as part of their consolatory work.²⁰ This ritual brought the Christian message to them and counter-checked the pagan practice of the early Filipinos of calling the *babaylans* (native priests) to assist the dying and later on of chanting dirges and native songs during the wake.

(b) *The Blessing of the Sick and Reading of the Gospel.* It was also customary to bless the sick, and to have the gospel read to them at the end of the Mass, whenever they were brought to town. The reading of the gospel brought them great consolation.²¹

These two practices -the reading of the gospel and the praying of the rosary- must have been the roots of Aquino de Belen's Pasyon.²² A closer look at de Belen's work would reveal that his translation of Villacastin's *Recomendación* served as a substitute for the rosary in the "magpa-Hesus" rituals. The Pasyon proper took the place of the gospel reading.

Being in verse form, the Pasyon was easily chanted. Thus, the Pasyon fulfilled a dual function: telling the people the story of Christ's Passion (catechetical function) and preventing the chanting of the native songs by providing a substitute for them (pastoral function).

¹⁹Javellana, *Casaysayan*, p. 12.

²⁰John N. Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History*, (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 1979), p. 76.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 76.

²²Javellana, *Casaysayan*, p. 12.

Besides, there was for them a change of emphasis in the Pasyon orientation. While the gospels' reading was addressed to the dying, the Pasyon reading (chanting) was addressed to those present at the death-bed. The ritual injunctions of the *Panalangin* (translation of Villacastin's *Recomendación*) and the *arals* (lessons), some of which chided those attending the wake for being materialistic and worldly, point to this new orientation.

2. *Aquino de Belen's Literary Ingenuity.* Aquino de Belen's ingenuity is shown through (a) the *Pasyon content* and (b) his *use of materials*.

(a) *Pasyon Content.* Aquino de Belen's *Pasyon* is an exposition of the spirituality of Christian death.²³ For him, man must be faithful to Christ until death. Thus, the *Pasyon* is a journey – the journey of Jesus from the Last Supper to Calvary to the Resurrection. Christ's journey in the *Pasyon* is the model of all journeys to the afterlife. Arrayed along Jesus' path there are different figures who symbolize possible attitudes man may have towards Jesus. These characters are rendered not realistically but as types which the reader is asked to understand so that he may learn to relate to Jesus; in other words to be faithful to Jesus until the end.

(b) *Use of Materials.* The material of the *Pasyon* is familiar and predictable, but Aquino de Belen recreated the characters of the traditional story with a freshness that could have only come from a child-like faith in the reality of those people. The New Testament characters were portrayed by the poet as though he were the first person to tell us their story. Without falsifying the portraits the Bible makes of them, Aquino de Belen avoids the stereotype characterizations created by pietistic tradition, and sees the characters as though they were his own countrymen.²⁴

In writing the *Pasyon*, Aquino de Belen added another dimension to the intimacy between the poet and his audience by building up his materials, drawn from Scriptures and some Spanish sources, with originality: He restructured the characters in such a way as to become the people the folk easily recognized.²⁵ He brought the experience of Christ close to the experience of the Tagalog audience. With his sensuous visual imagination and unfaltering psychological penetration, he transplanted into the Philippine setting a foreign social structure by adopting the folk idiom, thus bringing to more concrete terms the reality of Christ, his having lived and died among men.²⁶ This creative task of weaving together Christian threads to create a poem comprehensible to his Tagalog audience shows the assimilation of the Christian message in a truly Filipino context.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁴Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, p. 61.

²⁵Medina, *Confrontations*, p. 60.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 60.

II. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST TAGALOG PASYON

A. The first Tagalog Pasyon.

The first Tagalog Pasyon, *Ang Mahal na Passion ni Jesukristong P. Natin na Tola*²⁷ was written by Don Gaspar Aquino de Belen, a native of Rosario, Batangas, Philippines. A master printer in the Jesuit's *Imprenta de la Compañía* from 1703 to 1716, he presented to the ecclesiastical authorities (censors) his manuscript, a translation of Tomás de Villacastin's Spanish version of the *Ordo Commendationes Animarum*. Attached to this translation was Aquino de Belen's nine hundred-eighty verse poem written in the form of Spanish *quintilla*.²⁸ The *Mahal na Pasyon*, as Aquino de Belen entitled his work, recounted the events of Christ's Passion, beginning with the Last Supper and concluding with the Resurrection.²⁹

The Pasyon opens with a recapitulation of the prophecies pertaining to the Redemption, and then relates in twenty-two episodes the events of Christ's life leading to the Crucifixion and, finally, the Resurrection. Within the episodes there are fifteen *arals* (lessons) inserted at irregular intervals, whenever the occasion offers a chance for a homily or reflection.

The text of the Pasyon obtained ecclesiastical approval on March 25, 1703, and was published on that same year. On January 23, 1704, the text was awarded a forty-day indulgence by the Archbishop of Manila, proof of the high regard this text commanded in Church circles.

The translation of Villacastin's and the poem *Ang Mahal na Passion ni Jesu Christong P. Natin na Tola* were both published under one cover and given the title *Manga panalanging pagtatagobilin sa caloloua nang tauong Naghihingalo*. The supplementary stand given to the longer Pasyon is indicated in the title page: Beneath the main title, we read that this work by Villacastin and translated (*ysinalin*) by Don Gaspar, is "followed by (*ysinonod*) the Holy Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ in verse". The license granted by Melendez Llamas, the Manila Bishopric examiner, referred to the poem as inserted in the *Recomendación*.³⁰

Editions of the first Tagalog Pasyon. There were five printed editions of the first Tagalog Pasyon. The fifth edition appeared in 1760 and is the only extant copy of the text. The *Inventario Jesuítico* of 1769, a document from the Spanish civil government making an inventory of confiscated

²⁷In these pages we will be using *Mahal na Pasion* or *Pasyong Mahal* in referring to de Belen's work.

²⁸Javellana, *Casaysayan*, p. 11.

²⁹Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, p. 57.

³⁰Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism*, (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1988), p. 196.

goods belonging to the Society of Jesus, asserts that civil authorities found more than seven-hundred copies of Aquino de Belen's text - some bound, others unbound - in the *Imprenta de la Compañía* the previous year.³¹ By the beginning of the twentieth-century, the bibliographer Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera described the text as "muy raro".³²

As already noted, the fifth edition (1760) is the only extant version of the text. Two copies are available in Manila - one of them in the Lopez Memorial Museum and the other in the National Library. The Lopez's copy has a number of missing pages while the one in the National Library is complete. To this date, a microform (microfiche) of the preserved fifth edition is in the Filipiniana Library of Ateneo de Manila University. Typescripts based on the microform are also available at the Library. (In this study, we are using the typescript of Teodoro A. Agoncillo.)

The 1760 edition of Aquino de Belen's Pasyon used both the modern *s* and the old form of the letter which is best approximated by the letter *f* on the typewriter. In the typescript, the letter *f* was used for the old form of the *s*. The tilde too, was placed over the letter *g* in the original.

The Pasyon verses that the I will be quoting in the forthcoming chapters would, therefore, bear tilde over *g* and the *f* as equivalent to *s*.

B. The Sources of the Biblical and Folkloric Data in the First Tagalog Pasyon

The *biblical elements* are those that can be found in the Bible. The sequences, character and orientation found in the twenty-two episodes of the first Tagalog Pasyon have been drawn from the Bible and from Christian (Spanish-Filipino) Folklore.

Folkloric data are elements comprising the folk idioms: Filipino traits, attitudes, and beliefs expressed in poetry. They also refer to the foreign social structure introduced in the Tagalog Pasyon but are not Scripturally-based.

It is a fact that Aquino de Belen used some sources in composing his poem. A native poet like him working on a topic alien to his culture learned from the Spanish missionaries must have relied on sources for his Pasyon. Which are they? This is the subject of the following pages.

Three prominent Filipino critics offer their theories on the sources of Aquino de Belen's Pasyon. They are: Bienvenido Lumbrera, Nicanor Tiongson, and Rene Javellana.

³¹"Inventario Jesuítico," quoted in Wenceslao Retana, *Orígenes de la imprenta filipina. Investigaciones históricas, bibliográficas y tipográficas*, (Madrid: Suárez, 1911), p. 65.

³²Javellana, *Casaysayan*, p. 11.

Bienvenido Lumbera. According to him, the Tagalog Pasyon is related to a huge family of verse accounts of the Redemption.³³ In the fifteenth-century, the following versions appeared: Íñigo de Mendoza's "Vita Christi" (Zamora, 1482) the Comendador Roman's "Coplas de la Pasión con Resurrección" (Toledo, 1490), Bern Fenollars' "Historia de la Pasión" (Valencia, 1493), Ludolphus de Saxonica's "Vita Christi" (Valencia, 1496), and Sor Isabel de Villena's "Vita Christi" (Valencia, 1497). The sixteenth-century produced Juan de Quiros' "Década de la Pasión de Cristo" (Calle, 1576) and Francisco Hernández Blasco's "Universal Redención" (Toledo, 1598).

Nicanor Tiongson. The Tagalog Pasyon came from the following sources: (a) the Old and the New Testament, (b) some apocryphal works, Christian legends taken from the *awit*, (c) from other *pasyones*, and (d) the unbridled imagination of the writer.³⁴

Rene Javellana. Among the authors who proposed theories on the sources of the first Tagalog Pasyon, it was Rene Javellana who made an in-depth internal analysis of the text and came out with a more accurate identification of the sources. In his opinion, the Tagalog Pasyon came from several sources, namely (1) the Sacred Scriptures, (2) Juan de Padilla's "Retablo de la Vida de Cristo", (3) devotional life of the Church in the eighteenth-century, and 4) the *Apocrypha*. This needs further elaboration:

1. *Sacred Scripture.* Aquino de Belen did not have direct access to the Scriptures.³⁵ This can be proven by the following reasons:

(a) Although the Pasyon narrates the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ, it is not clearly dependent on any of the Four Gospels, but brings and mentions passages found in all of them.

(b) In his outline, Aquino de Belen introduces incidents nowhere to be found in the Gospels, namely:

— The Gethsemane prayer: Christ asked God the Father to protect his mother and disciples from harm;

— On the same Gethsemane incident, the angel's reply that God will protect his mother and disciples;

— The long sermon chiding Judas and Peter for their unfaithfulness;

³³Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, p. 50.

³⁴Nicanor Tiongson, "The Pasyon: The Best-Known Filipino Book," *Archipelago*, 3, (1976 IV, 1-28), pp. 30-38.

³⁵Rene Javellana, "The Sources of Gaspar Aquino de Belen's Pasyon," *Philippine Studies*, 32, (Third Quarter, 1984), pp. 305-321.

— Trial at the Sanhedrin: the speeches of Caiaphas and Annas against Jesus;

— Jesus before Herod: Herod's offer of half of his kingdom if Jesus performs a miracle for the former's entertainment;

— Details of the Way of the Cross;

— The gory description of the Crucifixion.

(c) The *Latin quotations* found in de Belen's *Pasyon* are current popular quotations, having as sources either the "Siete Palabras" (Seven Last Words, a popular Good Friday devotion), Christian proverbs and other devotional practices of those times, not the Latin Vulgate.

2. *Juan de Padilla's "Retablo de la Vida de Cristo" (1585).* The "Retablo de la Vida de Cristo" is the immediate and principal source of the Aquino de Belen's *Pasyon* and from which he derives the outline of his work.³⁶

The text was written by a Carthusian monk of the Charterhouse of Santa María de las Cuevas in Seville, Juan de Padilla, who was often called "El Cartujano." The poem is a Passion narrative, four hundred seventy stanzas long. It was entitled "Retablo del Cartuxo sobre la Vida de Nuestro Redentor Jesu Christo" (Alcala, 1505).³⁷ This popular poem appeared anonymously, but Padilla gave it his identity in an acrostic near the end. The poem was brought to completion by Bachiller Burgos in 1585 with an addition of forty-four stanzas that told the story of the Resurrection. It was later reprinted by Miguel de Riego (London, 1843) together with his other works.

The word "Retablo" would originally mean "reredos" or altarpiece, frequently decorated with carved wooden figures. It later came to signify a religious play with wooden puppets, and then any puppet show.³⁸ Juan de Padilla uses the term figuratively in his work.

One finds striking similarities in the "Retablo" and the *Pasyon*, namely, similarities in outline and content; similarities in techniques; and, in many instances, similarities in expressions. These we will discuss below.

3. *Devotional life of the Church during the eighteenth-century.* Whatever Aquino de Belen found inadequate in the "Retablo" for his purposes, was taken instead from the vast pool of Christian tradition kept alive by the liturgy and the devotional life of the Spanish-Filipino church. This can be clearly seen in the *Pasyon* as follows:

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 310.

³⁷Philip Ward, *Oxford Companion to Spanish Literature*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 436.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 493.

— The influence of liturgical practice, especially the Mass, in the eighteenth-century, on the narrative and presentation of the Eucharistic Mystery during the Last Supper.

— The use of the "Via Crucis" devotion, in the account of the Crucifixion.

— The use of religious art and iconography, in the vivid description of the meeting between Christ and Veronica.

4. *The Apocrypha*. The characters of Longinus, Veronica, Dymas, Gestas are apocryphal-based. Whether Aquino de Belen had direct access or not to the apocryphal gospel will be a subject of study later.

A thorough investigation of the sources used by Aquino de Belen would involve an extensive and profound knowledge of the literature oral and written that the Spaniards brought to the Philippines. The field is still wide for such work and endeavor.

C. The Filipino Folkloric Elements in the Tagalog Pasyon

The *folkloric elements* are those which refer to the folk idiom: the Filipino traits, attitudes and beliefs expressed in poetry. They also refer to the native and foreign structure introduced in the tagalog Pasyon that are not Scripturally-based.

In this study, these elements are classified as *Folkloric structures*, or the medium by which the elements are expressed and conveyed, and the *Folkloric contents* or the characters, attitudes, traits and beliefs contained in the tagalog Pasyon.

1. The Folkloric Structure of the Tagalog Pasyon.

Gaspar Aquino de Belen's *Pasyon* is folk Christian poetry. By writing his Pasyon he brought together a number of traditions and influences, which can be perceived: (a) In the Pasyon outline; (b) In the Pasyon style and technique; and (c) the Pasyon's original expressions.

a. In the Pasyon Outline. The Pasyon has been influenced by two different elements, namely, foreign sources and Aquino de Belen's originality.

(a) *Foreign Sources*. The Pasyon outline is basically taken from the "Retablo de la Vida de Cristo" of 1585. A comparative structural study of both outlines reveals that, except for a few discrepancies, both works have similar outlines.

Some incidents not found in the Scriptures are found both in the Pasyon and "Retablo." For instance, the Gethsemane incident (Jesus prays

for his mother and his disciples), and the gory scene of the Crucifixion.³⁹ The following is a parallel example of the Gethsemane Incident:

Mahal na Pasyon

Ynoolit ynaambil
Yaon onang panalangin
na dating ydinadayang
at toloy ypinagbilin
ang caniyang inang Virgen.

Ang manga apostole naman
caniyang paaarangan
na hovag tomalo't lomaban
ang loob sa catimtiman.

"Retablo"

Pero con gran aflicción,
¡O piadoso Señor Padre!,
Porque se que mi Pasión
Herirá su corazón
Te encomiendo aquella madre.

Mis discípulos, Señor,
De ti sean amparados;
Como ovejas sin pastor
Andarán descarriados.

However, some incidents in the Pasyon are not found in the "Retablo". These incidents are: (1) The Last Supper and the Washing of the Feet; (2) The Jews mocking at Jesus; (3) The Meeting (and dialogue) of Jesus and his mother on the way to Calvary; and (4) The story of Longinus, to mention a few. In these instances, Aquino de Belen made use of other sources available to him:

1) *The Last Supper*. This narrative was influenced more by the eighteenth-century Catholic liturgy — especially the celebration of the Mass —, than by the Gospel account. A comparison of Aquino de Belen's Pasyon account of the *Institution of the Eucharist* with the Synoptic's show that the phrases "binolongan capagdaca" and "benendicionan" do not have any parallel in the Gospel.⁴⁰ They refer to the actions performed by the priest during the Consecration. The Missal prior to the liturgical reforms of Vatican II had the rubrics "profert verba consecrationis secrete" (the words of consecration are said in secret).⁴¹ Would this be an indication that when Aquino de Belen wrote about this incident he had the Mass in mind?

2) *The Mocking Incident*. The Jews mocking Jesus is a biblical incident; yet Aquino de Belen did not have his account taken from the gospels. Most probably this was taken from the other verse accounts on Redemption especially Juan de Quirós' "Cristo Pathia" (Toledo, 1551). He could have learned it also from the stories and sermons of the missionaries during the "Siete Palabras" services.

3) *The Meeting of Jesus and Mary*. The narrative is most probably taken from the "Via Crucis" and Comendador Roman's "Coplas de la Pasión" (Toledo, 1490). The "Via Crucis" devotion can be traced back to

³⁹Javellana, "Sources...", p. 311.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

1342 when the Franciscans, who were custodians of the Holy Places promoted this devotion in honor of the Holy Passion of Christ.⁴² The Franciscans were also those who propagated this devotions in the Philippines during the Spanish period. On the other hand, the Pasyon and "Coplas de la Pasión" feature the same incident.

4) *The story of Longinus, Veronica, Dymas and Gestas.* These apocryphal accounts were not available to Aquino de Belen. He did not have a direct access to the Apocryphal gospels. These apocryphal stories were usually contained in Jacobus de Voragine's "Golden Legend", a compendium of Christian tales and legends. It is even doubtful that this book could have reached the Philippines from Europe. Again, could it be possible that Aquino de Belen learned these stories from the tales of the Spanish missionaries themselves?

(b) *Aquino de Belen's originality.* Although the Pasyon genre is undeniably Spanish in origin, available evidence points to the originality of the Tagalog Pasyon.⁴³ Aquino de Belen's originality is found in his *arals* (lessons). Although his lessons have their parallel in Juan de Quiros' "Cristo Pathia", a poem which draws lessons from the episodes narrated, his originality lies in presenting his lessons in separate sections.

His originality also lies in his redaction of traditional materials over which he had no control and which, if he were faithful to the Church, he could not drastically alter but merely work with and re-arrange to emphasize this or that point.⁴⁴

b. In the Pasyon Style and Technique. Analyzing the Pasyon text and comparing it with the Spanish verse-accounts of the Redemption and folk poetry would reveal several assumptions concerning style and technique:

(a) *Style.* The *poetical metre* used, which is consistently of five octosyllabic lines having a single assonantly rhyme, must have been influenced by the Spanish *quintilla* (a poem with five lines having eight syllables in each line).⁴⁵

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	(Octosyllabic)
1	At	saca	quinoha	naman					
2	Yaong	caliz	na	ynoman					
3	may	alac	na	nalalaman					
4	caniyang	benedic	ionan						
5	ay	naguing	dugo	ring	tunay.				

⁴²New Catholic Encyclopedia, ed. Staff of Catholic University of America, (London: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1972), p. 835.

⁴³Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, p. 50.

⁴⁴Javellana, "Sources...", p. 51.

⁴⁵Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, p. 51.

Compare it to the poetry of Iñigo de Mendoza's *Vita Christi* (1482):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 1 ¿Dónde vas, apasionado,
 2 con diversas heridas,
 3 con espinas coronado,
 4 con color descolorado,
 5 con lágrimas tan sentidas?

Instead of adopting the rhyme scheme of the Spanish *quintilla* (which is ABAAB) he used the mono rhyme of Tagalog poetry (AAAAA):

<i>Pasyon</i>	<i>Spanish quintilla</i>
Hayo na't, magsaoli ca't, (A)	¿Dónde vas, apasionado, (A)
magbago cang alaala (A)	con diversas heridas, (B)
tomatavad ca capagdaca (A)	con espinas coronado, (A)
magava't, quiquilala (A)	con color descolorado, (A)
sa nagsising maganda (A)	con lágrimas tan sentidas? (B)

Aquino de Belen emerged as an expert in the use of rhyme and meter. Seldom did he fall into the expediency of riming vowel sounds with common instances like "ko", "mo", "na", and "ba". His richness of vocabulary allowed him supply throughout the long poem the precise word whenever a line ending demanded a certain riming sounds.⁴⁶ What is striking in Aquino de Belen's riming was the consistency with which he sustained their meaningful use all throughout the *Pasyon*.

Most of the poetry during the pre-Spanish times were chanted or sung. Thus, the poetical meters of the *Pasyon* were likewise adapted to be sung or chanted. The style is also characterized by the regularity of rhyme and meter so that this plaintive tonal quality gave rise to another poetic tradition, that of romantic agony found in songs like the *dalit*, which betrays the sentimental nature of the folk, or indicating a certain struggle or agony, which reveals the folk's predilection of strife. Although the Spanish melodic influence was predominant, there was one style particular to the *Pasyon* called the *tagulaylay*. In this style, a complete stanza is chanted in one breath with fancy curls and trills. Yet, nowadays we seldom hear the chanting of Aquino de Belen's *Pasyon*. What is common nowadays is the chanting of the *Casaysayan* *Pasyon* during the Holy Week celebration.

Some chanters of the *Pasyon* on Holy Week interviewed at random did not even distinguish or remember where and how this tune had originated. Dr. Nicanor Tiongson, of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, however, admitted that some researches on the matter have been undertaken in the country.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Medina, *Confrontation*, p. 23.

⁴⁷Writer's interview with Dr. Nicanor Tiongson, March 23, 1991.

(b) *Techniques*. The popularity of Aquino de Belen's Pasyon can be attributed principally to the intensity with which he re-created the Passion story. His sensuous visual imagination and unflinching psychological penetration have been expressed through the use of the following: 1) dramatic dialogues; 2) direct address; 3) short sermonettes, and 4) the homeliness of his details.

(1) *Dramatic dialogues*. They were patterned after the narrative poems of the Redemption, especially the "Retablo" and the "Coplas de la Pasión". Incidents like the meeting of Jesus and Mary were expressed by the poet in dramatic dialogues reminiscent of the Spanish poems earlier mentioned.

In the *Coplas de la Pasión* we find Mary lamenting the sufferings of her Son:⁴⁸

Quando la virgen tornó
dixo con dolor muy fuerte:
¡Oh hijo! ¿qué mereció
tu carne que no pecó
para recibir tal muerte?
¡Oh mi hijo de dulçura
vida para mis reposos
más honestos!
No es aquesta tu figura
ni tus miembros gloriosos
son estos.

(When the virgin's turn came
to speak
She said with a deep pain:
O Son, how has
Your sinless flesh
Merited such death?
O my sweet Son
Life for my pure repose
That is not how you look
Nor are these
Your glorious limbs.

Tus cabellos igualados,
liaños, prietos y luzidos
véolos despedaçados,
mesados y deshonorados,
de sangre santa teñidos;
veo tu frente llagada
y tus cejas diferentes
sus cabellos,
tu cabeça ensangrentada
y tus ojos excelentes
no ser ellos.

Your trimmed hair
Smooth, thick and lustrous
Behold I see it torn
Messed and dishonored
Reddened by your holy blood.
I see your wounded face
And the hair of your eyebrows
Looking strange
Your bloodied head
And your excellent eyes
Are not as they used to be.)

The same thing is seen in the Pasyon. Christ, lamenting his desolation, calling on the disciples who deserted him, was heard by Mary who rushes to him and offers to take Christ's place on the cross:

Aacoing co na't, socdang
aco na ang papapatay,
at nang icao ang mabuhay,

(I'll take your place
and even die in your stead
so that you may live on,

⁴⁸Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, p. 54.

di ano pang capacan-an	for what use is everything
bongso, cun mavala icao.	My son, when you have gone.)

(2) *Direct addresses*: They were intended as reminders and admonitions for the readers and the characters themselves. The same addresses are found in Juan de Quiros' *Cristo Pathia* (Toledo, 1552) and the *Retablo*.

In the *Retablo*, while Jesus is on the way to Pilate, de Belen turns to the reader and delivers his exhortation:⁴⁹

Contempla con qué humildad	(Contemplate with what humility
Aquestas cosas sufría	He suffered all these things
Aquel Dios de la verdad;	the God of truth;
Contempla la mansedad	Contemplate the humility
y paciencia que tenía.	of the patience he had.)

In *Cristo Pathia*, after the mob has chosen Barrabas for Jesus, he addresses the mob and indirectly addresses sinners:⁵⁰

O pueblo bouo, o gente inaduertida,
 Que tan sin tino vas así a perderte.
 [Del que dio muerte, tú esperas vida]
 Al que te dio vida, quieres dar la muerte:
 ¡Que muera el sancto, y biua el homicida!
 Mira que es escoger la mala suerte;
 Niegas al justo, eliges al culpado;
 En todo tienes gusto deprauado.

(O foolish nation, o ignorant people
 Who, because of bad judgment, will thus be lost.
 From him who gave death, you wait for life;
 To him who gave you life, you wish to give death:
 That the holy one die, and the killer live!
 Behold that it is choosing misfortune
 To deny the just and choose the guilty;
 In everything your desires are depraved.)

In Aquino de Belen's *Pasyon*, we find many direct addresses to the reader. Here is an example:⁵¹

Ycaanim na ito	(This will be the sixth time
Pagyayaona,t, ito	where he will be going
paghahatiran cay Cristo	where Christ will be brought
mahabag ang Christiano,t,	Christians have pity
panimdim ay ibago.	our attitude could change.)

⁴⁹*Pasyon*, p. 116.

⁵⁰Juan de Padilla, "Retablo de la Vida de Cristo hecho en verso," in *Romancero y Cancionero Sagrados* (Madrid: B.A.C., Imprenta de los sucesores Hernando, 1915), p. 375.

⁵¹Lumbera, *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

Direct addresses were also intended for Peter, Judas and even words of consolation for Mary. In *Cristo Pathia*, the author after Judas' betrayal of Christ reproaches him:⁵²

O falso Judas, O traidor maluado
O crudo sobre natural manera
Más que el León de Mauro alanceado
Onca ni tigre no es tan lastimera
No es tan cruel el jauali acosado
Que si por dicha fueras bestia fiera
Cualquier maestro, que de ti curara
Tu natural fiereza amansara.

(O false Judas, o evil traitor
O cruel one, unnaturally so
More than the Lion by Maurus speared
Neither lynx or tiger is more plaintive
Nor is the hunted boar more cruel
For if by fortune you were a wild animal
Whatever master would care for you
Your natural fierceness would subdue.)

In the Pasyon, Aquino de Belen points out to Judas that by betraying Christ, he has violated Mary's hospitality by reminding him of the many acts of kindness Mary did for him:⁵³

Iudas yang iyong asal
iyang masama mong lagay
cun di mo tambing bauahan
tantong icao ay daraval
calolova mo,y, masasayang.

(Judas, what have you done
the evil into which you have fallen
will surely lead you to worse state;
if you don't change,
your soul will be lost.

Hayo na,t, magsaoli ca,t,
magbago cang alaala
tomatavad ca capagdaca
magava,t, quiquilala
a nagsising maganda.

Go then and be yourself
change your mind
ask for forgiveness now
and she will have take pity and
accept
your sincere repentance.)

In the denial of Peter, Aquino de Belen is not content with following the Gospel, but pursues Peter like a hound by directly addressing in thirty-two quintets to the coward apostle.⁵⁴

⁵²*Mahal na Pasyon*, p. 88.

⁵³*Mahal na Pasyon*, p. 57.

⁵⁴Lumbera, *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

3) *Short sermonettes or Arals.* He draws moral implications out of the different incidents in the Passion of Christ and asks the reader to join in the spirit of penitence. Here is an example.⁵⁵

Sa Dios tayo dumayng paava,t, homiñging tambing yayang siya nating galing tayo nama,y, guiguilivin ybig na di pacam-in.	(We cry out to God To sincerely ask and be pitied because He is our strength all of us will be consoled in granting our needs.)
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4) *Homeliness of Details.* By adopting the existing conditions of his time, Aquino identifies the readers with situations, characters and incidents in the Pasyon. In the Gethsemane incident, for instance, he shows us a common Filipino theme: friendship. Christ's suffering arose from friends' indifference.⁵⁶

Aba? (a niya) mga caolayao di бага cayo macaramay sa aquin nang paglalamay ysa mang oras lamang pananalanging mataman?	(Oh? says he, my dear mates, Could you not share with me this vigil, only a single hour of devout prayers?
O manga caibigan co pili cong manga catoto guising manalanganin cayo at nang di cayo matalo nang dilan masasamang toco.	O friends of mine, my chosen companions, rise and pray so that you may not fall to evil temptations.)

On another occasion, Judas is made to reflect on the theme of Filipino *hospitality*.⁵⁷

Di cayo,y, nagsasangbahay iysa ang inyong dulang? cun icao ay longmiligao may laan saiyoung bahao, canin, at anoanoman.	(Didn't the three of you share the same board? While you were out, roaming around didn't she set aside some food for you rice and whatever else there was to eat?)
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c. *In the Pasyon's Original Expressions.* His mastery of his own native language brings about a realistic description of the Passion of Christ. Though it may seem that the Pasyon is a "free" translation of the *Retablo* and reflects the tradition of medieval iconography of the life of Christ as found in the *Coplas de la Pasión*, he writes in a language

⁵⁵Mahal na Pasyon, p. 94.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 85.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 85.

marked with vigor and poignancy. This can be seen, among others, in the Crucifixion incident: While nailing Christ to the cross, the tagalog poet's Roman soldiers find that Christ's hands cannot reach the ready-made holes on the wood of the cross. Instead of boring new holes, the soldiers simply use brute force tugging at Christ's free arm so that it would be extended as far as the hole for the other nail:⁵⁸

May apat na malalacas linalapac ang balicat	(Four strong men wrenched the arm from the shoulder
nagsisipangorong ang ogat litid ay nagsipangalag niyong canilang pagbatac.	the veins pulled back at the strain the ligaments came loose because of the violent tug.)

It is a pity that the overflowing Aquino de Belen's tagalog vocabulary is not in use anymore, although some of the expressions he uses are still being used in certain towns of Batangas.

2. The Folkloric Contents of the Tagalog Pasyon.

The folkloric contents of the tagalog Pasyon are shown in both its folkloric themes and its folkloric figures.

a. Folkloric Themes.

Folkloric themes refer to the orientation, attitudes and beliefs common to the folk in the tagalog Pasyon used by the poet to convey his purpose in writing his narrative poetry.

Analysis of the text would reveal to us that the Pasyon originally is: (a) a Spirituality of the Christian dying, and (b) a Journey of Friendship with Christ.

(a) *Spirituality of Christian Dying.* Javellana summarizes the narrative content of the Pasyon as a sort of spirituality for the dying.⁵⁹ There is basis for supporting such an opinion. Aquino de Belen's intention can be seen from the reasons he had in translating the *Recomendación* and in writing the Pasyon. Aquino de Belen, in his dedication "to the most exalted image of Jesus Christ" in the "Panalangin" mentioned the reality of death: "Since death is a certainty, we should prepare for it; how are we going to prepare ourselves for this reality?"

From the translation, we can distinguish several steps, namely, 1) looking at the dying, 2) surrender to God, and 3) prayer as a manifestation of surrender.

⁵⁸Lumbera, *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁵⁹Javellana, *Casaysayan*, p. 13.

(1) *Looking at the dying.* By looking at a dying person, one sees a reflection of the accumulated loss of the living.⁶⁰

. . . .caya бага man di anong iyong libang o cacaonin, ay tingnan mo mona ang asal nang naghihingalo, at con maquita mo na at mapagmalas, ay nang ang iyong loob ay maglubag sa ano mang panimdim, at gauang ipagcacasala.

(. . . .so, whatever you do or wherever you go, look for the while at the dying person, and in seeing him, may yourself unveil the memory of your sinful state.)

The death of a person becomes the means by which we realize the sinfulness of death. We die because we are sinners. The realization of this loss and sinfulness should lead to sorrow for what one owes God.

(2) *Surrender to God.* The reality of death hastens our surrender to God. Surrender or submission to God creates a new dimension in our relationship with the others especially the dying.

(3) *Prayer.* The relationship of submission and surrender is manifested in prayer. Prayer becomes the privileged means of exchange between the living and the dying. It brings both parties under the protection of God's care. Prayer awakes in us a vivid desire for a good death.⁶¹

. . . .Prayer thus turns death around. For by imploring the presence of a good death, it divests death from any authority over the convert's past and present life; that is, the exchange of prayers is meant to reveal death not as sheer loss but as containing the potential for validating all that one has given up in submitting to the dominion of the outside realm.⁶²

Thus, the rationale for the "Panalangin" and the "Pasyon" of Aquino de Belen: The *Panalangin* is a prayer to obtain a good death. The *Pasyon*, intended for the wake of the dead, is addressed to those attending the wake.

The Pasyon reminds us of life as a journey. We should not care so much for this life that we have, when death – whose eloquent testimonial is the corpse being waked – will end all anyway.⁶³ To prepare ourselves for this journey, we should be faithful to Jesus until death. The Pasyon is Jesus' journey from the Last Supper to Calvary to the Resurrection. This journey is the pattern for any Christian journey. All the hardship, pain and deprivation we encounter on this journey derive their significance from Christ who has already suffered and died.

⁶⁰Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism*, p. 202.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³Javellana, *Casaysayan*, p. 13.

The characters in the Pasyon symbolize the possible attitudes man may have towards Jesus. Understanding the characters would help us relate meaningfully to Jesus. To relate meaningfully to Jesus is to be faithful to his ideals until death.

(b) *A Journey of Friendship with Christ.* Faithfulness to Christ until death is expressed by the word *friendship*. Thus, we see the characters of the Pasyon within the context of being *friends*, *enemies* or *traitors*. We see the ever-faithful Mary. Judas betrays Jesus. Peter, because of weakness, loses faith in Him. Longinus, an enemy of Christ, learned to be faithful to him.

By expressing this relationship in terms of friendship, Aquino de Belen brought Christ closer to tagalog sensibility in his milieu,⁶⁴ since friendship is a Filipino value.

Friendship is *being with* a person. The words *kaibigan* (companion) and *capatid* or *kaputol* (brother), connote a *being-with* and *being-part* of a whole. The Filipino is not complete without a *casama*. He never suffers alone, neither does he rejoice alone. He has to make it part of a family, a *barkada* (peer group) and a community. He is always a *cadamay* (co-sharer) in the joys and sufferings.⁶⁵ Such is friendship in a Filipino context.

. . . The Filipino is never left alone. He is expected to have a companion from birth to death. As a being-with-others, he is expected to have a reference group, his *sakop*. The *sakop* is primarily his kinsmen. If he is away from them he has the mechanism of forming others *sakops*, such as his *barkada*. . . He is also expected to sacrifice his own interest for the sake of his own *sakop*. . .⁶⁶

The Malayan influence of *solidarity* in the family and community laid down the foundations of this friendship.⁶⁷ The Spanish influence strengthened this relationship and further encouraged the spirit of self-sacrifice. This influence was generally religious in orientation.

Indispensable to Filipino friendship is the concept of *utang-loob*, or *utang na loob*, which is an interpersonalistic Filipino trait of *debt-of-volition*.⁶⁸ A person who has received something, although the giver did

⁶⁴Medina, *Confrontation*, p. 60.

⁶⁵Ruben Billote, "A Parish Priest's View of People's Perception of Christ," *The Filipino Face of Christ*, (Tagaytay City: SVD Press, 1978), p. 41.

⁶⁶Leonardo N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology*, (Tacloban City: DWU Publications, 1975), pp. 54-55.

⁶⁷Jacob Quiambao, "The Filipino Family and Society," *Reading in Philippine Culture and Social Life*, ed. Amparo S. Lardizabal (Manila: Rex Books, 1976), p. 88.

⁶⁸Mercado, *Ibid.*, p. 116.

not set any condition or asked for any expression of gratitude, a *debt-of-gratitude* is ingrained in the recipient, who has to repay the giver be repaid one way or another.

In the tagalog Pasyon, several events can be noted and defined in terms of friendship. For instance, (1) the Last Supper was a re-affirmation of Christ's oneness and friendship with his disciples; (2) the Eucharist as a symbol of that oneness and friendship; (3) suffering arises from friend's indifference; (4) laying down one's life is a supreme act of friendship, (5) Christ is the great *catoto* (friend); and (6) to be a Christian is to live in Christ's friendship.

(1) *The Last Supper: A re-affirmation of friendship.* Meals, feasts and banquets are always occasions for celebrations of friendship. A Filipino does not celebrate anything alone; he invites his friends. His *barkada* enlivens the celebration. It is within this context that de Belen presents the Last Supper. Christ is saying goodbye to his friends. He asks them to remember Him.⁶⁹

At nangusap na tibobog
sa manga casamang irog
Aba matanto na ninyo
manga ibig co,t, catoto
ang lahat nang ginava co
pacatandang totoo.

(And He spoke thus
through his beloved ones:
You must remember,
my beloved friends,
all I have done
truly remember them.)

(2) *Eucharist: Symbol of oneness and friendship.* Filipino friendship is sharing. One is always a *cadamay* (co-sharer) in the joys and sufferings of the other. He is a *being-with* and *being-part* of the whole. What more beautiful symbolism could Aquino de Belen find than the Eucharist?⁷⁰

Aquing lalagacan
nang daquilang caibigan. . .
catauan co,y, caning tunay
dugo, ay inumin naman. . .

(I will be leaving you
a great Friend. . .
eat of my body
drink of my blood. . .)

Lest it be misunderstood, Aquino de Belen does not deny at all the real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He just wanted to show that the Eucharist is also a symbol of friendship.

(3) *Suffering: A result of friends' indifference.* Aquino de Belen attributes a great deal of Christ's suffering to the indifference of his disciples to keeping watch with him during the agonizing moments in the Garden of Gethsemane. He says.⁷¹

⁶⁹Pasyon Mahal, pp. 7-8.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 11.

⁷¹Mahal na Pasyon, p. 11.

Aba? (a niya) manga caolayao
di baga cayo macaramay
sa acquin nang paglalamay
iysa mang horas lamang
pananalanging mataman?

(Lo! my dear friends,
Can you not accompany me
in my being awake
for at least an hour
in moments of prayer?)

Suffering also arises from a friend's denial. Peter denied Christ:⁷²

Marorog (a niya,t,) pisanan
cun aco,y, caalam-alam
at cun aco,y, caalagbay
ni Christong inyong caavay
magmovang cayo,t, magnilay.

(May I crumble to dust
if ever I knew
or was ever a follower
of this Christ who's your enemy
think upon my words.)

Judas betrayed him:⁷³

Capagdaca'y nilapitan
yniyacap, toloy, hinagcan. . .

(At once he came near
embraced and kissed him. . .)

Since friendship is based on *utang-na-loob*, indifference, denial and betrayal are signs of *walang-utang-na-loob*. Judas was chided by the author of the Pasyon for this attitude:⁷⁴

Di ba ang loob mo,y, sinidlan
nang manga mahal na laman. . .
dili ca pinili niya,
at ipinacabilang pa
sa manga casamang sinta
doon sa labindalawa
na isa ca sa canila?

(Your self was filled
with precious things. . .
Were you not chosen,
were you not included
to his beloved companions
the twelve apostles,
were you not one of them?)

Yaon baga ang ganti mo
sa Panginoon mong ito?
na nagpatavad sa iyo
nang daraquilang sala mo
caavang di sasang-ano.

Is this your debt-of-gratitude
to your Lord,
who has forgiven you
of your great sin
with his boundless mercy?)

(4) *Death: A supreme act of friendship.* It was through Christ's death that we became truly his friends:⁷⁵

Pagpurihin nating lahat
nang moli,t, moling falamat
ang dios, na nagpatavad
ating iquinapanglawas
at yguinanda nang palad.

(Let us all praise
and thank him more and more
the God who has forgiven
for our salvation
and the beauty of our fate.)

⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁴*Mahal na Pasyon*, p. 122.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 121.

(5) *Christ is the great Catoto (Friend)*. In spite of the rejection and the suffering unjustly imposed by malefactors, Christ remains the open-hearted friend whom all of us can turn to for merciful forgiveness.⁷⁶

Ama cong Dios na totoo	(My true God,
ang hingi co po saiyo	What I ask of you
ngay-on ay patavarin mo	is to forgive today
ang lahat nang mañga tavo	everyone
na nagpaco sa aquin dito.	who crucified Me.)

(6) *Christianity: Living in Christ's Friendship*. Aquino de Belen exhorted his readers of the Pasyon to imitate Christ and to live in Christian friendship. The concluding stanza of the tagalog Pasyon summarizes this theme of friendship:⁷⁷

Lomagui nava at camtan	(May we stay and attain,
nating lahat nang binyagan	all of us baptized,
gawang pagcacaibigan	the works of friendship
dito,t, saca doon man	now and in that place
sa guinhavang valang hanggan.	of everlasting peace.)

b. The Folkloric Figures of the Tagalog Pasyon.

The *folkloric figures* are the characters involved in the Pasyon narrative, whether they are *biblically-based* or *culturally* and *traditionally-based*, received in the context of the folk idiom. These folkloric figures can be classified into (1) Folkloric types, and (2) Apocryphal figures.

1. *Folkloric Types*. Folkloric types are characters in the Pasyon narrative that are *biblically-based* but were used by the author as symbols and types to attain his purpose in writing the Pasyon.

Mary, Peter, Judas, Annas, Caiphas and the Roman soldiers are biblical characters. More than being actual characters in the Pasyon narrative, Aquino de Belen used them as types and symbols of the different attitudes man may take in relating to Christ. Placed within the context of the folk idiom, they are the types of the different attitudes Filipinos may take in relation to their Christian faith.

(1) *Mary*. Mary appears only through two encounters with Christ: first, at the Via Crucis, and second, by the Cross at Calvary. These encounters were occasions for a dialogue between them. The dialogues were placed within the context of Mary being faithful to Christ until the end. This faithfulness was shown by her being *cadamay* (sharer) in his

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 127.

Passion. This connotes the Filipino concept of friendship expressed in *damayan* (co-sharing) and the *sakop* mentality. For the sake of the *sakop* (Christ, her son) she is ready to sacrifice her own interest.⁷⁸

Aacong co na,t, socdang	(I'll take your place
aco na ang papapatay	and even die in your stead
at nang icao ang mabuhay,	so that you may live on,
di ano pang capacab-an	for what use is everything,
bongso, cun mavala icao.	my Son, when you have gone?)

Addressing the people during wakes in the eighteenth-century, the Pasyon presents Mary as the type of all Filipinos who cling to their newly found Faith inspite of the onslaught of pagan practices, superstitions, and customs very popular among the tagalog natives during those times.

(2) *Peter*. Peter is a dynamic character. His sin is not a mark of innate evil but rather emanates from lack of courage. It was moral weakness that drove Peter to deny Jesus. Yet, he is a character that is capable of change. This dynamism is seen from his denial to repentance later on.

When confronted by a slave girl, he denied the Lord:⁷⁹

Marorog (aniya,t,) pisanan	(May I crumble to dust and die now
cun aco,y, caalam-alam	if ever I knew
at cun aco,y, caalagbay	or was ever a follower
ni Chriftong inyong caavay	of this Christ your enemy
magmovang cayo,t, magnilay.	think upon my words.)

Yet his repentance speaks of a change of heart:⁸⁰

Aco (aniya) Panginoon co,y,	(My God, he said, I am
di na tapat turang tao	no longer fit to be called a man;
langit man sucat tumampo	heaven itself should turn away
nang canandayan cong yto,t,	because I have been corrupt
cabohongan co saiyo.	because I have been a scoundrel.)

Peter typifies the Filipino Christians who out of moral weakness revert back to their old pagan ways and yet through the Sacraments, particularly through the Sacrament of Penance, through the exhortation of their confessors return back to their faith.

(3) *Judas*. Judas was described by Aquino de Belen as (1) *tacsil* (traitor) to his *catoto* (friend), (2) *lilong mapangahas* (betrayer-opportun-

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁷⁹*Pasyong Mahal*, p. 30.

⁸⁰*Mahal na Pasyon*, p. 31.

ist) to his *sakop* (the community of the apostles), and (3) *walang utang-na-loob* (no debt of gratitude) to Christ's generosity and Mary's hospitality.

— *Tacsil* (traitor). To be a *tacsil* is to reject being a *cadamay* (co-sharer) and a *casama* (companion). He disregards the time element of friendship and sharing. We find Judas after being with Christ for a long time betraying him in Gethsemane.⁸¹

Aba Judas na namamamlupit	(O Judas, who is so cruel?
ano na iyong guiyaguis	What have you done?
aling demonio ang songmilid	What kind of devil is in you
ang nasoc sa iyong dibdib	entering your heart
songmira nang iyong bait?	destroying your senses?
Ano bagang nabanta mo	What is it you wish?
anong naalala mo	What is it you think
vala ca nang pinaglilo	That you have no one to betray
cundi ang iyong maestro	but your Master,
nacasiping mo,t, casalo.	your companion, your friend?

— *Linlong-Mapangahas* (Betrayal-Opportunist). To be a *lilong-mapangahas* connotes a turning away from the demands of friendship that in turn requires faithfulness and unity in the ideals and objectives. One uses friendship to further one's aims and objectives. Judas, in the Pasyon did not only betray Christ, but he used that same relationship to enrich himself.⁸²

O Judas na valan palad	(O Judas, the Unfortunate One,
budhi lilong mapangahas	whose heart is a betrayer-
	opportunist
palamara't tavong sucab	a greedy and ill-mannered person,
inaari mo pang hamac	you have taken possession
biyaya ni Chriftong lahat.	of Christ's graces not your own.)

— *Walang utang-na-loob* (No debt of gratitude). To be *walang utang-na-loob* would be to disregard one's obligation and one's benefits derived from the *sakop* (the group). It is turning away from returning favors over benefits received. The Pasyon presents Judas disregarding Christ's generosity and Mary's hospitality.⁸³

Dili ca casipingsiping	(Were you not his companion
casalosalong cumain	eating the same food together?
anomang canyang gao-in	Whatever he does
catala cang magaling	you are his confidant
sa hayag man at sa lihim.	openly or secretly.)

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸³*Ibid.*

Judas represents the Filipino Christian who over indulges in the physical and materialistic tendencies of this world thus betraying the tenets of Christian faith and morality. Aquino de Belen chides them in this stanza:⁸⁴

Ano ang sala saiyo	(What is his sin
saca mo ipinagduro	that you handed him over?
ang salapi ang mahal mo	In your love for money
siya,y, ipinagbayad mo	you have exchanged him
di ca na homingtay payo.	without asking his advice.)

Judas' character has been so ingrained into the Filipino's consciousness that the word *Hudas* has even been added to the Filipino vocabulary. To be called *hudas* would be a summary of what Judas did: a traitor, betrayer-opportunist, no debt-of-gratitude and everything evil attributed to him.

(4) *Annas, Caiaphas, and the Roman soldiers.* Aquino de Belen refers to them as *caaaway* (enemies) of Christ. They are not members of the *sakop*. They were also called *tampalasan* (renegades) and *marahas* (violent). The word *caaaway* etymologically means *ca* (co) and *away* (conflict or trouble). It is opposed to *cadamay*. In the Pasyon, they are the persons who plotted Jesus' death.

These characters refer to the enemies of the newly-introduced Christianity in this lands. They refer to the pagans who rejected this invitation of the missionaries towards conversion. Aquino de Belen says to all of them:⁸⁵

Ol-ol na lubha ang tavo	(Man is such a fool
palamarang di magsino	that he allows himself to be deceived;
sucat pasalamat dito	that instead of giving thanks
sa Panginoong totoo	to the true God
alipi,y, guinguino.	he chose slavery.)

(b) *The Apocryphal Figures of the Pasyon.* The *Apocryphal figures* of the tagalog Pasyon are characters that are not biblically-based but are found in the Apocryphal New Testament and other sources used by Aquino de Belen. They are also used as symbols and types by the author to attain his purposes and objectives.

Likewise, the characters of Longinus, Veronica, Dymas and Gestas are not biblically-based but are found in the Apocryphal New Testament and other sources.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 21.

(1) *Longinus*. The figure of Longinus came from two different traditions, namely, from Latin and Greek.

— *Latin tradition*: In the Roman Martyrology, Longinus was referred to as the soldier who pierced Christ's side with a lance.⁸⁶

En Cesarea de Capadocia el martirio de San Longino soldado, de quien se refiere que traspasó con una lanza el costado del Señor.

He is the same soldier mentioned by St. John (19:13) who pierced the side of Christ; and since he used a lance, which in Greek is called *lonkhe*, the lancer has then been popularly called *Longinus*.⁸⁷

El fue, pues, aquel soldado de que habla san Juan en el evangelio. . . y de lanza, en griego *lonkhe*, con que abrió el pecho de Cristo, tomó su nombre de *Longinus*, el lancero.

Truly, in a miniature of a famous Syrian manuscript at the Laurentian Library in Florence, illuminated by Rabulas in the year 586 A.D., the incident of the opening of Christ's side is given a prominence which is highly significant. Moreover, the name Longinus is written in Greek characters above the head of the soldier thrusting his lance into our Saviour's side.⁸⁸ This would be a proof that the legend which assigned this name to the soldier (who, according to the same tradition, was converted after being healed of ophthalmia by a drop of the precious blood spurting from the wound) is as old as the sixth century.⁸⁹

Whether true or not, many scholars agree that the name *Longinus* is in some way connected to the lance used by the Roman soldier during the Crucifixion. Legends grew around it, gaining strength with the passing of centuries, of Gaius Cassius, who became known as Longinus, the Spearman. A convert to Christianity, he came to be revered as a great hero and saint by the first Christian community of Jerusalem, and a prime witness of the shedding of the Blood of the New Covenant of which the Spear became the symbol.⁹⁰

— *Greek tradition*: The Greek tradition identified Longinus as the centurion who, according to the Synoptics, stood watching on the crucified Christ and exclaimed when He died: "Truly, this is the Son of God." (Mt. 27:51, Mark 15:39, Lk. 23:17).⁹¹

⁸⁶*Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana*, ed. Hijos de Jose Espasa (Barcelona: Hijos de Espasa, 1936), p. 63.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸Herbert Thurston, "The Holy Lance," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles Herbermann et al., (New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1913), p. 119.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰Trevor Ravenscroft, *The Spear of Destiny*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), p. 7.

⁹¹*Ibid.*

This tradition draws its sources from the apocryphal *Acts of Pilate* or the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. In this version, a Christian named Ananias claimed to have found an account of the trial of Jesus written in Hebrew by Nicodemus. The translation into Greek done by Ananias in 425 A.D. contained two events, (a) the proceedings before Pilate, the crucifixion and death of Jesus (1-11) and (b) the Sanhedrin's enquiries which authenticated the miracle of the Resurrection.⁹²

In the *Acts of Pilate*, Annas and Caiaphas testified that Longinus pierced Jesus side with a lance:⁹³

. . . he was scourged and received condemnation, and that he was crucified at the place of the skull and two thieves with him, and that they gave him vinegar to drink with gall and that *Longinus*, the soldier, pierced his side with a spear. . .

In the same *Acts*, Nicodemus testified that it was Longinus the centurion mentioned by the Synoptics:⁹⁴

Longinus, el centuri6n, que estaba de pie dijo: "Verdaderamente Hijo de Dios era este. . ."

The same centurion who went to Pilate and reported all the things that had happened,⁹⁵ was the Longinus who stood watching over the tomb of Christ and witnessed the Resurrection. The *Acts* narrate:⁹⁶

My wife Procla took Longinus, the believing centurion, and ten (or twelve) soldiers who had kept the sepuchre and went forth and found him sitting in a tilled field teaching the multitude.

The Tagalog Pasyon described the deeds of this apocryphal figure in the following accounts: (1) as the soldier who pierced Jesus with a lance;⁹⁷ (2) as one of the soldiers guarding the tomb of Jesus⁹⁸; (3) as a witness to Christ's Resurrection,⁹⁹ and (4) consequently dying for his Faith.

Aquino de Belen did not have *direct access* to these apocryphal documents. His figure of Longinus would probably come from *indirect sources*,

⁹²*Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner, I, (London: Bkurns and Oates, 1969), p. 59.

⁹³Montague Rhode James, "Acts of Pilate," *Apocryphal New Testament*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 11.

⁹⁴*Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada*, p. 63.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶Montague Rhodes James, "Letter of Pilate to Herod," *Apocryphal New Testament*, p. 155.

⁹⁷*Mahal na Pasyon*, p. 124.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

namely, (1) the *Siete Palabras* (Seven Last Words) sermons on Good Friday, (2) the *Via Crucis* (Way of the Cross) of the Franciscans, and (3) the stories and sermons of the missionaries during the eighteenth-century.

The Pasyon account of Longinus would have influenced the Filipino religious practice of the *Moriones Festival* of Marinduque. Year after year during the Lenten season, this fun-full spectacle represents a free version of the biblical happenings by depicting the Roman centurions ganging up on one of their kind who became a believer in the Risen Christ.¹⁰⁰

The following is a description of the Moriones Festival:

. . . the streets of Boac, Gasan and Mogpog become alive with many costumes and masked penitents, called *moriones* (masks). These masked penitents are the Roman centurions who participate in the elaborated ritual centered around the principal character, Longinus, the repentant Roman soldier. The ritual includes verse recitations, dance, mime, and a literal chase that takes the entire cast all over the town on Easter Sunday.

The highlight of the celebration is always the capture and beheading of Longinus.¹⁰¹

According to a set pattern, Longinus comes near capture at least six times. But, always he will manage to elude his pursuers until the seventh time when he is finally trapped on the river bed. After the capture, follows the confrontation, wherein the Captain of the Moriones interrogates Longinus, in a sing-song verse.

The subsequent "beheading" of Longinus takes place on Easter Sunday, the day of Christ's Resurrection. This reversion of events is done to dramatize the travails of the first converts, prophetically antedating the persecution and self-sacrifice which believers in Christ are exhorted to accept in emulation of their Redeemer.

(2) *Veronica*. The name *Veronica*, *Beronica*, or *Santa Veronica* is given from antiquity to a woman, variously identified in legend with persons mentioned in the New Testament, associated with an image of the face of Christ that was said to have been brought to Rome.¹⁰²

The figure of *Veronica* can be traced in connection with two traditions, namely, (a) the *Vera Icon* (true image) of Christ, and (b) a woman described in the apocryphal *Acts of Pilate*.

¹⁰⁰Tony Lopez, Jr. "The Medley Bahind the Mask," *Sunday Times Magazine*, 27, No. 8, (May 11, 1969), pp. 60-61.

¹⁰¹Gilopez Kabayao, "Pageantry and Penance," *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 28, No. 35, (April 7, 1963), pp. 24-25.

¹⁰²*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 625.

(a) *The Vera Icon*. The belief in the existence of authentic images of Christ is connected with the old legend of Abgar of Edessa. Abgar, the king of Edessa was sick of an incurable disease and wrote to Christ to come and heal him. Christ, through his secretary Hannan wrote him back a letter declining his invitation. The same Hannan was archivist at Edessa and painter for King Abgar. He was tasked to paint a portrait of Christ and brought to Edessa a picture which became an object of popular veneration. This became the nucleus of a legendary account.¹⁰³ This image of Christ was venerated at St. Peter's in Rome as early as the tenth-century and the beginning of the eleventh century.¹⁰⁴ To distinguish it from the other images of Christ, it was called the *vera icon* (true image), which ordinary language soon made "*veronica*". Popular imagination mistook this word for the name of the person and attached thereto several versions of the legend in various countries. This pious matron of Jerusalem, who during the Passion of Christ was one of the holy women who accompanied him to Calvary and offered a towel on which he left the imprint of his face, came to Rome at the invitation of Emperor Tiberius, whom she cured by making him touch the sacred image. She remained in the capital of the empire, being there a contemporary of Sts. Peter and Paul. At her death she bequeathed the precious image to Pope Clement and his successors.¹⁰⁵

In France, the legend said that she was given in marriage to Zacheus, the convert of the Gospel, accompanied him to Rome, and then to Quiercy, where her husband became a hermit, under the name of Amador, in the region now called Rocamadour. Another version is that, shortly after the Ascension of Christ, she went to Soulac at the mouth of the Gironde, bringing relics of the Blessed Virgin where she preached and died. She was buried in a tomb which is now venerated in the Church of St. Seurin at Bordeaux.¹⁰⁶

(b) *The woman of the Apocrypha*. The Apocryphal *Acts of Pilate* presents Veronica as both, the hemorrhissa who was cured in the Gospel and as a matron who desired to have a picture of Jesus.

— *Veronica, the Hemorrhissa*. She was the woman identified in Mk. 5:25-34. In the *Acts of Pilate* she testified before the Sanhedrin.¹⁰⁷

And a certain woman named Bernice (Beronice in Coptic and Veronica in Latin) crying out from afar off said: I had an issue of blood and I touched the hem of his garment, and the flowing of my blood was stayed which I had for twelve years. . . .

¹⁰³Antoine Degert, "Saint Veronica," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, p. 625.

¹⁰⁵Antonio Degert, *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁷James, "Acts of Pilate," p. 102.

— *Veronica, the Matron.* The *Acts of Pilate* narrate:¹⁰⁸

The Emperor Tiberius, being sorely diseased, heard that there was a wonderful physician in Jerusalem named Jesus who healed all sickness. He sent an officer of his named Volusianus to Pilate to bid him send the physician to him. Pilate was terrified knowing that Jesus had been crucified. On the way back to his inn, Volusianus met a matron called Veronica and asked her about Jesus. She told him the truth, to his great grief, and to console him added that when our Lord was at large teaching, she desired to have a picture of him always by her, and it happened that when she was carrying a linen cloth to a painter for that purpose Jesus met her and, on hearing what she wished, took the cloth from her and imprinted the features of his face upon it. "This cloth," she said, "will cure your lord: I cannot sell it, but I will go with you to him." Volusianus and Veronica went to Rome, and Tiberius was instantly healed by looking at the image.

In the tagalog Pasyon, the account on Veronica consists of five incidents. One of them says that the impression of Christ's face reflected his suffering under the cross. Bloodied and exhausted, he carried the cross without anything to wipe his face. . . .¹⁰⁹

Dito naghirap na lalo
naliliyo,t, nahahayo
ang pavis ay tongmotolo
mucha ay nagpapaligo
nagcahahalo nang dogo.

(Here he greatly suffered
tired and exhausted
sweat pouring out
washing down his face
mingling with his blood.

Siya,y, valan
ang valan panyong caponit
anong di ipagraig
ang may adhica nang danit
valan mapolong golanit.

Nothing to wipe the face
nor any piece of
handkerchief. . . .)

There was a woman with a towel in her hand. She offered to wipe His face:¹¹⁰

(Doon sa babaying madla
ongmaantabay caliña
hongmiñgi siyang nagcufa
pahibain ding magdalita
nang panyong pamahid luha.

(There to a woman in the crowd
who stood by caring
he sincerely asked
to end his suffering
by wiping his face with the
handkerchief.

At nang may ipahid lamang
fa muchang na dirilinan

so that the face could be wiped
he approached the woman. . . .)

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁹*Mahal na Pasyon*, p. 99.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

manan ang nagdalañginan
babaying napaguinhava,y,
dinolog din capagcovan.)

By a miracle, Christ's face was imprinted in the towel:¹¹¹

Ano,y, ang cahimalaan	(What a miracle
nalagda, at na laravan	imprinted and placed
anaqui inilimbagan	on the handkerchief traced
ang caniyang muchang mahal	his holy face.)
fa ipinahid na birang.	

The image of this impression is presently venerated in Rome:¹¹²

Ang balita,y, nga at badya	(The news and the information
fa laravang ito,niya	about this image
ang ifa ay na fa Roma,	is that one is in Rome
minamahal finafamba	worshipped and loved
nang Chrifianong lahat na.	by Christendom.)

The other two images are venerated in Jaen and in the Church of Santa Verónica in Spain.¹¹³

Aquino de Belen's account of Veronica was taken from some sources available to him during his time, namely, (1) the *Retablo*, (2) religious art, (3) the "*Via Crucis*", and (4) the stories in Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legends*.

(1) *Retablo*. This narrative contained also the story of Veronica and specifically mentions that the Sacred Face was imprinted on her veil.¹¹⁴

(2) *Religious Art*. Aquino de Belen's description of the veil tells us that there were three imprints on the surface. Nowhere is it mentioned except in de Belen's work. It would seem that it is a product of Philippine iconography which depicts Veronica displaying a veil with three faces of Christ.¹¹⁵ This can even be seen nowadays in the traditional procession on Good Fridays especially in the provinces. The multiple imprint may have been a way of reconciling the many places where the sacred images are found.

(3) *Via Crucis*. This devotion was propagated by the Franciscans in 1242, consisting of fourteen stations. In one of the stations is mentioned the incident between Veronica and Jesus. The same devotion was introduced by the Franciscans in the Philippines when they arrived.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*

¹¹²*Ibid.*

¹¹³*Mahal na Pasyon*, p. 100.

¹¹⁴Padilla, "Retablo," p. 378.

¹¹⁵Javellana, "Sources," p. 320.

(4) *Voragine's Golden Legends*. The book is a collection of legendary lives of saints written by the Dominican Jacobus de Voragine. It was at first entitled *Legenda Sanctorum* but soon became universally known as *Legenda Aurea* (Golden Legends) because the people of those times considered it worth its weight in gold.¹¹⁶ In format the work is a calendar of saints. Its 177 chapters are divided into five sections, according to the liturgical seasons: Advent to Christmas; Christmas to Septuagesima; Septuagesima to Easter; Easter to the Octave of Pentecost; Pentecost to Advent. The author provides an introduction to each division of the year and a preface to each great day. The book is devotional. Voragine's main purpose was not to compose reliable biographies or to write scientific treatises for the learned, but to write simple devotional books adapted to the common people. The work made a deep impression on the people as shown by its immense popularity and the great influence it had on the literature of many nations. It became the basis of the many passionals of the Middle Ages and religious poems of the later times.¹¹⁷

It could be possible, therefore, that Aquino de Belen's sources for the stories of Longinus, Veronica and the other apocryphal figures were taken from the *Golden Legends* not by having direct access to the book but through the stories and sermons of the missionaries who had read the book.

(3) *Dymas and Gestas*. They were the two thieves crucified with Christ. *Dymas*, (*Dysmas*, *Demas*) and *Gestas* are apocryphal figures in the *Acts of Pilate*. *Gestas* was the bad thief.¹¹⁸

The first, Gestas, used to strip and murder wayfarers, hang up women by their feet and cut off their breasts, and drink the blood of the babes: He knew not God nor obeyed any law, but was violent from the beginning.

Dymas, on the contrary, was the good one.¹¹⁹

The other, Demas was a Galilean who kept an inn; he despoiled the rich but did good to the poor, even burying them like Tobit. He had committed robberies on the Jews, for he stole (plundered) the law itself in Jerusalem, and stripped the daughter of Caiaphas, who was priestess of the sanctuary, and he took away even the mystic deposit of Solomon which had been deposited in the (holy) place.

They both were apprehended by the Romans and were sentenced to be hanged on the Cross together with Christ at the Calvary.¹²⁰ *Dymas* was

¹¹⁶Michael Ott, "Voragine," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, pp. 262.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸Montague Rhode James, "The Story of Joseph Arimathea," *Apocryphal New Testament*, p. 161.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

¹²⁰James, "Acts of Pilate," p. 103.

crucified on the right hand and Gestas on the left.¹²¹ It was Gestas who rebuked the Lord and Dysmas who acknowledged him as Saviour:¹²²

And one of the malefactors that were hanged (by the name of Gestas) spoke unto him saying: "If thou art Christ, save thyself and us." But Dysmas rebuked him saying: "Don't thou not at all fear God since thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus: "Remember me, Lord, in thy kingdom." Jesus said unto him: "Verily, verily I say unto you, thou shalt be with me in paradise."

The apocryphal *Acts of Pilate* had given a reason for Dysmas attitude towards Christ. It was not a conversion of heart then and now but it had started a long time ago when the Holy Family fled into Egypt:¹²³

. . . the Holy Family meet Dysmas who is struck by the beauty of Mary and of the child in her arms, adores them and says: If God had a mother I would have said thou art she. He received them into his house, and when he goes out hunting commends them to his wife's care. He has a leprous child who is always crying, and he is healed by the water in which Jesus has washed. Dysmas hearing of this on his return is moved to do all he can for Mary: and on the return from Egypt he aids them again, and Mary promises him a reward for his goodness. Therefore was he accounted worthy through the grace of the merciful God and his mother. . . to bear witness upon the cross together with Christ.

The dialogue between Christ and the thieves were presented in Aquino de Belen's Pasyon. The sources can once again be traced to apocryphal stories told by the missionaries and the *Siete Palabras* on Good Friday.

c. Christ in the tagalog Pasyon. Aquino de Belen presented a very human Christ. There is a literary value in presenting and stressing the humanity of Christ. If he is to be model for the readers of the Pasyon, then he should be somebody loving to whom one can approach upon death. For the readers to follow Jesus, he must be tangible, approachable and one with the folk.

To present a human Jesus (without denying His divinity) he made use of the following techniques: (a) presenting Christ as a *catoto* (friend), and (b) as the *Spanish Christ* as described in his literary sources (Spanish pasyones especially the *Retablo*).

¹²¹*Ibid.*

¹²²*Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹²³*Ibid.*

(a) *The Catoto (Friendly) Christ*. He presents Christ who is a *casama* (companion), a *caramay* (co-sharer) and one who is deeply concerned for his *sakop*. He calls his disciples *catoto* (friends). He affirms his *oneness* through the Washing of the Feet:¹²⁴

Aba matanto na ninyo	(So you may know,
mañga ibig co,t, catoto	loved ones and friends,
ang lahat nang ginava co	all that I've done will end up
ang vacas ñgani ay ito	in this:
pacatandaang totoo.	remember truly.
Cayo,y, acquing lalagacan	To you I will offer
nang daquilang caibigan	one great friend:
sa inyong puso,y, tandaan	bear in your heart,
houari,t, gagaring tunay	follow keenly
ninyong catoto cong pisan.	your beloved exemplar.)

This bond of friendship was sealed by the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed for His loved ones. He offered his life as a ransom for his *catoto*. This suffering-servanthood of Christ is typically Filipino in character:¹²⁵

The Filipino male for example, who wants to play hero, the beloved must first prove his gallant love by chopping wood, fetching water, and literally being a servant to his girl. . . the genuine Filipino hero is necessarily a suffering servant, a martyr.

The humanness of Christ was accentuated by Aquino de Belen's use of Filipino traits and sentiments like *awa* (mercy), *damay* (sharing) and *utang na loob* (debt of volition and gratitude).

(b) *The Spanish Christ*. The Christ in the popular religious tradition especially in Southern Spain is referred to as the *Spanish Christ*. He was a product of Spanish folk Christianity. He was a blending of the elements of North African animism and Christian ideas and practice. The conquest of Spain by the Moors and their occupation for nearly eight-hundred years made Spain more African still.¹²⁶ This was true of the southern provinces of Spain.

Spanish popular faith according to Unamuno had the following characteristics: a profound sense of tragedy, a terrible dread of death, and a religious fervor that dwells on the wounds and agony of Christ:¹²⁷

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹²⁵Villote, "A Parish Priest's View of the People's Perception of Christ," p. 40.

¹²⁶Miguel de Unamuno, "El Cristo Español," as quoted from John Mackay, *The Other Christ*, (New York: MacMillan Press, 1933), p.3.

¹²⁷Elwood, *Christ in the Philippine Context*, p. 2.

Christ stands before us as a Tragic Victim. . . bruised and bloodless, a horizontal Christ who has succumbed to death - the embodiment of unrelieved tragedy.

This seems to be the portrayal of Christ in the *Retablo* and the other Spanish *pasiones*. The effect of Aquino de Belen using these sources can be seen in many instances, especially in the gory scene of the Crucifixion.

Aquino de Belen made Christ acceptable to the people because He is human. De Belen has made Him one with the natives endowing Him with characteristic Filipino traits, thus, making him identifiable and approachable to the level of the folk.

III. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE FIRST TAGALOG PASYON TO THE INCULTURATION OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

A. Catechetical and Pastoral Orientations of the First Tagalog Pasyon.

Aquino de Belen did not have direct access to Scripture but heavily relied on secondary sources in composing his Paschal Mystery narrative; yet, he kept himself faithful and devoted to the traditional teaching of the Church, as reflected all throughout his work. Such devotion and faithfulness to the teaching of the Church are shown mainly in his *catechetical* and *pastoral* orientations.

1. Catechetical Orientations in the First Tagalog Pasyon.

Aquino de Belen's Pasyon was meant to recount the story of Christ's Passion to those persons present at wakes and to the his readers as well. It was intended to deepen and guard the faith of both readers and listeners. In his narrative, de Belen stressed the following points: (1) the individual and personal salvation; (2) the sacraments (especially Baptism and Eucharist) as means of friendship and reconciliation with Christ; and (3) the call to repentance.

a) *Individual and Personal Salvation*. For Aquino de Belen, salvation involves the divine initiative of restoring mankind to the state from which it had fallen through original sin. God the Son became man and saved mankind from eternal damnation through His Life, Death and Resurrection, and the establishment of the Church. But salvation is a participative process; man must personally and individually commit himself to this God who became like him. The Pasyon is a narrative of Christ's life so that every man may pattern and model his life according to Him.

De Belen's stress on personal salvation is manifested mainly (a) in his portrayal of a truly human Christ, and (b) in his presentation of the Pasyon as the prototype of all journeys to afterlife.

— *Portrayal of a truly human Christ.* The Tagalog Pasyon presents a very human Christ without denying his divinity. He is pictured as the faithful *catoto* (friend) who, inspite of rejection and suffering unjustly imposed by his enemies, remains the open-hearted shepherd to whom everybody can turn to for merciful forgiveness. This very human portrayal of Christ makes him accessible and approachable to anyone who wishes to follow him. It is also an invitation to listeners and readers to personally commit themselves to him. In other words, through this human image, Christ is brought close to the experience and heart of the Tagalog audience.

— *The prototype of all journeys.* The Pasyon, being the journey of Christ from the Last Supper to Calvary to the Resurrection, implies a deeper meaning: it is the pattern of all Christians' journey of life. Each Filipino Christian is symbolically portrayed in the attitudes presented through the different characters described. The symbolization illustrates that each Filipino should undertake this personal relationship with Christ. The Paschal mystery must be an individual experience, a personal encounter with Jesus.

b) *The Sacraments as means of friendship.* For Aquino de Belen, the Sacraments are basic tenets of Christian life. The efficacy of the Sacraments derives from the merits of Christ's death; and it is expressed in the soldiers piercing of Christ with a lance:¹²⁸

Ang taguiliran,y, inolos	(His side was pierced
Ang longmabas, at fongmipot	What came out, what appeared
fa dibdib niyang inolos	from the pierced breast
dogo,t, tubig ang calahoc	a mingling of blood and water
doon ngani ibinohos,	from which flowed
yaon pitong Sacramentos	the Seven Sacraments.)

The Seven Sacraments are means and expressions of our friendship with Christ, the great *catoto*. The institution of the Eucharist was an affirmation of this friendship offered to us by Christ. Such a friendship is continued now in the Church through the celebration of the Eucharist by its ministers. Baptism is seen as a commitment to avoid sin and to walk towards salvation, in order to share in Christ's friendship with mankind. The concluding paragraph of the Tagalog Pasyon exhorts the folk to live in this friendship by virtue of their Baptism.

c) *Call to Repentance.* Aquino de Belen's *arals* (lessons), like sermons, relate a particular aspect of Jesus' life to the Christians especially to those attending at the wakes. They are calls to repentance by reminding everyone of the end of life, when death claims everything. The lessons were also warnings to those ladies (especially those present at the wake)

¹²⁸*Mahal na Pasyon*, p. 121.

who waste their time on cosmetics, knowing very well that all beauty fades with death. Thus, because physical beauty is transitory, Aquino de Belen admonishes his readers not to call it their own. Man must make use of his life while there is still time. Life should be a journey to the after life through faithfulness to the Giver of Life. The process of conversion involves the avoidance of sin and walking toward God in friendship.

2. The Pastoral Orientations of the Tagalog Pasyon.

The Tagalog Pasyon was meant to dissuade the Filipino Christians from reverting to their old pagan ways. Thus, the Pasyon became the substitute for the rite of the *babaylans* (the native priests) chanting dirges and profane songs during wakes. This orientation was introduced by Aquino de Belen through (a) his presentation of the Pasyon as a type of spirituality for the Christian dying, and (b) the Pasyon as a devotion meant to be used in a particular celebration.

a) *Care of the Dying.* The Tagalog Pasyon is a treatise of spirituality for the Christian dying meant to teach everyone how to approach death and how to care for those dying. The *Panalangin*, as we have mentioned earlier, shows us the way how to approach death and the role each Filipino Christian should play when faced with this reality. Aquino de Belen's emphasis on prayer as a means to ask for a good death both for us and for our loved ones, creates in all Christians a bond of relationship between the living and the dying. Prayer becomes caring for the dying.

b) *The Pasyon as Devotion.* The Paschal mystery narrative written in the vernacular was intended by Aquino de Belen not just to be read or listened to, but also to be used in a particular celebration: that of the wakes for the dead. From the biblical point of view, we might be tempted to consider the Pasyon as not consistently faithful to the Scriptural narratives of the last days of Christ, since the book uses biblical and non-biblical figures. Aquino de Belen's main objective was not to compose theological texts or to write scientific treatises for the learned, but simply to write a devotional book adapted to the simple manners of the Filipino Christian still grappling with their newly-found Faith. The writing of the Tagalog Pasyon, with all the writer's limitations in knowledge and sources accessible to him is admirably adapted to enhance the Filipino Christian's love and respect towards God, to foster our devotion towards Christ, and to encourage all to follow his example.

B. THE FIRST TAGALOG PASYON AND THE LENTEN PABASA.

1. The Lenten Pabasa.

The chanted Pasyon is called the *Pabasa*. Strictly speaking, the *Pabasa* refers to the chanting of the *Casaysayan* text with tunes both

traditional and new.¹²⁹ It takes place every Holy Week — particularly in the Tagalog region, where the celebration has become a custom — before altars decorated with flowers, candles and an image of Christ.

Being a living tradition, documenting all its forms would be an almost impossible task. Actually there is not a specific place or time for its celebration; neither a fixed manner of doing it. What in any case can be said is that it has always been celebrated by chanting Jesus' life every year either as a form of expiation for sins or as a thanksgiving for a healing or a favor from God.

a) *Origin of the Pabasa.* The precise beginnings of the Pabasa are hard to pinpoint. Sources from the Spanish colonial period are inadequate and not explicit enough about the practice which became very popular during the nineteenth-century.

Javellana, in his annotation on the *Casaysayan*, reveals the following data:¹³⁰

— That in the "*Censura e impresión de libros, 1764-1843*," at present in the Archdiocesan Archives of Manila, there is a complaint of the evil effects of the Pabasa, in a letter written by one of the parish priests of the Manila Archdiocese. The complaint stemmed from a report of an "*indio*" telling him that, according to the Pabasa, Judas betrayed Pilate.

— That as early as 1842, in his report *Informe sobre el estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1842*, Sinibaldo de Mas mentioned some abuses of the Pabasa:¹³¹

... the Pabasa provided an excuse for young native maidens and lads to come together for purposes less than holy. Their nocturnal trysts, done under the guise of religion, led to unexplainable pregnancies.

Because of these abuses parish priests were appealing to the authorities to have the Pabasa banned.

Traditional practices associated with the Lenten Pabasa, like the *tapatan*,¹³² a contest in verse-recitation, a common practice in Quezon and the other Tagalog provinces; the singing of the Pasyon over the deceased person's body¹³³; and some superstitions connected with its celebration, can be traced to the Spanish colonial period and are contained in the accounts of missionaries and chroniclers. These same documents indicate that by the nineteenth-century the Pabasa was an established tradition.

¹²⁹Javellana, *Casaysayan*, p. 5.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³¹*Ibid.*

¹³²Francisco Demetrio, "Folk Memory and the Pasyon," *Myths, Symbols, Philippines*, p. 215.

¹³³Ileto, *Pasyon at Rebolusyon*, p. 25.

b) *Assumptions on the Pabasa's Origin.* Reflecting on the Pabasa's origin, in the absence of any explicit document on the matter, we offer the following assumptions:

— The Pabasa must have been originally developed as an *oral tradition*. We have mentioned earlier that the Tagalogs were a singing people. They had songs for every occasion. Couldn't it be the Pabasa's origin attributed to this?

— The initiatives of chanting the *Casaysayan* came from the natives themselves, as evidenced by the number of folk practices attached to its celebration. It did not come from the clergy and the ecclesiastical authority, who, on the contrary, looked upon the Pabasa with suspicion and reservation.

— The Pabasa influenced the basic life pattern of the Christian Filipinos, especially during Lenten season and more particularly during the Holy Week. Practices like the old people forbidding their children to sing or read books other than the Pasyon;¹³⁴ or of not taking a bath on Good Friday because the water might be the blood of Christ; of the state of mourning because only the Jews and Roman soldiers rejoiced on this occasion; and the one of simple staying at home because Christ is dead, reveal some socio-religious influences of the drama offered by the Pabasa.

— The reason why the *Casaysayan* was used as the Pabasa text and not Aquino de Belen's Pasyon is still a matter open to discussion and study. However, some explanations can be forwarded:

(1) The eclipse in popularity of the Pasyon in favor of the *Casaysayan* may have been caused by the printer's (Aquino de Belen) association with the Jesuits. When the Jesuits were expelled, Aquino's works stopped circulating.¹³⁵

(2) The popularity of the *Casaysayan* over the Tagalog Pasyon made the former accessible and familiar to the folk. Thus, when the need arose for a popular devotion, the text readily available and known was the *Casaysayan*.

(3) The anonymous writer of the *Casaysayan* wanted his work to be a Holy Week devotion. Internal evidences in the *Casaysayan* point to this orientation.

2. Influences of the first Tagalog Pasyon on the Lenten Pabasa.

Comparative studies of the first Tagalog Pasyon and the Lenten Pabasa reveal that there is *no direct influence* of the former over the

¹³⁴Amanda Morente, "Social Customs of the People of Pinamalayan," BCTE, Vol. I, 1916, p. 2.

¹³⁵Javellana, *Casaysayan*, p. 13.

latter. The Lenten Pabasa is the chanted *Casaysayan* text; not Aquino de Belen's *Pasyong Mahal*. However, the first Tagalog Pasyon had a *direct influence* on the *Casaysayan* text.

a. The Tagalog Pasyon's influence on the *Casaysayan* text.

The *Casaysayan nang Pasyong Mahal ni Jesucristong P. Natin* published in 1814 by an anonymous writer was an attempt to update the language of Aquino de Belen's Pasyon and to add new materials to it. Lumbera calls the *Casaysayan* a plagiarism of de Belen's work.

The work has traditionally been attributed to Mariano Pilapil, Rector of San Jose College, so that it has been popularly called *Pasion Pilapil*. But Pilapil's only contribution was to censor the text given to him by the *Juez Provisor* (Judge of the Ecclesiastical Court) Francisco Durano. Pilapil corrected some words and stanzas, and sent the text back to Durano, who approved it together with the recommendation that unauthorized texts and manuscripts be collected by parish priests and burnt.¹³⁶ The Pasyon of 1814 is also known as *Pasion Genesis* because the author, departing from Aquino de Belen, begins his narrative with the account of the creation of the world and closes it with a glimpse of the Last Judgment according to St. John's Apocalypse.¹³⁷

The Tagalog Pasyon was the source of the *Casaysayan*. Evidence of it can be seen, according to Javellana, in the following:¹³⁸

(a) *The Casaysayan outline.* The text was taken from the Tagalog Pasyon and incorporated into a wider framework. Aquino de Belen's Pasyon begins with the Last Supper and ends with the martyrdom of Longinus. Written within the context of wakes, it contains the inner unity and completeness appropriate for the occasion. Viewed in another context, it becomes incomplete. While the Tagalog Pasyon puts stress on personal salvation, the *Casaysayan* does it on universal salvation through the propounding significance of Jesus' Christ's Holy Passion.

(b) *Evidence of Direct Copying.* There are stanzas that are taken verbatim from the Pasyon. Addition of connectives to the original are also evident.

(c) *Literary retouches.* Some retouching of old stanzas to fit the development of Tagalog were done. Words of the Pasyon were substituted by their nineteenth-century synonyms without altering the meaning.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹³⁷Lumbea, *Tagalog Poetry*, p. 93.

¹³⁸Javellana, *Casaysayan*, p. 29.

b. The Pabasa and the Celebration of the Holy Week.

Tradition has always associated the Pabasa with the celebration of the Holy Week. This can be attributed to two developments in the nineteenth-century, namely (a) the structure and framework of the *Casaysayan* itself, and (b) the folks' indifference to the manner the liturgy was celebrated during such period.

(a) *Structure and Framework of the Casaysayan*. The text in itself was intended for the Holy Week:

— The *Casaysayan*'s theme focuses on the Passion of Christ, which is the center of the Holy Week celebration. If really the text was intended for being chanted during the Holy Week, this emphasis on the Passion fitted the season very well indeed.¹³⁹

— The subdivision of the text was probably patterned after the Catholic Liturgy of the four last days of the Holy Week.¹⁴⁰ The content of each subdivision shows that while the identification of specific events with specific days do not have biblical support, it does in fact mirror liturgical practice.¹⁴¹

— The *Casaysayan*'s lesson for Palm Sunday is an explanation of the special liturgical actions of the day.

(b) *Indifference of the Folk to the Nineteenth-Century Liturgy*. The indifference of the folk can be attributed to two factors:

(1) The Easter Liturgy was celebrated in *Latin*, following the Pope Pius V Missal (1570). The fact that the ceremonies were incomprehensible gave origin to the Pabasa: being in the vernacular, it made the liturgy comprehensible and understandable to the folk.¹⁴²

(2) The Liturgy of the Holy Week was celebrated in big centers (towns) mostly early in the morning. "Since the *población* was filled with relatives, friends and people who had come from outlying barrios to celebrate the Holy Week, this question loomed: what to do during the time left after the liturgical celebration?"¹⁴³ Logically some rites and devotions directly connected with Holy Week arose. Among them, the popular Pabasa.

c. The Tagalog Pasyon's Influence on Some Folk Practices Outside of the Holy Week Celebration.

As we have mentioned earlier, Aquino de Belen's Pasyon was intended for use during the wakes of dead persons instead of the *magpa-Hesus* rituals.

¹³⁹F. Demetrio, "Folk Memory and the Pasyon," p. 213.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁴¹Javellana, *Casaysayan*, p. 28.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 29.

In some parts of the country, the Pasyon was sung for twenty-four hours over the deceased person's body.¹⁴⁴ In the past, in Marikina, it was customary to chant the Pasyon in lieu of the novena for the dead should death have stricken a family sometime during Lent.¹⁴⁵

Another folk practice arising from the Pasyon's influence — using Aquino de Belen's text first and later on the Casaysayan version — was the *Tapatan* or "Passion debate". Several versions of this practice have reached us. One of them is the following:¹⁴⁶

When some other experts happen to pass by, a challenge is given to the "home" party and a Passion combat takes place. Those men and women who are reading and singing the passion stop and give way to the contest. A party may be composed of two or more persons, but one is sufficient, the others merely serve as reinforcement as in duet.

A Passion debate takes place with both parties asking and answering questions based on the Pasyon, with the losers being punished like, for instance, being tied to a post, crowned with thorns, or forced to carry the cross in the manner Jesus Christ did. Riddles, parables, allegories and other figurative expressions are used for the sake of fooling or ridiculing one another. Entertainments of this kind often lasted the whole night.

The *Moriones Festival* is another Filipino religious folk practice inspired in the Tagalog Pasyon.

C. THE ENDURING VALUES OF THE FIRST TAGALOG PASYON

1. The Contribution of the Tagalog Pasyon to the Filipino Religiosity and Spirituality.

We said before that Aquino de Belen's Pasyon is not the Lenten Pabasa. And we said too that the Pabasa is based on the *Casaysayan* text. Consequently, the Tagalog Pasyon does not play a very significant role in the celebration of the Holy Week, unless we changed the *Casaysayan* text with the *Pasyon Mahal* in the Pabasa. What, then, is the Pasyon's contribution to Filipino Christianity?

A double contribution can be pointed out, namely, (a) the Pasyon as religious and catechetical literature, and (b) the Pasyon as the promoter of Christian and Filipino values.

¹⁴⁴Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁵Javellana, *Casaysayan*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁶Eufonio Alip, *Tagalog Literature: Historico-Critical Study*, (Manila: UST Press, 1930), pp. 36-37.

a. The Pasyon as Religious and Catechetical Literature.

Literature played a very important role in the Christianization of the Philippines. It was through the literary medium, particularly by the use of the folk idiom, that the Christian faith was brought to the consciousness of the people. Aquino de Belen's Tagalog Pasyon, the first folk Christian poetry in the Philippines, was the first Filipino attempt to bring Christianity to the level of the folk through literature.

(a) *As religious literature.* The Pasyon is the first folk Christian Filipino poetry. Its popularity in the eighteenth-century is reflected in Aquino de Belen's success in making Jesus assume a Filipino face, and in rendering the characters alive and very close to the folk.

As religious literature, it brought the reality of Christ into the minds of the folk. The Pasyon, a poetic narrative of the Paschal Mystery, was an apt substitution for the dearth of biblical reading materials, the long and incomprehensible liturgical celebrations, and the lack of missionaries in the far-flung barrios and sitios. Through its use Christianity was kept alive in these areas.

Christianity was brought to the Philippines by the Spanish Missionaries. Literature was the medium through which it was spread and accepted by the folk. The first Tagalog Pasyon attests to this fact.

(b) *As catechetical literature.* The doctrine and morality expounded by the first Tagalog Pasyon was the doctrine and morality the devoted missionaries and the Filipinos lived. The Pasyon is a reflection of how a Christian Filipino lived during the eighteenth-century. It shows us the different attitudes Filipinos took when faced with the demands of Christian faith. The characters in the Pasyon are but a cross section of Filipino religiosity and spirituality.

The first Tagalog Pasyon was not meant to be a treatise of theology. It was rather a devotional book meant to be an exposition of the spirituality of Christian death and Christian friendship. Placed in the local setting and in the vernacular, it was intended for those attending at funeral wakes. Through the Pasyon lessons, people were instructed and reminded of their Christian obligations. The narrations of the Passion of Jesus fulfilled a catechetical function for the people.

b. The Pasyon as Promoter of Christian and Filipino Values.

Value and belief carried through folklore are deeply ingrained in the lives of the people. In a recent article entitled "An Attempt to Arrive at Filipino Values and Beliefs Through Folklore Analysis" the author, Ma. Lourdes Bautista, attempted to find out whether today's Filipino still accept the proposed values and beliefs contained in the folklore. Using the

Boucher Methodology,¹⁴⁷ she concluded that folklore is both a mirror and a medium for traditional views and tenets of the Filipinos.¹⁴⁸

Surely, the same things happened with the values contained in the Tagalog Pasyon. It has been a medium and mirror of Christian and Filipino values.

(a) *As promoter of Christian Values.* The first Tagalog Pasyon has developed moral, religious and social values inherent to Christianity. The deep religious values of generosity, responsibility, integrity, good manners, clean speech and other virtues found in the Pasyon have helped the Filipinos of yesterday and today attain a finer personality. In the process of looking up to Christ as a perfect *catoto*, many persons have transformed themselves into better Christians.

The Tagalog Pasyon, as a rich reservoir of moral virtues like prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance has led to the development of moral values especially a fundamental attitude towards materialism in this world. Intended for wakes, the Pasyon reminds the people of the temporariness of life on earth. What matters is faithfulness to Christ until death.

Social values like friendship, cordiality, humility and consideration are norms of conduct observed during the Pasyon readings. Times of mourning are times for renewing and restoring ties between family members, relatives and kins of the dead. It becomes a time for dying to the old self and being born anew. It is a time for getting rid of the self of impurities and a time for forgiveness following the example of Christ.

(b) *As promoter of Filipino Values.* The Tagalog Pasyon brings out the Filipino value of *friendship*. Being a *casama* (companion), *kapatid* (brother) and a *catoto* (friend) would entail being a *caramay* (co-sharer) in one's life. This co-sharing is expressed in servanthood, being its favorite expressions are "Magpapaalipin ako nang dahil saiyo" (I will endure sufferings for you) and "Igagapang kita sa hirap mabuhay lang sila" (I am willing to crawl and suffer humiliation just for you).¹⁴⁹ The Christ of the Pasyon is a *catoto*, a God-with-us, the perfect model of a friend. Neglecting, abandoning, exploiting and oppressing others is very un-Filipino.

¹⁴⁷Raymond J. Boucher, "The Manam Creed: A Melanesian Worldview through Folklore," Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Ateneo de Manila University, 1971. Boucher's technique is based on discovering cultural values, attitudes and beliefs by quantifying his respondent's reaction to this cultural content by proposing values. By using statistical methods, Boucher succeeded in testing for differences by sex, age, grouping and education.

¹⁴⁸Ma. Lourdes Bautista, "An Attempt to Arrive at Filipino Values and Beliefs through Folklore Analysis," *Unitas*, 46, no. 2 (June 1973), p. 175.

¹⁴⁹Villote, "A Parish Priest View," p. 41.

Suffering and death are also important events that affect the Filipino way of life. The Filipino's optimism before suffering and death are summarized in the words *sumakabilang-buhay* (going to another life). To early Filipinos, death was a passage to another life to the point that the dead were treated as living persons by placing jewels, money and other precious valuables in the tomb as provisions for their journey.¹⁵⁰ In Aquino de Belen's Pasyon, faithfulness to Christ until death assures the person of happiness in the next life.

Family solidarity is a crystallization of the Filipino concept of *sakop* (reference groups). In times of trouble, adversity and death the family gathers together. The family includes the relatives, kins, in-laws, any person related by blood or affinity. Wakes, during which the Pasyon is read or chanted, are occasions for such gatherings.

Pagbabalikloob (conversion) is also a value stressed by the Tagalog Pasyon. Harmony is the essence of Filipino philosophy.¹⁵¹ The righteous man is one whose body, soul, and spirit are in harmony; an evil man's spirit is not in tune with his body and soul. This integral harmony is seen in the concept of *pagbabalikloob*. The Filipino Christian must constantly renew himself to be worthy of this friendship with Christ.

2. The Inculturation of the Tagalog Pasyon to Filipino Religiosity and Spirituality.

The Tagalog literature has always had some influence on religiosity and vice-versa. However, the prime mover of religiosity has been tradition, whether written or oral.¹⁵² This explains again the popularity of the Tagalog Pasyon.

The common religiosity of the Filipino revolved around the Birth, Passion and Death of our Lord, around man's death and about the patron saints of the different localities. However, through the years different groups of people undertook in stride to adjust such practices to their own idiosyncrasy, and it happened that in the process of doing so they often distorted the substance of the message.¹⁵³

Take, for example, what happens during a wake for the dead. Death is a social event uppermost in the popular mind of the Filipinos. What really matters for a Filipino is not so much the fact that the person confessed his sins or was anointed before he died, but the blessing or the

¹⁵⁰Leonardo Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology*, p. 226.

¹⁵¹Leonardo Mercado, "Soul and Spirit in Filipino Thought," *Philippine Studies*, 39 (August 1991), p. 300.

¹⁵²Laurentino García, O.P., "Popular Religiosity in Tagalog Literature," *Life Today*, 36 (November, 1980), p. 19.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 19.

Mass by a priest and, even more important, the novena for his soul and the celebration of his death anniversary. The novenas are prepared by the bereaved and the relatives or by some oldsters who earn their living by acting as leaders of prayers during the wake. What the prayers mean or the language in which they are said matters little; what matters is that they are expressions of affection towards the deceased and the bestowal of aids for the repose of his soul.¹⁵⁴ While prayers are going on, drinking sprees, *mahjong* sessions, eating and refreshments color the occasion.

Aquino de Belen's Pasyon was a reaction against wake abuses and celebration distortions within the context of the eighteenth-century. We already mentioned that the early Filipinos used to call for *babaylans* (native priests) to attend to the dying and that during the wakes, dirges and native songs were chanted praising the vain deeds of pagan gods and heroes. The wake was an occasion for socialization, wherein the affluent would come in glittering jewelry to be noticed by others. It was the *arals* (lessons) that chided these people for beautifying themselves and thinking of the materialistic pursuit of life rather than being faithful to Christian tenets.

a. The Rationale for Inculturation.

Just as there are some Jewish, American and Filipino ways of being human, there must also be some Jewish, American and Filipino ways of being Christian. This, in simple terms, is what inculturation or integration is all about. Religious inculturation refers to the process by which a particular church expresses its faith and life in and through the local culture.¹⁵⁵ This results in mutual enrichment: on one hand, the culture in question receives a new dynamism, and on the other hand, fresh ways of understanding and living the Christian faith are opened up.

By inculturation, the faith is grasped in a more profound and personal manner by the local people and it can take deeper root among them.¹⁵⁶ It involves the "evangelization of cultures" as described by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: it is a question of "affecting and, as it were, upsetting through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interests, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation".¹⁵⁷ It means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity in the various human cultures.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵Julián Saldña, *Inculturation* (Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 1987), p. 19.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, n. 19.

Such would be the case of the introduction of folk liturgies and practices into Filipino Christianity. Folk liturgies and practices would not only preserve the Christian faith of the Filipinos, but would also serve as vehicles of their folklore. This was the way by which Fr. Anscar Chupungco developed his basis for integration and inculturation.¹⁵⁸

The liturgical reform of Vatican II demands from the Church that she respects and foster the genius and talents of various races and peoples. If possible, she must keep them intact, and admit them into the liturgy itself. So long as they harmonize with the true and authentic spirit of the liturgy, there should be no problem in incorporating folklore elements into the worship of the Church. Thus, the Council exhorts the bishops to carefully and prudently consider which elements from tradition and cultures of individuals might be appropriately be admitted into divine worship.

Respect and devotion to the Word of God lies more in keeping it alive rather than stubbornly clinging to a historically conditioned set of words. Even during the time of Christ, the Rabbis made use of the Aramaic version of the Scriptures in official Synagogue services because the Hebrew language was no longer commonly understood by the majority.¹⁵⁹ The mere fact of the contemporary development of Scripture translations shows the importance of making intelligible God's Word for the men and women of today, for the particular people we are dealing with here and now. In the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy of the Vatican II Council the Church did not wish to impose a rigid and uniform pattern in liturgy. She is ready to admit into the liturgy whatever in the customs of the peoples is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error.¹⁶⁰

Liturgical adaptation has been particularly marked from the beginning by the use of indigenous language and music.¹⁶¹ Such would have been the case with the Tagalog Pasyon.

b. Proposed Inculturation Attempts.

Based on the nature of how Filipinos conduct wake services and their practices and behaviors on such occasions, under the light of this study I would like to recommend adaptation on the following aspects:

(a) *Pasyon reading or chanting as a Wake Service.* Wake services for the dead are an important aspect in the life of every Filipino. Death as we have said is a social event. Family solidarity is expressed by the love and care Filipinos have for their departed loved ones. Expressions of this

¹⁵⁸Anscar Chupungco, "Folklore and Christian Worship," *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, (March 1973), p. 112.

¹⁵⁹Anscar Chupungco, "The Pabasa and the Liturgy," *Liturgical Renewal in the Philippines*, 3 (September 1979), p. 92.

¹⁶⁰Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), n. 37.

¹⁶¹Saldanha, *Inculturation*, p. 9.

love and care are manifested in the wake services. Often times, wake services last for nine days or until all the members of the family are either present or accounted for. Relatives, kins and friends of the person are expected to pay their last respect to the dead person, and it is taboo to talk ill of the one who died. Rosaries are recited for the soul of the dead; masses are also celebrated. To while away the hours spent in vigil when no religious services are conducted people play *mahjong*, card games, and indulge in drinking sprees, to keep awake and drive away the sadness and loneliness one feels. The night before the burial is the most attended and the busiest in the span of the wake vigils.

In the United States, people conduct a service of prayer or celebrate the service of consolation for the bereaved during the wake vigils. For these services they are used spiritual texts and prayers, without prejudice to the celebration of the Mass for the dead.¹⁶² Why not the introduction of the chanted Pasyon within the framework of the wake vigils? In doing so many things would be achieved, namely, (1) we would be using the Tagalog Pasyon for the purpose it was intended to be; (2) the people attending the wake services would be properly oriented towards the purpose of their being there; (3) directly or indirectly, through the *arals* (lesson) people could be guided towards a right attitude before life and death; and (4) people could see life and death within the perspective of the passion of Christ.

The chanting or the recitation of the Tagalog Pasyon during the wake vigils is not proposed as a must but rather as a wholesome Filipino religious practice alternative to bridge the time-gap between the liturgical celebrations and the hours of idleness and monotony.

(b) *Adaptation in the Structure of the Pasyon.* Much can be done to adapt the structure and contents of the Pasyon so as to reflect better the authentic Paschal Mystery narration and its proper biblical orientation. The Pasyon can be re-written without destroying its structure. The re-writing of the Scriptural account of the Passion into the Pasyon structure of five lines per verse with eight syllables per line, can be done. An attempt of this sort was made last August 22, 1973 when seventy-five seminary professors, pastors and laymen went up to Maryhill School of Theology in Taytay, Rizal, to give their comments and advice on ad hoc studies on liturgical indigenization. Among the studies, one was about the "*Ang Pabasa and the Liturgy.*" One of the many suggestions was the use of the proper Scriptural texts in the re-writing of the Pabasa. And since the account of the Passion according to St. John is the Gospel for Good Friday, this was the text used in the adaptation.¹⁶³

¹⁶²Walter Schmitz and Terence Tierney, *Liturgikon* (Indiana: Sunday Visitor, Incorporated, 1977), p. 159.

¹⁶³Anscar Chupungco, "Ang Pabasa and the Liturgy," *Liturgical Renewal in the Philippines: Maryhill Liturgical Consultations*, 3, (Tagaytay: Maryhill School of Theology, 1980), pp. 93-96.

*Scripture Text (John)**Text Arranged for Pabasa Structure*

18:1

Nang masabi ni Jesus ang mga bagay na ito, umalis siyang kasama ng mga alagad. Pumunta sila sa ibayo ng batis Cedron at pumasok sa isang halamanan doon.

Nang masabi na ni Jesus ang mga bagay na ito umalis siyang totoo Kasama niyang tumungo kanyang mga discipulo.

Umalis nga sila roon at pumunta sa ibayong ang ngalan ay batis Cedron at sila at nagsipasok sa halamanan doon.

18:2

Ang lugar na ito'y alam ni Hudan na nagkanulo sa kanya, sapagka't madalas doon si Jesus at ang kanyang mga alagad.

Ang lugar na ito,y alam at hindi lihim kay Judas na nagkanulo sa kanya sapagka't doo'y madalas si Hesus at mga alagad.

18:3

Pumaroon si Judas kasama ang ilang bantay sa templo at isang pangkat ng mga kawal na padala nang mga punong saserdote at mga Pariseo Sila'y may mga dalang parol sulo at sandata.

Si Judas nga'y pumaroon kasama'y bantay sa templo isang pangkat ng sundalo padala ng Pariseo at saerdoteng pinuno.

Aba! at mga ito na mga galing sa templo may dalang parol at sulo Aba! at bakit ganito sandata sa kamay nito.

18:4

Alam ni Jesus ang lahat ng nangyayari sa kanya, kaya't siya'y sinalubong niya at tinanong, "Sino ang hinahanap ninyo?"

Alam ni Jesus sa t'wina ang mangyayari sa kanya kaya't sinalubong niya at saka tinanong niya sinong hinahanap nila.

18:5

Sumagot sila sa kanya: "Si Jesus na taga Nazaret". Si-

Sumagot sila sa kanya: "Jesus Nazareno", anila

nabi sa kanila ni Jesus: "Ako siya". Kasama nila si Judas na nagkanulo sa kanya.

18:6

Nang sabihin sa kanila "Ako siya". sila'y napaurong at nangabulagta sa sa lupa.

18:7

Muli siyang nagtanong: "Sino nga ba ang hinahanap ninyo". Si Jesus na taga-Nazaret sagot nila.

18:8

"Sinabi ko na sa inyong ako si Jesus. Kundi ako ang hinahanap ninyo, hayaan ninyong umalis ang mga taong ito", wika niya.

18:9

(Sinabi niya ito upang matupad ang kanyang salita, "Walang napahamak kahit isa sa mga ibinigay mo sa akin Ama.")

18:10

Binunot ni Pedro ang dala niyang tabak at tinaga ang alipin ng pinakapunong sasedote. Natigpas ang kanang tainga ng aliping yaon na ang pangalan ay Malco.

Sinabi nga sa kanila at winika pa nga niya ani Jesus, "Ako siya".

Si Judas kasama nila ang nagkanulo sa kanya Nang sabihin sa kanila Wika niya'y: "Ako siya" Ah! nangabulagta sila!

Muling nagtanong si Jesus "Sino nga bang hanap ninyo" "Sabihin sa aking totoo". "Si Jesus na Nazareno", ang sagot nila ay ito.

Sinabi ko sainyo tunay na si Jesus ako kung ako ang hanap ninyo hayaang umalis ito mga taong kasama ko.

Ito ay sinabi niya nang matupad, kanyang wika "Walang napahamak", aniya "kahit isa sa kanila sa "ki'y ibinigay, Ama".

Ang dalang tabak ni Pedro bigla-bigla ay binunot Aba't tinaga si Malco alipin ng paring pinuno tinaga nga nang totoo.

Ay! Nang si Pedro nataga pagkabunot n'ya ng tabak ang alipin na ang ngalan Malco nga ang ngalang tunay kanang tainga nga'y natigpas.

18:11

Sinabi ni Jesus kay Pedro:
 "Isalong mo ang iyong tabak
 Dapat inumin ko ang saro ng
 paghihirap na ibinigay sa
 akin ng Ama.

Ani pa Jesus kay Pedro
 "Iyong tabak isalong mo!
 Dapat kong inumin ito,
 saro ng paghihirap ko
 ibinigay ng Ama ko."

18:12

Si Jesus ay dinakip at
 ginapos ng mga bantay na
 na Judio at ng pangkat
 ng mga kawal sa pamumuno
 ng kanilang kapitan.

Ah! at dinakip si Jesus
 at pagkatapos ginapos
 ng mga bantay na Judio
 at ng pangkat na sundalo
 na ang kapita'y pinuno.

18:13

Siya'y dinala muna nila
 kay Anas na biyenan ni
 Caifas na pinakapunong
 sacerdote ng panahong
 iyon.

Siya muna ay dinala
 Sa pinakapuno nila
 Anas ang ngalan niya
 biyenan ni Caifas talaga
 sacerdoteng puno nila.

18:14

Si Caifas ang nagpayo
 sa mga Hudyo na mas mabuti
 para sa kanila na
 isang tao lamang ang ma-
 matay alang-alang sa bayan.

Si Caifas nga ang nagpayo
 sa lipon ng mga Judio
 Aniya sa mga ito
 mabuti ngang isang tao
 ang siyang magbubo ng dugo.

These examples of re-structuring the contents of the Pasyon through the use of the Scriptures brings about the following advantages, namely, (1) it brings the "cultural genius" of the people into the liturgy;¹⁶⁴ (2) it brings the people especially the Pasyon readers in closer contact with the more accurately written account of the Passion; (3) it becomes a concrete proof for the people that there need not be a separation between official liturgical worship and traditional popular practices; and (4) it brings Christianity more alive to the the folk.

The same attempts would also help Christians to share their faith-experience with non-Christians coming from the same cultural background. □

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 92.