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## The Sources of Gaspar Aquino de Belen's Pasyon

RENE B. JAVELLANA, S.J.

In an earlier note in *Philippine Studies*[PS 31 (1983): 451-67], I outlined the genealogy of the *pasyon* text, a type of religious verse that narrates the life of the Saviour and which has appeared in the major vernaculars of the Philippines.

The first datable *pasyon* to have appeared was a 980-verse narrative written by the master printer of the Jesuits, Gaspar Aquino de Belen, who in 1703 published *Mahal na Passion ni Jesuchristong Panginoon Natin na Tola*<sup>1</sup> as a companion to his translation of Villacastin's prayers for the dying. This *pasyon* text has been considered a landmark of Tagalog literature of the eighteenth century for here we have an instance of a native poet struggling with a topic not endemic to his native culture but one learned from foreign missionaries. It is intriguing to search for the roots of this landmark, to discover the sources behind the first *pasyon*, for such a search will help, even in a limited way, toward a better understanding of how Christian stories and teachings become acculturated in a new environment.

1. Tomas de Villacastin, *Manga Panalanging Pagtatagobilin sa Calolova Nang Tavong Naghihingalo*, Ysinalin sa vican tagalog ni D. Gaspar Aquino de Belen, 5th ed. (Manila: Imprenta de la Compañia de Iesus, 1760).

This fifth edition is the only extant version of the text. Two copies are available in Manila, the copy in the Lopez Museum and that in the National Library. The Lopez copy has a number of missing pages while the National Library copy is complete. Earlier bibliographers date the first printing of the text to 1703 but Lumbera has argued for a 1704 dating. He points to the notice granting 40 days indulgence to whosoever reads or hears read the *pasyon*. From this he argues that "the first edition appeared a year later than is generally acknowledged." [see "Assimilation and Synthesis," *Philippine Studies* 16 (October 1968): 624, n. 5.]

His argument misconstrues the legal status of indulgences vis-a-vis publication. For a work to be published it needed the approval of the local ordinary. This was granted after the *censura previa*. Other documents attached to the fifth edition indicate that the

## CRITICAL SOURCE WORK ON THE PASYON

Vicente Barrantes, in claiming that the Filipino pasyons were copies of European originals, implied that Gaspar Aquino de Belen used sources in composing his poem. Yet it was not until almost a century later that any serious attempt to trace the sources of Aquino de Belen's poem, or of any pasyon for that matter, was undertaken. Two critics may be singled out for their work in this area: Bienvenido Lumbera and Nicanor Tiongson. Lumbera observes that although Aquino de Belen's pasyon may be called original, it had its roots in Spanish poetry. Lumbera goes on to cite "Spanish verse accounts of the Redemption" to which Aquino de Belen's pasyon is related; to cite a few: Iñigo de Mendoza's *Vita Christi* (Zamora 1482); Comendador Roman's *Coplas de la Pasion con la Resurreccion* (Toledo, 1490); Juan de Quiros' *Cristo Pathia* (Toledo, 1552); Francisco Hernandez Blasco's *Universal Redencion* . . .<sup>2</sup> Although Lumbera's bibliography of relations, hence possible sources, is impressive, he does not demonstrate which of these Spanish poems influenced Aquino de Belen; much less does he demonstrate *how* Aquino de Belen was so influenced. Tiongson has come up with the best worked out theory of sources, suggesting that the pasyon came from: a) the Old and New Testaments; b) apocryphal works, Christian legends culled from the *awit* and the *awit* themselves; c) other pasyons; and d) the unbridled imagination of the writer.<sup>3</sup> Like Lumbera, Tiongson does not go into a meticulous analysis of the pasyon to demonstrate which part of the pasyon came from which of the sources he has proposed. Thus, Tiongson's suggestion until adequately demonstrated, remains an hypothesis.

There are historical problems to Tiongson's hypothesis, though.

*censura previa* was done a year earlier and approval for publication given then. This means that the work could have been published in 1703 as earlier bibliographers attest. An indulgence could be added later as a sign of favor but had little to do with getting a text published.

Since no critical edition of Aquino de Belen's pasyon exist, I have based my essay on the complete edition of the National Library and have appended stanza numbers to each stanza. Subsequent references to the pasyon text of Aquino de Belen will be notated as AqdB, followed by a stanza number.

2. Lumbera, "Assimilation and Synthesis," pp. 623-24.

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

When he says that the pasyons used the Old and the New Testaments, does he refer to the Scripture text itself or to some paraphrase of it? The Scriptures were not translated into the vernacular until the 1930s, and this through the efforts of Protestant missionaries and not Catholic priests. If any Scripture was available locally in the eighteenth and nineteenth century for the use of the Catholic, it was the Latin translation, Jerome's Vulgate. More common were paraphrases or catechisms on Bible History, like Josef Pinton's *Compendio Historico de la Religion*.<sup>4</sup> To claim, then, that Aquino de Belen used the Old and the New Testaments would mean that he could read Latin intelligently. Is this probable?

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. In particular, we would have to know which pieces of religious literature braved the passage through the Pacific unscathed and which underwent transformation as currents of cultural contact were filtered through Mexico. We would also need to know Mexican literature of the Spanish colonial period, for it can be safely assumed that since Mexico was the launching point for the mission to the Philippines, at least during the first three centuries of evangelization, it would be probable that Christian literature forged in Mexico had its influence in the Philippines. A satisfactory study and survey of Spanish and Mexican literature brought to the Philippines is yet to be made. Lacking such a study, this article proposes neither a thorough account of sources nor a definitive study regarding the literature, oral or written, that Aquino de Belen may have used. What this study does attempt is threefold: to refine the Tiongson hypothesis that Aquino de Belen used the Old and New Testaments as sources; to give focus to Lumbera's proposal that the pasyon of Aquino de Belen is related to "Spanish verse accounts of the Redemption"; and to discover, through internal analysis of the pasyon text, indications concerning the identity of other sources used.

4. Josef Pinton, *Compendio Historico de la Religion: Maicling Casaysayan nang Sarisaring Bagay na Nauucol sa Pagquilala at Pagsamba sa Dios*, trans. Antonio Florentino Puansen (Manila: Tip. de la Univ. de Santo Tomas, 1932). First published in 1863.

## AQUINO DE BELEN ON HIS USE OF SOURCES

No unequivocal document exists that clearly states which sources Aquino de Belen used in fabricating his pasyon, yet Aquino de Belen in the preface to his own work suggests that he did in fact come in touch with sources. He claims that his knowledge is not his own but he owes it to those with whom he dwells — “paquinabang co sa aquing quinalalagyan at sinasalilongang may caniya.” He seems to have used some written sources or at least had access to them for he states:

Ytong mahal na Passion ni Iesu Christong Panginoon natin ay bagaman yari na capagdaraca, ipinasiyasat co sa manga madoronong, at isinongdo nilang magaling sa Historia nang Santo Evangelio, at malaquing pagcaca-balic nang manga Passiong sulat sa camay na nangaonang inilacad caya onavain mo ang iyong pagbasa sampon nang pagtoring nang canicaniyang vica.<sup>5</sup>

Aquino de Belen mentions a *Historia nang Santo Evangelio* to which his text was favorably compared and which apparently antedates his. This *Historia* could not have been a complete translation of the four Gospels, for although the Council of Trent (1545-63) did not prohibit translations of the Bible into the vernacular, its insistence on competent and orthodox translations did in fact become a hindrance to Bible translations in the colonies of Spain. Possibly the text alluded to was Pablo Clain's *Historia de los Evangelios* mentioned in Salvador Maso's manuscript on prominent Jesuits.<sup>6</sup> No copy of the *Historia* exists. If it did it was most probably a paraphrase of the gospels. Probably, it never saw print since Aquino de Belen's pasyon proved to be far superior, and because it never saw print, the text is not mentioned elsewhere except in Maso. Aquino de Belen also mentions “Passiong sulat sa camay.” What were these texts? Were they some prototype of the pasyon? Or were these nothing more than passages from the Gospel and Bible stories patiently copied out by the native after a sermon as their forebears were wont to do?

5. Gaspar Aquino de Belen, “Sa Babasa Nitong Libro,” Preface to *Manga Panalanging Pagtatagobilin* (no page given).

6. Salvador Maso, “Misiones Jesuíticas de Filipinas,” (MS) trans. Leo A. Cullum (n.p., 1951?), pp. 65-66.

## AQUINO DE BELEN AND HIS USE OF SCRIPTURE

A thorough presentation of the evidence regarding the sources would involve reproducing the text of Aquino de Belen and annotating this to indicate sources used. For this article, it will suffice to present the general flow of the evidence and the conclusion toward which such an annotated text would point. Our search for sources begins by a process of elimination. Did Aquino de Belen have direct access to Scripture?

If he did then the only text available for him would be Latin. But there is no external proof to disclaim or to prove that he read Latin. In fact, his pasyon is replete with Latin quotations: "Non lababis in aeternum mihi pedes" (Jn. 13: 8); "Tristes est anima mea usque ad mortem" (Mt. 26: 38); "Vigilate et orate, ut non intretis in tentationem" (Mt. 26:41); and he ends his book with "Laus Deo." Do these quotes not give the impression that Aquino de Belen knew Latin?

If he read Latin, he could read the Vulgate. But if he did read and use the Vulgate, how do we explain his utter disregard for the sermon of Jesus in Jn. 13:1–17:33 wherein the words of the Lord match perfectly with his theme of faithfulness and friendship? If he read the Vulgate, how do we explain his omission of incidents in the Gospel which find their way into later versions of the pasyon? For instance, de la Merced's mentions the young man who ran away naked from Gethsemani at the arrest of Jesus (Mk. 14: 51-52) but Aquino de Belen does not.<sup>7</sup>

Comparing the gospels with the *Mahal na Passion* narrative shows that the pasyon does not follow any one gospel narrative slavishly, but picks and chooses from the four according to some outline derived from the four Gospels but not clearly dependent on any one of them. It is also into this fabricated outline that Aquino de Belen introduces incidents nowhere to be found in the Gospels, namely:

1. Christ's prayer that God the Father protect his mother and his disciples from harm at Jesus' passing away.
2. The angel's reply that God will not only protect his mother

7. Aniceto de la Merced, *El Libro de la Vida: Historia Sagrada con Santas Reflexiones y Doctrinas Morales en Verso Tagalo*. (Manila: Libreria y Papeleria de J. Martinez, 1906), p. 131. The text was first published in 1852, but a manuscript version was already in existence a decade earlier.

but He will protect the disciples as well.

3. The long sermon chiding Judas and Peter for sinning.
4. The speeches of Annas and Caiaphas against Jesus.
5. Herod's offer of half his kingdom if Jesus performs a miracle for the former's entertainment.
6. Details about the way of the cross.
7. The gory description of the crucifixion which in the Gospel merits the prosaic description, "And they nailed him to the cross" (Mk. 15:24).

All these facts together give the impression that Aquino de Belen probably worked with a conflation of the Gospel, or a paraphrase, a *Vita Christi* of sorts, rather than with the gospel texts themselves. But how do we explain his use of Latin? Many of the quotes he uses are popular enough; some come from the *Siete Palabras* devotion of Good Friday, for instance: "Pater dimitte illis non enim sciunt quid faciunt"; or "Amen dico tibi, hodie mecum eris in Paradiso." Others are like Christian proverbs "Vigilate et orate." Add to this the custom of spicing sermons, letters and devotional books with Latin quotes, and we have a probable source for Aquino de Belen's Latin. These Latin quotes were culled from various devotional practices and books rather than from direct contact with the Vulgate.

#### JUAN DE PADILLA'S RETABLO DE LA VIDA DE CRISTO

Having eliminated direct contact with Scripture and having proposed a paraphrase of sorts as one of the immediate sources of the *Mahal na Passion*, can something more specific be determined about this source?

I propose that Juan de Padilla's *Retablo de la Vida de Cristo, hecho en verso* written in 1585 is the immediate and principal source of Aquino de Belen's pasyon and from which he derives the basic outline of his work.<sup>8</sup> The *Retablo* is a long poem, the section covering the passion of Jesus covers 470 stanzas, to which 44 stanzas were added later by Bachiller Burgos bringing the Resurrection narrative to completion. The author of this highly emo-

8. Juan de Padilla, "Retablo de la Vida de Cristo, hecho en Verso," in *Romancero y Cancionera Sagrados*, Vol. 35: *Bibliotecas de Autores Españoles desde la Formacion del Lenguaje hasta Nuestros Dias* (Madrid: Imprenta de los Sucesores de Hernando, 1915), pp. 368-84.

tional poem was a Carthusian monk who, as a prolific writer, was well known for his religious verses and the narrative he wrote on the life and career of the twelve apostles. This narrative was to serve as a complement to the *Retablo*.

Comparing the *Retablo* and the *Mahal na Passion* uncovers striking similarities, namely: a) similarities in outline and content; b) similarities in technique; and c) similarities in expression in more than a few instances.

#### SIMILARITIES IN OUTLINE AND CONTENT

If the additions made by Bachiller Burgos are discounted, a comparison of the *Retablo* with the *Mahal na Passion* reveals that except for a few discrepancies both pasyons have a similar outline. The discrepancies are, first, there are incidents in the *Mahal na Passion* not found in the *Retablo*, and second, vice-versa. Under the first heading are the following: a) the Last Supper and Washing of the Feet; b) the Jews mock Jesus; c) Mary encounters Jesus on the road to Calvary and their dialogue; and d) the story of Longinus. Under the second heading are: a) the women of Jerusalem meet Jesus in Caiphas' house and have pity on him and His mother; b) John invites Mary to go to Calvary; and c) the long dialogue between Jesus and Mary at Calvary, and the Jews' mockery of Mary.

Some incidents not found in Scripture are found in both the *Mahal na Passion* and the *Retablo*. Two notable incidents are the prayer of Jesus for his mother and disciples and the "sadistic scene" of Jesus' crucifixion. Here are the words of the two poems placed in parallel:

#### *Mahal na Passion*

#### *Retablo*

#### a. Prayer for the disciples and Mary

Ynoolit ynaambil  
yaong onang panalangin,  
na dating ydinadayang,  
at toloy pinagbilin  
ang caniyang Ynang Virgen

Pero con gran aficion  
¡ O piadoso señor Padre!  
Porque se que mi pasion  
Herir ha su corazon  
Te encomiendo aquella Madre.



Ang manga Apostoles naman  
 caniyang paaarangan  
 ipinapagsasanggalang,  
 na hovag tomalo, t lomaban  
 ang loob sa catimtiman.  
 (AqdB, 91-92)

b. The crucifixion

Paripa, y nang mabotasan  
 caliuang camay hinotan  
 capagdaca, y, ibinabao,  
 at canilang tinictican  
 nang malaquing pacong bacal.

Nang isosonod ang canan,  
 na ypapaco na naman,  
 sa icana, t, ipalagay,  
 isa ma, y, di matapatan  
 yaong botas nang pahalang.

Malayo, at ang alangan  
 di mayrating maonay  
 cun i-ayon sa sasanlan,  
 di magcasongco, t, capalang  
 ang canilang gava, t lalang.

Sa di rin nga matatapat  
 sila, y, dina noling notas  
 nang iba, t, yaong ang sinocat,  
 ang nabanta pang pahirap  
 hinila nanga, t, binatac.

Nang apat na malalacas,  
 linalapac ang balicat,  
 nagsipangorong ang ogat,  
 litid ay nagsipangalag  
 niyong canilang pagbatac.

Di isa man tinogotan,  
 paghila, y, di itinahan,  
 hangan di doon bongmacam  
 sa botas na nalalaan,  
 at toloy nang pinacoan.

Mis discipulos, Señor  
 De ti sean amparados  
 Que a causa de mi dolor  
 Como ovejas sin pastor  
 Andaran descarriados.  
 (Retablo, p. 370)

Como tendido le vieron  
 Los que asi lo mandaron  
 Allí señales hicieron  
 Do sus manos extendieron  
 Y donde los pies llegaron

Y despues que señalaron  
 El Señor fue levantado,  
 Y luego la cruz tomaron,  
 Y por allí barrenaron,  
 Por do habian señalado.

Y allí otra vez le tendieron  
 Al Rey nuestro, do primero  
 Y de un brazo lo asieron  
 Y grueso clavo metieron  
 Por la mano y abujero.

Y tales golpes le dieron  
 Porque estuviere bien fuerte  
 Que sus nervios encogieron,  
 Y aquellos dolores fueron  
 Mas mortales que la muerte.

Y pasados a enclavar  
 La mano que descansaba  
 Y queriendo el calvo hincar,  
 No la podian llegar  
 A do abarrenando estaba;

Porque, como ya contaron  
 Los metros que he proseguido,  
 Al tiempo que al otro echaron,  
 que los nervios le apretaron  
 Y estaba el brazo encogido.  
 (Padilla, p. 379)

Ang talampacang dalava,  
 ipinahindolas nila,  
 pinagsiping, pinagsama,  
 pinacoang parapara,  
 di maquibo,t, di mahila.  
 (AqdB, 793-799)

## SIMILARITIES IN TECHNIQUE

Aside from the graphic and emotional language of the *Retablo*, as exemplified by the quotations above, the *Mahal na Passion* also uses the *Retablo's* techniques of dramatic dialogue, direct address and short sermonette. Here is an example of dramatic dialogue from the *Retablo*. The scene is at the foot of the cross. Mary and Jesus are speaking with each other— their address to each other is arranged according to the conventions of the stage:

Judios: Muera la Madre del malo

.....  
 Ved la traidora  
 madre del EngaÑador;  
 Mirad con que gana llora  
 Mirad con que viene ahora  
 A quejarnos su dolor,

Maria: Por vos era yo honrada

.....  
 Hijo, mi bien y mi Dios;  
 Ahora soy maltratada.  
 Abitada y amenguada  
 Y deshonrada sin vos.

Adonde ire? Que hare!  
 Hijo, bien de los mortales  
 A quien me querellare?  
 Con quien me consolare?  
 A quien contare mis males?  
 Vos a todos remediais  
 Con vuestra muerte y pasion;  
 Y pues que ya me dejais  
 Hijo, ved a quien mandais  
 Que me de consolacion.

Jesus: (to Mary)

Cata ahi, Mujer,  
A San Juan has de tener  
Por hijo y por compañía  
(Padilla, pp. 381-82)

Instead of quoting extensively from the *Mahal na Passion*, the following references suffice to show how Aquino de Belen uses dramatic dialogue: AqdB 91-112; 679-724.

An example of direct address can be found in the narrative of Jesus' trial. While Jesus is on the way to Pilate, Padilla turns to the reader and delivers this exhortation:

Contempla con que humildad  
Aquestas cosas sufria  
Aquel Dios de la verdad;  
Contempla la mansedad  
y paciencia que tenia.  
(Padilla, p. 375)

Similarly, in Aquino de Belen's version of the incident he addresses the reader in these words:

Ycaanim na ito  
pagyayaonana, t, ito,  
paghahatiran cay Christo  
mahabag ang Christiano,t,  
panimdim ay ibago.  
(AqdB 509)

Besides direct address to the reader, both poets speak directly to the characters of their story. Thus, for instance, Padilla addresses Judas after betraying his Master and he offers words of consolation to Mary. Similarly, Aquino de Belen offers a lengthy tirade to Peter (AqdB, 152-73) and to Judas (AqdB, 252-73) after both betrayed their Lord.

Finally the short sermonettes of Padilla, which are for the most part variations of an exhortation to weep — "Cristianos, gemid, llorad" — (Padilla, p. 379) turn into the full-blown *Aral* of Aquino

de Belen. These "arals" draw out the moral implication of the different incidents in the passion of Jesus, which the reader is asked to enter into with a spirit of penitence.

#### SIMILARITIES IN EXPRESSION

Similarities in outline, content and technique may not be conclusive proofs that Aquino de Belen actually used the *Retablo*, for it might be argued that such an outline is derived from the gospel, the choice of content from devotional practice and the techniques from conventions of religious writing current during the eighteenth century. Such an argument would have been cogent had there not been a considerable number of instances when the text of Aquino de Belen appears to be a translation, free rather than literal, of the *Retablo*. The parallelisms in the *Mahal na Passion's* and the *Retablo's* description of the crucifixion present the following examples for consideration. The passion accounts of both poems begin:

#### *Retablo*

Grandes cosas nos dijeron  
Las antiguas profecias  
Y muchas se atribuyeron  
A la pasion que le dieron  
Al verdadero Mesias.

Dijeron que ser tenia  
Preso y aun muy maltratado  
Y dijeron que seria  
De sus sierva compania  
Dejado y desamparado;

Y que habia de ser atado  
Y ante el juez Pilatos puesto,  
Muy crudamente azotado,  
Y falsamente acusado  
Con sombra de gran denuestro

Dijeron mas que seria  
Con espinas coronado  
Y que de loco ternia

#### *Mahal na Passion*

1 Sa Ona pang nanhuhula  
ang manga Profetang madla  
saquit na ypararaya  
manga ypararalita  
sa Messias na naava.

2 Ang vica,y, matatalian  
daracpin nang sandatahan,  
mumurahi,t, di ygalang  
siya,y pagiyvan naman  
Discipulong caybigan

3 Totobonga,t, ysosombong.  
daraiquin sa pagtotol.  
casinongalingan yaon  
doon nila yoolong  
cay Poncio Pilatong Hocom,

4 Ang manga hula pa,t, ysip  
ay hahampasing masaquit  
nang limang libong mahiguit

La ropa que se vestia  
Y que seria ordenado.

Y mas, que habia de llevar,  
Por redoblar sus pasiones  
Y por mas le atormentar,  
La cruz, y habia de estar  
En medio de los ladrones.

Item mas, que beberia  
Vinagre y amarga hiel;  
Que en una cruz moriria,  
Y que su muerte seria  
Muy mas dulce que la miel.

Dijeron que su costado  
Seria de lanza herido,  
Y que seria sepultado.  
Y que por lo ya contado  
Seria el mundo temido.

Escribieron que tendria  
Enterramiento de canto,  
Y que en el guardia habria,  
Y tres dias estaria  
En aquel sepulcro santo.  
(Padilla, p. 369)

at popotongan nang tinic  
ang Olo niyang mariquit.

5 Aariin namang ol-ol,  
at ypagdorooldool  
niyong manga maroronong  
anaqui,y, aliping davol  
pagmoray pinatotoloy.

6 Sa cruz ypapaco rao;  
at nang lumobhang humalay  
ang caniyang pagcamatay,  
siya,y, pagpapagytanan  
nang dalavang magnanacao.

7 At paiynomnin naman  
nang apdo,t, sucang masangsang  
pamatid yaon nang vhaio,  
at doon din mapapatdan  
nang caniyang pagcamatay

8 At toloy susugatan dao  
yaong dibdib niyang mahal  
Vala na niyon ang buhay  
toloy ybabaon naman  
sa ysang baonang hirang.

9 At dito rin sa baonan  
madlang tavong magbabantay  
Soldado sa Romang Bayan  
at nang maicatlong arao  
ay magooling mabuhay.

10 Yayang ito,y, natopad na  
lahat na hula sa ona  
Diyos ay caya namura,  
tayo ring tavong lahat na,y,  
atin ding ycabalisa.

11 Ngayon ay tayo,y, matova  
pasalamat sa naava  
sa tongmobos, namahala  
baquit mapagbigay pala  
siya pang nacatimava.

Other examples given in the Table below are by no means exhaustive but are merely illustrative. It must be noted that the dependency is not always word for word, so that the *Mahal na Passion* cannot be called a translation of the *Retablo*. Yet, the author of the *Mahal na Passion* does not merely lift ideas: certain turns of phrase are present in what can only be described as a "free rendering" in Tagalog of the Spanish prototype.

A Comparison of Stanza from the *Retablo* and the *Mahal na Passion* Showing Close Similarity Between the Two

*Retablo*

*Mahal na Passion*

A. Transition stanza from Hula to Narrative

Siendo el tiempo ya venido  
De todo lo que he contado  
Para salvar lo perdido  
Para que fue se cumplido  
Lo que era profetizado.  
(Padilla, p. 69)

Ay ano,y, sa dumating na  
arao na hula sa ona  
nang masisidhing Profeta,  
ycatitimava baga  
nating inapo ni Eva.  
(AqdB, 18)

B. Events

1. Judas' Despair

Y los dineros tomo  
Y arrojolos en el templo,  
Y confeso que peco  
Y justa sangre vendio  
Y que dio muy mal ejemplo  
(Padilla, p. 374)

Sa Simbahan tongmoley  
Sa pinto ibinolagsac  
yaong dala niyang pilac  
anhin co (a niya) lapas,  
aco,y, dili na tatawad  
diva aco,y, di tapat  
(AqdB, 347-348)

2. The Trial before Caiaphas

Y luego por la mañana  
Cuando ya la primavera  
Aquella gente tirana  
Perversa, con grande gana  
A casa de Caifas fuera:  
(Padilla, p. 273)

Diyata,t, capagca bucas  
arao ay bagong sisicat  
na magbubucan livanag  
ang sila nga,y, mamimitac  
agad nilang ytinambad  
Ynoling yniharap nga  
Cay Cayfas na cohila  
(AqdB, 290-291)

## 3. The Accusation Against Jesus Before Pilate

Este hombre adelantado  
 Por rey nuestro se nombraba  
 Contra la ley predicado;  
 Tiene el pueblo alborotado  
 Hijo de Dios se llamaba  
 (Padilla, p. 374)

Nagpapangap Hari, mura  
 ang ogali iniyba  
 guiniguibic ang lahat na,  
 anac (dao) nang Dios siya  
 sa tavo,y, gayon ang badya.  
 (AqdB, 385)

## C. Aral

Cual es el que contemplado  
 Aquesto, no ha compasion!  
 Cual hombre sera el que cuando  
 Este paso este pendando  
 No quiebre su corazon!  
 (Padilla, p. )

Ay ang tavo pang may isip  
 may calolova,t, may bait  
 ang di mahabag, tomangis  
 loob, bañgona,t pagtindig  
 manangis cang manangis  
 (AqdB, 919)

The close verbal correspondence between the *Retablo* and the *Mahal na Passion* cannot but create the impression that Aquino de Belen had first-hand knowledge of this Spanish poem. However, Aquino de Belen's *pasyon* is 510 stanzas longer than the *Retablo*. What were the sources of these added stanzas? "Unbridled imagination"?

## DEVOTIONAL LIFE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON AQUINO DE BELEN'S PASYON

A search for the sources of the stanzas in Aquino de Belen that have not been influenced by the *Retablo* leads to less conclusive results. However, some examples clearly influenced by devotional life can be cited.

The Church's devotional life is a powerful means for shaping Christian consciousness. Knowing instinctively the power of liturgy and paraliturgy on Christian formation, the Spanish missionaries consciously utilized Church celebrations and devotions in their evangelizing. Hence the fact that liturgy and devotion should shape Aquino de Belen's work should not be surprising. Here is an example of an incident narrated by the *Mahal na Passion* through the optic of the Church's liturgical practice. In telling the story of the institution of the Eucharist, Aquino de Belen writes:

Capagcaraca,y quinuha  
 ang tinapay sa lamesa  
 at benedicionan niya,  
 binolongan capagdaca  
 niyong vicang mahalaga.

Yto, ay ang catao-an cong  
 ypacacain sa inyo  
 caloob co,t, panagano,  
 bagaman tinapay ito,y,  
 nagcayba nang totoo.

At saca quinoha naman  
 yaong Caliz na ynoman  
 may alac na nalalaman  
 caniyang benedicionan  
 at naguin dogo rin tunay.

(AqdB, 46-48)

A comparison of Aquino de Belen's account of the institution with the Synoptics' shows that the phrases "binolongan capagdaca" and "benedicionan (ang alak)" do not have any parallels in the Gospels. However, we find in the Roman Missal prior to the reforms of Vatican II, the rubric "profert verba consecrationis secreta" (the words of consecration are spoken in a whisper). Aquino de Belen also calls the words of Jesus "vicang mahalaga" (precious words), an allusion perhaps to the consecration of the Mass. In the stanzas that follow the narrative of the consecration of bread and wine, Jesus turns to his disciples and tells them to imitate what he did: "hangan ngayo,y, parahan na." Such a phrase is not found in the Gospels but it is in 1 Cor. 11:25 describing the institution of the Eucharist, and in the Roman canon's version of the words of consecration, which is, in fact, a conflation of the Gospel's and Paul's account of the Eucharist. To sum up, Aquino de Belen's narrative and presentation of the institution of the Eucharist are shaped more by liturgical practice than by the Gospel account.

The pervasive influence of the liturgy and other devotions which are complements of liturgy may be detected in other stanzas. For example, the use of the *Via Crucis* to amplify what in John is a simple statement: "Jesus was led away, and carrying the cross himself, went out to what is called the Place of the Skull (in



Hebrew, Golgotha)" (Jn. 19:17). The tale of Jesus' going up to Calvary becomes a dramatic narrative complete with characters and incidents not found in the Gospels (such as the meeting of Jesus and Mary, and the kindness of Veronica who wiped Jesus' blood-stained face with a veil), but which are found in that all too familiar Lenten devotion, the Stations of the Cross.

Religious art, which also finds a home in the liturgy, adds its touch to *Mahal na Passion*. Describing Veronica's veil, Aquino de Belen says:

Ano,y, ang cahimalaan  
nalagda, at na laravan,  
anaqui inilimbagan  
ang caniyang muchang mahal,  
sa ipinahid na birang

Nagcatiticiopticlop ma,y,  
paraparang nangalanan  
sa ilalim at sa ibabao  
cun iladlad, at ilaylay,  
doroon ang muchang tonay.

(AqdB, 762-63)

The description tells us that there were three imprints of the Sacred Face. Padilla's version of the Veronica story does not indicate how many imprints there were of the "sagrada cara." It is enough for Padilla to mention that the Sacred Face was imprinted on Veronica's veil (Padilla, p. 378). Where did Aquino de Belen get this detail of the triple imprint? It seems that it came from traditional iconography which depicts Veronica displaying a veil with three faces of the Christ.<sup>9</sup>

9. In Philippine iconography, the number of imprints of the Holy Face have sometimes been one and at other times three. There seems to be no fixed pattern. The multiple imprint may have been a way of reconciling the alleged presence of many versions of the Holy Face; AqdB 764-67 mentions Rome, Jaen and Spain as three places where a copy of the Holy Face may be found. Other places also claim ownership of this relic. That there may have been more than one imprint of the Holy Face may be connected with the different traditions of the Veronica story. "Various stories to account for the origin of the picture have been told. One of the earliest is an account given in the *Mors Pilati*, according to which a matron called Veronica, who desired to have a picture of Jesus to comfort her when He was away preaching, was taking a linen cloth to a painter to have a picture put upon it when she happened to meet Jesus. He, upon hearing what she wished, took the cloth from her and caused his features to appear upon it. [see M.R. James, tr., *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1926).] In later versions the image was caused by direct impression upon the face of Christ. . . . In the 14th century the story of the compassionate woman wiping the face of Christ on His way to Calvary began to find favor." (P.K. Meagher, "Veronica," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 14: 625.)

## THE APOCRYPHA AND AQUINO DE BELEN'S PASYON

Tiongson mentions that the pasyon used apocryphal scripture. In Aquino de Belen there are only two instances that can be related to the apocryphal scripture, namely, the story of Veronica and the story of Longino. The basic outline of the Veronica story is already present in Padilla. It is the Longino story whose source cannot definitely be pinpointed. Certainly the original source of this tale was Jacobus de Voragine's *The Golden Legend*, a medieval compendium of Christian tales and legends.<sup>10</sup> But how did this tale reach the East? Was Voragine's book available locally, or was it known like the Bible through a retelling? Intriguing questions for which there are no answers as of the moment. An indication that the critical study of the pasyon's source is hardly completed.

To conclude then, from the *Retablo*, which Aquino de Belen must have seen first-hand, the native poet derived the outline, some literary techniques, part of the content and turns of phrase which he uses in his poem. However, Aquino de Belen found the *Retablo* inadequate for his purposes, and so for other parts and details of his text he drew from the vast pool of Christian tradition kept alive by the devotional life and liturgy of the Church. There is no certainty which other written sources he may have used, or whether some of his sources were oral; but it is quite certain that Aquino de Belen did not know the Bible first-hand but came to its content via other sources.

This analysis of sources may give the impression that since Aquino de Belen drew heavily from other material, his work is not touched by originality. But this is not so. If Aquino de Belen's originality is to be sought, it must be found in his aral. Even more important than the aral is his redaction of traditional material over which he had no control and which, if he were to remain faithful to the Church, he could not drastically alter but merely work with and rearrange to emphasize this or that point. In his redaction of traditional material, Aquino de Belen's work was analogous to the work of the original evangelists who themselves did not set out to write the gospels *ab ovo* but had before them a tradition, more or less fixed, which they could not substantially alter.

10. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (New York: Arno Press, 1969).