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## **Pedring and His Times**

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## Pedring and His Times\*

PATRICIO CEBALLOS

The name Pedro is a very popular name in the Philippines. One rarely comes to a place without bumping sooner or later into a Pete or Pedrito or Pedring or Edring or Dro or Penduko which are some of the more common local variations of the name Pedro.

Many Filipino parents, evidently, have a special predilection for this name; and they are right for Pedro is a name of primacy in the history of Christianity. Did not Christ himself single out a Peter or Pedro to be one of his chosen apostles and then raise him to the rank of Head of his Church with the singular pronouncement that he was Peter and that upon this rock Christ was going to build his church?

Anyway, the fact is that this name recurs so often in Philippine baptismal registry books. This is especially the case in many a town or parish in Bohol. As a matter of fact, not too long ago the writer of this paper was witness to a singular coincidence of names in one Bohol poblacion wherein the town parish-priest, the town-mayor, the chief of police, the church-organist, the local wit and joker, and the principal of the local elementary school all answered to the name of Pedro.

It is with this background in mind that the writer of this paper chose the popular name Pedring with which to christen the Boholano around whom this character, which is intended to be a character-analysis, will revolve. This Pedring is a real character who lived during those years of the past when religious folk-

\*For the context of this article, see Editor's Preface.

literature had its heyday in Bohol. He is as real as the Tonyings or Bertings or Dadongs or Tinongs or Pepes who were his contemporaries. Like them he typifies the Boholano character so markedly identifiable during those years of faith.

The years referred to cover roughly the period starting about 1888 to 1942. Frankly speaking, there is no record available that could possibly support the dates given above. The choice of 1888 as the starting point and of 1942 as the terminal point is purely a matter of personal opinion or speculation. At least on the basis of talks or interviews that the writer of this paper had with two old-timers still living in Bohol, 1888 would be a pretty wise choice with which to date the coming into vogue of some early forms of Boholano religious folk-literature like the *pamukaw* (a special form of Marian devotion), the *dayegon* (a song for the Christmas season and the *nilambay* (an elaborate play for exhibition usually in connection with the celebration of a fiesta). From a lady septuagenarian, Miss Rosario Oppus Tumamos<sup>1</sup> of Villalimpia, Loay, Bohol, who is a retired public school teacher and social worker, the writer of this paper learned that her father, the late Mr. Hilario Tumamos, was actively involved as participant in charge of the dancing and the tournaments in the nilambay plays from 1888 to 1910. Miss Tumamos claimed that her father, who died in 1914 at the age of fifty, was one of the pioneer-enthusiasts involved in the presentation of nilambay plays to the people of Loay as well as of the nearby towns comprising the southwestern section of Bohol, namely Alburquerque, Baclayon and Dauis, where the nilambay plays were reported to have made their maiden appearance in Bohol. And from another old-timer, Mr. Fabian Villamor Lamdagan,<sup>2</sup> an octogenarian native and resident of Baclayon, Bohol, the writer of this paper also learned that the pamukaw and the dayegon were introduced into his hometown for the first time in the year 1888. He based his calculation on the fact that by the time he joined a pamukaw

1. Miss Rosario Tumamos, Villalimpia, Loay, Bohol, May 29, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

2. Mr. Fabian Lamdagan, Baclayon, Bohol, May 21, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

group and a dayegon group at the age of fourteen, the pamukaw and dayegon tradition in his hometown had been going on for a dozen years.

The allegations made by the two old-timers mentioned above do not necessarily prove that 1888 marked the beginning of Boholano religious folk-literature. It could have developed or come into existence before that; only that there is no evidence or proof to back the possibility. Anyway, in the absence of a definite record and with the allegations or testimonies coming from two old-timers who are better believed than not, it would not be without reasonable basis to pick 1888 as the most likely beginning of Boholano religious folk-literature.

Besides, the choice of 1888 should give ample time (some fifteen years) for Boholano religious folk-literature to develop and improve itself into something better and more appealing to the viewing or listening public so that by 1903 or thereabout, with the Philippine Revolution and the resistance movement against the Americans as things of the past and with peace and order restored in the province of Bohol, it could be truly said of Boholano religious folk-literature that it had at last ripened or blossomed to enjoy a period of nearly thirty-five years when it held captive, as it were, the minds and hearts and the imagination of the Boholano masses.

The choice of 1942 as the terminal point is based on the observation that by this time there had set in a very marked decline in the popularity of Boholano religious folk-literature. Evidently, the unstable times during the war and the Japanese Occupation put a halt in many places to the holding of religious festivities which normally were the nursery bed of Boholano religious folk-literature.

This decline was to continue through the end of the war, the grant of Philippine independence and the post-war years to the present time. With the coming in of new values, new attitudes, new interests, radical external and internal changes, both positive as well as negative, introduced in the name of modernism or liberalism or progressivism or new morality, affecting not only urban communities but even rural areas (to which category most

Bohol towns even today would properly belong), the popular taste and liking for the old religious folk-literature gave way to a new liking for things that are modern which are generally samples of commercialized art. A Novo Bono stage-show, complete with dancers, singers and a combo, would today draw a bigger crowd in any Bohol poblacion or barrio where there is a fiesta celebration than a nilambay or *moro-moro* or *sarzuela* presentation. Similarly, young carolers in Bohol today would rather warble lines from modern Christmas songs found in the Song-Hits magazines than chant out lines from an old dayegon or *rico-rico* or *igui-igui* (an old form of dayegon).

The term "decline" should not, however, be taken to mean the dissolution or death of Boholano religious folk-literature. Up to the present time, as stated in the introductory chapter, there are still samples of it that have continued to survive. There are still sitios in Bohol where the singing of the *pasion* (a protracted chant for the Holy Week to commemorate the passion and death of Christ) remains an annual ritual or where a *kolelese* (another protracted chant sung to honor a deceased person or to entertain people attending a wake) is regularly chanted whenever somebody dies. Even the old pamukaw tradition is still observed today in sitio BaliAUT, Baclayon, Bohol. There are still groups of carolers in Maribojoc, Bohol, who present the igui-igui pageant come December. As long as there remains a viewing or listening audience, especially among the common people, to appreciate these old samples of religious folk-literature and as long as there are performers or aficionados to present them to the people, either in their old traditional form or as adaptations with fine touches of creativity, some samples of Boholano religious folk-literature will remain a living part, no matter how small, of the religious and cultural or artistic life of the Boholanos.

Returning now to Pedring, the typical Boholano belonging to that past era when religious folk-literature had its heyday and the central character to be analyzed in this chapter, the writer of this paper presents him to the reader as a native and resident of Baclayon, Bohol, a quiet ancient town situated along the southwestern coast of Bohol some seven kilometers south of the

city of Tagbilaran, the capital of Bohol.

The choice of Baclayon as Pedring's birth-place and place of residence was inspired by the fact that Baclayon, by virtue of its geographic location, places Pedring at a fine vantage-point where exposure to different samples of Boholano religious folk-literature is not only sure but is also likely to be richer than if he were placed elsewhere. For Baclayon is truly the cradle of Christianity in Bohol where, according to a Blair and Robertson volume,<sup>3</sup> the first Christian missionaries to enter Bohol in the person of the two Jesuit priests Juan de Torres and Gabriel Sanchez, made their first appearance and where the first catholic church in Bohol was constructed. The date of arrival of the two missionaries in the village of Baclayon is 1595. It is to be presumed that the construction of the heavy-set stone church, the oldest in Bohol, followed soon after.

But the writer of this paper is strongly inclined to theorize that the work of evangelization in Bohol, specifically in Baclayon, dates back to a much earlier time, no matter how informal or small-scale the process used might have been. This contention may be taken to rest on very thin documentation, but the reasoning behind it is pretty logical and sensible.

The theory is that after the landing of the Miguel Lopez de Legazpi expedition in Bohol at sitio Bo-ol where the historic Blood-Compact<sup>4</sup> between the Spanish chief and the native chief Sikatuna took place, the Spaniards, pleased with the natives because of their friendliness and hospitality, proceeded to settle down even temporarily. But because they found the terrain in sitio Bo-ol generally sloping and uneven, they explored nearby areas in search of a better place.

Sitio Baclayon, barely four kilometers south, proved satisfactory to the Spaniards because of its wide even space. Whereas what would be Tagbilaran now, some three or four kilometers north, was at that time not as accessible as Baclayon. Anyway, the Spaniards chose to stay in Baclayon.

3. "The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines," Blair and Robertson, Vol. 28, pp. 332-333.

4. "Relation of Legazpi," *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 208.

When it was time for Legazpi and his fleet to set sail for the conquest of Cebu, it would not have mattered much if a few of his men chose to remain. If that really was the case, it was likely to happen that the very few who stayed got married eventually to some of the native women. This could be one reason for the strong "mestizo" racial strain which to this day is evident in Baclayon. And the same few men, it can be presumed, must have engaged in some forms of preselytizing in line with one of the important reasons for the sending of the Legazpi expedition to the Philippines, namely to Christianize the natives of these islands,<sup>5</sup> and they must have initiated the construction of the Baclayon catholic church. That would surely make the Baclayon catholic church the oldest in the Philippines in point of start of construction, for its construction would be reported to have started in the year 1565, the year of the arrival of the Legazpi expedition in Bo-ol, Bohol.

Surprisingly, this date is borne out by a stone-slab marker displayed today near the entrance of the massive, centuries-old stone-church in the parish of Baclayon. According to the marker which the writer of this paper took careful note of, this ancient place of worship, which is under the special patronage of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, was erected in the year 1565 and completed thirty years later in 1595.

It may interest the reader of this paper to know that about five years ago, in December of 1966, a certain Spanish doctor in archaeology, Professor Miguel Pinggol of the Department of Fine Arts and Architecture in the University of Seville, Spain, visited the historic Baclayon church to verify the report of ancient records found in Seville and now preserved in the city archives attesting to the antiquity of the Baclayon catholic church. The good doctor, according to the Rev. Fr. Bernardino Estoquia Fuertes<sup>6</sup> who is the present parish priest of Baclayon, measured the dimensional of the Baclayon church and found them to tally

5. Gregorio F. Zaide, *Philippine History* (Manila: Bookman, Inc., 1961), p. 82.

6. Rev. Fr. Bernardino Estoquia Fuertes, Baclayon, Bohol, May 20, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

with the dimensional specifications contained in an ancient copy of the church plan which was adopted as guide when the Baclayon catholic church was under construction. This rare copy lies preserved today in the Seville Archives.

Another interesting discovery made by the professor during his visit had to do with the statue of St. Anne which occupies one of the side niches to the right of the central niche reserved for the statue of our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in the main altar of the church. In the opinion of Dr. Pinggol, the statue is over four-hundred years old. He further said that the St. Anne in the Baclayon church was "la mas guapa de las muchas estatuas de Santa Ana" that he has seen in his many travels. He spoke of the face of St. Anne as portrayed in the centuries-old statue as singularly expressive and beautiful.

The foregoing facts as well as speculations about the ancient town of Baclayon, the writer's choice of place of birth and residence for Pedring, point clearly to its antiquity and to its rightful title as the cradle of Christianity in Bohol, and by extension, a potentially rich base for the flowering of religious folk-literature. It was here in Baclayon, specifically in sitio Baliaut, where Pedring was born on June 29, 1892; where he grew up and lived; where he went to school; where he met and married his wife; where he raised his family; where he worked as a clerk in the office of the registry of deeds; and where he died shortly before the outbreak of World War II.

Pedring did not leave Baclayon in order to settle in greener pastures as did some of his relatives who went in search of the better life in the virgin lands of Mindanao, where they settled and prospered. Other relatives of his engaged regularly in the peddling business which brought them to other towns in Bohol as well as to other provinces in the Visayas and Mindanao. Pedring was the stay-put type who was satisfied where he was, although his hometown did not have very much to offer. Farming and fishing were common means of livelihood. The soil was not particularly rich. The most important crops were corn, coconuts, vegetables, ubi and rice.<sup>7</sup> A few Baclayonons engaged in

7. Cecilio Putong, *Bohol and its People* (Manila, Philippines, 1965), p. 90.



pastry-making and their "pastels, tortas and hojaldres" were considered Bohol delicacies as they still are today.

With nothing but the ordinary means at hand to insure a normally stable existence, Pedring and his co-Baclayonons lived a normally happy and quiet life, untroubled by any class distinction or gap or mark of social inequality. As Dr. Putong<sup>8</sup> pointed it out in his book, there was no feudalistic social order, no existing aristocracy to divide the people, no landed gentry to lord it over the others. There was instead that strong "we-feeling" (everybody in the community knows everybody else and is desirous of helping) or democratic spirit and feeling of real equality (every family owns its own parcel of land, however small it may be) that accounted for the well-knit community in the town (another important factor that insures a rich base for the flowering of a folk-literature). Aided by their strong faith and trust in divine providence and by their natural inclinations to be frugal, thrifty and industrious, Pedring and his co-Baclayonons managed to live in comparative contentment. They had none or very little of life's above-the-ordinary pleasures and luxuries; but they were satisfied with what they received in return for the efforts they exerted in order to keep body and soul together.

That was Pedring — satisfied in his hometown, happy in his dealings with his townmates, simple in his views, hardy, enduring, industrious, optimistic. By 1903 or thereabout, he was already a teenager and at that impressionable age he began to feel the impact of some of the more interesting specimens of religious folk-literature that was flourishing in his hometown and in other towns as well. It must be noted down that, though rooted in Baclayon, Pedring would sometimes be seen in other places like Inabanga, Clarin, Tubigon, Calape, Loon, Maribojoc, Cortes, Antequera, Corella, Tagbilaran, Panglao, Dausi, Alburquerque, Loay, Lila, Loboc, Duero, Carmen, Talibon, Ubya, Jagna, Valencia and even in Cebu City usually for pleasure (like attending the fiesta) and occasionally for business. So Pedring's exposure to

8. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

the religious folk-literature of Bohol was not limited to his hometown alone. He must have felt a similar impact from specimens obtaining in other towns. One thing definite — his exposure to religious folk-literature was to continue for as long as he lived.

Pedring was a neat and clean figure of a man, with acceptably good looks, an average height and physical build, and a slightly above-average mental aptitude. Had he been favored with extraordinary opportunities, he could have easily gone up higher than he actually did in any field or challenge where brains and guts and moral stability are indispensable.

Notwithstanding his limited situation in life, Pedring developed into a fine specimen of a man — reliable, sensible, practical-minded, conscientious and serious when at work; simple, humble, meek and generally cool-headed and patient; easy to please and to satisfy, not overly ambitious; relaxed, friendly, affectionate, helpful, hospitable, trustful and faithful; musically-inclined, fond of entertainment, curious and appreciative, more easily impressed than not and little given to criticism; generally of an unquestioning frame of mind and of a peaceful disposition and with a sense of humor that quite often bounced at his own expense and which he would take lightly and graciously; capable of strong feelings when provoked; sincere, receptive and responsive, responsible, and honest, optimistic and brave.

Some of the traits mentioned above could be mis-interpreted for shortcomings. Pedring's receptive, impressionable and non-critical nature may lead others, particularly non-Boholanos, into thinking that Pedring lacks originality, initiative, resourcefulness and the ability to project his individuality; and that his character is passive, dry and flat. His meekness and humility may easily be mistaken for weakness.

Whether these misconceptions are correct or not, the fact is that Pedring had his normal share of human imperfections. He was as susceptible to human excesses and aberrations as any other normal human being. He could be overly sensitive, stubborn, shy, indecisive, lazy, proud, hostile, passive, unreasonable depending on the frame of mind and feelings he would be in. But, in the over-all picture, Pedring was a balanced, even-tem-

pered, normal, wholesome person. His was a character people everywhere would like and accept and approve of.

There is a popular song entitled "Ang Boholano" which contains a simple tribute honoring Boholano manhood. This song has become a Villar-record hit and has remained a consistent favorite, especially among Visayans, because of its artless, yet heart-warming melodic eloquence that makes a happy combination of the serious and the zestful. Its composer and lyricist, Mr. Regino Dano who is a professional musician and piano-teacher from Loboc, Bohol, is now a resident of Pasig, Rizal.

The song is addressed to the marriageable Indays (young ladies) who are advised to pick a Boholano for a husband. If they do that, according to the lyrics, it is *suerte* (good luck) for them; for the Boholano is truly good-natured (*buotan*) and will be loving and faithful *hangtud sa kahangturan* (forever and ever).

The song further cautions the Indays to avail of their traditional prerogative to be the chased and not the chaser and to act coy (*bisan wa'y gusto padilidili*) especially if the young man is *palikerong ulitao* (a Don Juan).

The writer of this paper is inclined to believe that the dual portraiture of the Boholano implicit or explicit in the song was for a good purpose. There is the Boholano elevated to the skies with his sterling qualities; and there is the Boholano brought down to the level of the human with his naughtiness and game-ness.

Pedring certainly was such a balanced image. And although there are a number of humorous anecdotes made up by Boholanos themselves which tend to caricature the Boholano as an *understanding* husband (meaning henpecked) because he is gentle, loving, faithful, helpful and good-natured, the truth is that deep inside the Boholano is romantic and has a strong sense of gallantry that moves him to hold his woman in high esteem as the queen of his heart and life. Pedring lived up to that unwritten code.

As for his attitude towards the artistic forms of entertainment as embodied in the religious folk-literature that was in vogue in his lifetime, Pedring showed a favorable and fully sympathetic

attitude. He was responsive, receptive, even avid and hungry at times, sentimental and nostalgic in his feelings for them in a manner typical of small-town people who rarely get to see a show or a performance for their entertainment.

In the case of Pedring, the special attraction and appeal posed by these forms of entertainment (the *nilambays*, the *pastores*, the *sarzuelas*, etc.) was understandably very pronounced because in Baclayon at his time and even in the capital town of Tagbilaran which is barely seven kilometers away, there was not even a shadow of the proliferation of entertainment media that today is evident especially in Tagbilaran City.

In his artistic tastes and preferences, it must be established that Pedring never had lessons in the intricacies of the artistic or the literary and did not receive that form of education that would serve even in the basic level for real artistic appreciation of the beautiful creations of man. So Pedring naturally favored the simple, the plain, the direct, the easily intelligible and identifiable, the straight-to-the-belt form of entertainment, whether framed in the realm of the romantic and fantastic or in the realm of the realistic and true-to-life. Pedring's native artistic propensities and mentality would not be different from those of people today who are referred to as the *bakya crowd* (a term, now a cliché, coined by Mr. Lamberto Avellana of theater and cinema fame) and who set a heavy premium on directness and explicitness over subtlety and implicitness, simplicity and plainness over sophistication and class, home-spun humor over deep or sly witticism, the illustrational over the representational or symbolical, the emotional and sentimental over the philosophical and intellectual.

Pedring's innate simplicity and plain-mindedness accounted much for his being a good auditor and viewer who would welcome warmly and enjoy heartily the religious folk-literature extant in his time. Moreover, since he had a strong natural liking for what was pleasureable, entertaining, artistic and beautiful and since he was very impressionable and readily appreciative often to the point of naivete, he was, therefore, in the right frame of mind and heart to accept and respond warmly, in his own untu-

tored manner, to the different forms of folk-literature that his gifted "paisanos" produced for his entertainment. Those literary specimens practically made up the main entertainment fare available to Pedring and his provincemates at that time. To many Boholanos at that time they were the only available entertainment fare.

Another very important factor that accounted for Pedring's favorable attitude towards the literary folk-entertainment which flourished during his lifetime was the strong religious orientation that he had as a Roman catholic. His catholic orientation included both the internal aspect, which was Pedring's attitude towards the faith that he professed and his practice of that same faith, and the external aspect, which had reference to the different rituals, customs, traditions, practices and festivities observed by the catholic population in his province during his lifetime.

The lifetime of Pedring was truly an age of faith. The one strong bond of unity that made the Boholanos feel and think as one people was the catholic faith which the vast majority of Boholanos professed. Pedring was a catholic. So, too, were his parents, his grandparents and his grand-grandparents before him. At least 98% of the Baclayonons residing in the town at that time were catholics.

Pedring was baptized a catholic in the Baclayon parish church nearly two weeks after his birth by Rev. Fr. Jose Maria Cabañas, who was the last Spaniard to serve as parish priest in Baclayon. As stated in the stone-slab marker seen today near the entrance of the Baclayon catholic church, Father Cabañas served as parish priest of the town from 1870 to 1898 and was succeeded by Rev. Fr. Juan Villamor, the first Filipino to be assigned parish priest of Baclayon. Father Villamor served the parish for twenty-one years, the longest by a Filipino priest in the history of the parish.

As a catholic, Pedring was brought up and taught to love and, especially, to fear the Lord. A close-up view of his being a catholic, even in his mature years, would reveal that it was more a thing of the heart rather than a thing of the mind; that it was not the probing and searching kind but the complacent and unques-

tioning; that it was not one of deep intellectual conviction but of emotional conviction; that it was not one of free, independent acceptance but one of submissive and trustful acquiescence. Pedring's faith came to him so easily by birth and not by personal choice. He had always considered himself a catholic. As far back as he could remember of his childhood days, that was how he was brought up. It was taken for granted that it just had to be that way.

It mattered little or nothing at all to Pedring if his foundation in catholic theology was shallow and superficial. He wouldn't know what theology was or meant. He did receive some instructions regarding his religion when, as a young boy of seven, he was prepared together with other boys and girls of his age for the reception of First Communion. The summer religious instruction class he attended was managed by young ladies of the parish whose pedagogical know-how consisted solely of requiring the little children to repeat after them some prayers and a few basic articles of the faith contained in the old catechism booklet.

Pedring memorized those prayers and articles so well and he could repeat them perfectly so that he was often singled out as a model student and was often a recipient of holy pictures and medals. But he did not really understand most of the things he had committed to memory. By the time his rote memory failed him, he had forgotten most of the things he once mastered except for the basic prayers, a few of the commandments of God and of the church that had real bearing with his own life and some truth-fragments relating to the faith like the existence of hell, purgatory, limbo and heaven.

One lesson taught Pedring in the catechism classes which hit him deep in the heart was that heaven was for good people only and that hell was the place of eternal punishment for the bad. Another point that was emphasized was that the catholic church alone was the true church founded by Christ and that she alone taught the right way to heaven.

All that made up the theological base for Pedring's life as a catholic. Its obvious thinness was, nevertheless, offset by Pedring's sincerity and honesty. He had a genuine belief in God and in the

catholic church. Moreover, he was essentially good-natured and well-intentioned. That innate goodness, reflected in his actions and actuations, made up for what he lacked.

With or without adequate theology, Pedring lived as a catholic in the simple, quiet, uncomplicated, untroubled and unobtrusive way he knew how. He was neither passionate and fanatical nor cold and indifferent, he was his real and normal self, reacting in a manner that was in keeping with his personality and capabilities as well as with the situational and environmental forces he had to contend with.

As was expected of every catholic, Pedring faithfully observed the rule regarding Sundays and holy days of obligation. He heard Mass on the days prescribed, he did not understand many of the things said and done by the priest. But he was attentive and curiously watched from his favorite place in church, which was either near the doorway or at the rear-part of the church, whatever went on in the sanctuary. He did not pray the Mass for that was not how he had been taught, but he prayed during the Mass.

Pedring found the Mass ritual fascinating and impressive. Since he habitually attended the eight o'clock Mass, he was often witness to the solemn high Mass which was colorful because of the resplendent vestments worn by the celebrant, the *siryales* (local term used to refer to the bearers of the cross, the candles, the incense-holder and the holy-water container) and the singing by the choir. Only once in his life (when he was in his late twenties) did Pedring witness a solemn pontifical Mass. That happened on a December morning when the bishop of Cebu visited Pedring's hometown on the occasion of the local town fiesta which was celebrated that year in the early twenties on a grand scale. As far as Pedring could remember, that was the longest and the most impressive Mass he ever attended. That was one experience he could never forget. There was seen in that two-and-a-half hour ceremony rare liturgical splendour that would dazzle the eyes of any impressionable and simple small-town provinciano like Pedring.

A sure attraction present in these religious functions was the

parish choir made up of men and women who sang beautifully up there in the choir loft to the full and billowy accompaniment of the pipe organ. Since the time of Fr. Jose Maria Cabañas, who was earlier alluded to as the last Spaniard to serve as parish priest of Baclayon, the Baclayon parish had been lucky with its church-choir. The good priest, who was very fond of music, personally trained the members of the choir that he helped organize. That group of active parishioners was to continue through the years handling the choir-service in the parish with ready replacement any time a regular member had to quit for one reason or another. This enduring group never really experienced any serious membership-problem, for there were always relatives and friends of the choir-members ready to reinforce the group whenever they were needed.

Worthy of mention among the old pupils of Father Cabañas was the late Mr. Marcelino Israel (born in 1872 and died in 1959) who served for a long time as organist and director of the Baclayon parish choir, which in his time enjoyed a considerable reputation as one of the finest in Bohol. His daughter-in-law, the golden-voiced Mrs. Florentina Curambao Israel<sup>9</sup> from whom the writer of this paper got the informative details relating to the Baclayon parish-choir and Fr. Cabañas's role in its formation is today one of the principal assets of the choir. Mrs. Israel's natural singing prowess is matched only by her renowned skill as a maker of the Baclayon "pastel and tortas."

Anyway, Pedring enjoyed listening to the choir. Many of the songs sung appealed to him because of their soul-lifting melodies. Since he had a pretty fine ear for music himself, he got to master several of the melodies that he heard and could hum or whistle them accurately.

Pedring, on the other hand, showed little appreciation for the normally long-winded sermons given in church. They harped too often and too repeatedly on the theme of reward or heaven and punishment or hell-fire. They would normally take half an hour, and more often than not, were given in an uninspired and flat

9. Mrs. Florentina Curambao Israel, Baclayon, Bohol, May 20, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.



manner unless the priest who gave the sermon was quite exceptional. As a rule, Pedring would listen closely to an eloquent and interesting sermon.

In the reception of the sacraments, Pedring's record was average. In his younger days he was a twice-a-month communicant. His mother, of course, saw to that. But as he grew older, the frequency of his communions leveled down to about seven or eight times a year. As a matter of fact, there were years when he fulfilled just the minimum requirement of one communion during Easter time.

It was not easy in those days to receive Holy Communion. The rule on the communion fast was too rigid and strict. One had to begin abstaining from food and water from midnight until communion time the following morning. So that in Pedring's case, he would have to abstain from both liquid and solid for nearly nine hours since he regularly attended the eight o'clock Mass. There were no afternoon Masses then.

Besides this point of inconvenience, the notion that one must go to confession before every communion, irrespective of whether he was in the state of grace or not, somehow got into Pedring's way of thinking. This misconception was very common at that time. Even today many Filipino Catholics feel the same way. It was not that Pedring disliked the idea of going to confession; but confessing to a parish priest who was likely to recognize a voice if heard too often could have its embarrassing implications, at least in the mind of Pedring.

Another distorted idea that somehow got into the system of Pedring was that exercises of piety properly belonged to women and to the old people and that it would not look right for a man to engage in pious practices where the womenfolk enjoyed an overwhelming monopoly. To be spotted too often at the communion rail where the usual ratio of communicants was ten females to two or three males would likely draw sly comments from male friends and colleagues that one was a sanctimonious "goody-goody" type of character. Evidently, many of the young men at that time confused piety with pietism, which is piety with affectation. Because of this, it was not unusual for the

menfolks to put some kind of distance between themselves and acts of piety or to exercise some form of restraint lest they be branded sissies or effeminate.

Whatever aberrations Pedring might have been charged with in his religious attitude, it would not be accurate nor fair to brand him a sham, a phony or counterfeit catholic. The truth was that he was sincere and his faith had that indefinable serious meaning and worth to him. If he erred at all, his errors were committed without malice. He erred in good faith. The blame should fall on the fact that Pedring had not been adequately instructed. His knowledge of the Christian faith was very limited. Religious inaccuracies and distortions would come naturally to influence the thinking and behaviour of small-town people with superstitious, naive and gullible propensities like Pedring.

Besides, all the flaws and imperfections in Pedring's manner of thinking as a catholic were sufficiently offset by his pervasive simplicity, sincerity, genuine loyalty and good intentions or actuations. In the final analysis, Pedring was not a well-informed catholic. His being a catholic was to a large degree intuitional and only to a very limited degree rational. If there was more formalism in it rather than substantiality, more externalization than internalization, more feeling than logic and conviction, it was because the emphasis of the times was on conformity over individual freedom, on authority over individuality, on dependence and obedience over independence and individual articulation, on docile acceptance over free inquiry and scrutiny, on rituals over theological truths, on intuition over reason.

With regard to the external aspect of Pedring's religious orientation which also had a profound influence in shaping the climate or environment of the times, the observation arrived at would show an over-all salutary and favorable picture.

Because of the fervent religiosity of the Boholanos as a catholic population, they were a contented people, satisfied with what they had and got. Their land was not singularly favored and blessed with the rich bounties of nature. But they managed to get something from it to stay alive in comparative peace and bliss. They lived simple and frugal lives, happy when things went well

with their plans, their work, their business; and resigned and forward-looking whenever misfortune knocked.

As alluded to earlier in this chapter, there was no mad scramble for luxury and wealth. If they came, they were received without ostentation and with sobriety. Modesty, humility, restraint, respect of authority, honesty and integrity were meaningful values held in high regard by everyone. A social gap or cleavage between rich and poor was nowhere perceptible. There was a strong sense of equality and human dignity that paved the way to mutual feelings of respect and kindness.

There was no crime-wave, no criminal offenses of shocking proportions. Crimes against persons and properties were contained to a minimum number. Local jails were often empty rooms and the job of the police was simple, easy and rather dull. There was no need of fences, grilled windows and reinforced doors to insure safety in the home. Respect for the law was the rule, not the exception. A job in the government was a public trust that elicited honest and dedicated service. The pervading note of the times was one of order, cooperation, peace. Friendliness, neighborliness, hospitality made life beautiful and bearable. Family life was rooted in love, discipline and obedience. The catholic church drew all together into one family. In every town the parish priest was held in high regard and the most imposing structure was the massive stone-church where the community congregated to worship their God. The fear and the love of God became the primordial source of inspiration to live right.

In Baclayon, as well as in every other town, there was in evidence a rich store of religious practices and traditions which in those days, with the kind and pace of life then obtaining, would surely leave a lasting impression of beauty or even grandeur in the minds and hearts of the discerning townspeople. Of course, in some towns there would have to be a richer store of such observances and the attendant beauty or splendour would be greater. Baclayon, the cradle of Christianity in Bohol, would fall in that class.

One such practice which Pedring knew was the daily angelus or *oración* at six in the evening. The well-paced ringing of the

huge bell in the church belfry would shatter the stillness of the early evening hours at six everyday to remind the people in the town to thank the good Lord for the mystery of the Incarnation. At the very start of this evening tintinabulation Pedring and everyone else who knew would halt whatever activity they would be engaged in at the time and stand in prayerful reflection for some two to four minutes. It would be like the sudden pause of movements in a public square where the national anthem would suddenly be played. Though passingly brief, this oracion tradition gave to the townspeople as it were the identity of a christian community.

Again at eight in the evening everyday Pedring would hear a differently arranged ringing of the church bells which would last about two minutes. This was the *paghandum sa mga minatay* (remembrance of the faithful departed). At this time of the night everybody was supposed to be in his home ready to go to sleep. The tolling of the bells was a kind of reminder to the people in the parish to recite at day's end their evening prayers and to remember the souls of the faithful departed. It was a form of curfew and by the time the ringing stopped the lighted lamps or candles in many a home in the town would be put out and the thick darkness of night would engulf the whole town.

There were the annual fiestas, both on the poblacion and the barrio level, with their happy fusion of the spiritual and material celebrations. Boholano hospitality at its best would shine on these occasions. Even strangers would receive a warm welcome in Pedring's home come December 8 of each year and would be asked to partake of whatever *andam* (food preparation) Pedring had for the occasion.

There were the special forms of Marian devotions like the pamukaw serenade and the *flores de mayo*.

There was the very touching dawn reproduction every year of the Easter reunion of the Risen Lord and his Blessed Mother in the melody-rich ceremony called *hugos* where the youngest and best *tiple* (a boy with a high-pitched voice) in the town would play the role of an angel. Atop a scaffolding built for the occasion, the little boy would hang suspended from what would

signify heaven and then, at a given moment, he would be slowly lowered down to where the veiled or covered statue of the Virgin was placed. He would then uncover or unveil the statue while little girls dressed like angels would burst into the jubilant Alleluia songs.

There were the solemn processions, either penitential or devotional, around the principal streets of the town. There was particularly the Good Friday early evening procession the unusual length and duration of which would lead one to thinking that the whole town itself had come out to participate in the *intierro* or burial of the crucified Christ. The sad and mournful music played by the town band that trailed the *carro del intierro* (carriage bearing the statue of the dead Christ) near which Pedring would normally follow the procession would seem to tie up the pervading gloom as the silent multitude slowly wended its way through the streets of the town carrying a thousand or more lighted candles.

There were the pastores (a troupe of performers to entertain for a fee the more moneyed families in the town with songs, dances and dialogues connected with Christmas), either of the locality itself or coming from other towns which would provide an evening entertainment not only for the members of the families paying for the performance but also for the people in the neighborhood many of whom would congregate in the street or yard fronting the house of the family paying for the show.

These and other traditional practices observed uniformly or with a difference in many a Bohol poblacion were, directly or indirectly, inspired by the catholic church in Bohol through some priests or some members of the catholic laity who introduced them as original ideas or as adaptations inspired from outside sources. Evidently, these observances helped to create even more pointedly a Christian atmosphere in those places where they were followed. These external manifestations of the religious faith of the Boholanos lent additional vigor, color, pleasure, variety, meaning and beauty to what, otherwise, would have been simply Christian living minus the externalizations in flashy fashion that these practices supply. They may not be that essen-

tial; but they are humanly necessary. In the case of Pedring's religious faith, the internal and the external forces were complementary. His internal orientation as a son of the catholic church (as embodied in his personal and arrived at attitudes, values, convictions as a catholic) and his external orientation by virtue of the rich religious background he grew up with certainly complemented each other. They both helped strengthen Pedring's religious faith and loyalty. For men like Pedring, living in an era when faith was more emotion or intuition than reason, such a happy blending of the internal and external was a historical necessity. Such a happy blending proved a blessing in favor of Boholano religious folk-literature which was really part and parcel of the external orientation of Pedring as a catholic. If Pedring was favorably disposed or receptive or readily adaptable to such a folk-literature, it was not only because of Pedring the man but also because of Pedring the catholic.

The foregoing analysis of the religious character of Pedring is the result of an attempt by the writer of this paper to synthesize the many interesting observations and facts that the writer had gathered from the interviews or conversations he had with some Boholano friends who are residents of Bohol. The writer felt that a synthesis of views followed later on by a group acknowledgment of the people who were kind enough to discuss these matters with the writer would better serve the purpose of the writer — namely to analyze the Boholano character. Anyway, in practically everything the writer found a basic consensus. If there were differences at all, they were on matters of emphasis.

These were the people who figured prominently in the consortium of ideas: the Most Rev. Mons. Manuel Mascariñas, D. D.,<sup>10</sup> bishop of the Bohol diocese; Rev. Fr. Pelagio J. Dompbor, D. C. L.,<sup>11</sup> rector of the Immaculate Heart Seminary in Tagbilaran City; Rev. Fr. Camilo V. Auza,<sup>12</sup> parish priest of

10. Mons. Manuel Mascariñas, D. D., Tagbilaran City, May 5, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

11. Rev. Pelagio Dompbor, D. C. L., Tagbilaran City, May 12, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

12. Rev. Camilo Auza, Tagbilaran City, May 5, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

Tagbilaran City when interviewed by the writer; Mons. Primitivo Descallar,<sup>13</sup> parish priest of Dauis, Bohol; Mr. Justo Cruzante Boiser, Sr.,<sup>14</sup> a prolific and gifted writer and playwright from Talibon, Bohol; Mr. Paterno Angco Ongcoy,<sup>15</sup> a Baclayonon who works as office supervisor of PhilAm Life in Tagbilaran City and who has been a consistent member of the Baclayon Parish Council; Mr. Elias Pacatang Perin,<sup>16</sup> a government employee in the municipal treasurer's office in Sevilla, Bohol, who finds time to author plays for local presentation during town fiestas and to join the local church choir as organist and singer; Mr. Sulpicio Falcon,<sup>17</sup> a septuagenarian native and resident of Tubigon, Bohol and a retired public official who, in the middle twenties, was "presidente municipal" (the equivalent of today's mayor) of Tubigon; Mr. Pablo Cuajao Gonzaga,<sup>18</sup> resident and native of Baclayon, Bohol, and a retired Air-Force (PAF) lieutenant who, in his younger days, performed as a regular *pamukaw* member; Mr. Mariano Rocha,<sup>19</sup> resident and native of Tagbilaran City who, in his younger days, acted in several zarzuela presentations; and Mr. Juan Montoya,<sup>20</sup> resident and native of Tubigon and still an active foreman of the Tubigon Labor Union although he is now in his seventies, who, in his younger days, used to play the role of *estilicon*, one of the princes featured in a nilambay play.

The above-mentioned Boholanos shared generously with the writer of this paper their personal views and observations, several

13. Mons. Primitivo Descallar, Dauis, Bohol, May 14, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

14. Mr. Justo Cruzante Boiser, Sr., Talibon, Bohol, May 16, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

15. Mr. Paterno Angco Ongcoy, Baclayon, Bohol, May 20, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

16. Mr. Elias Perin, Sevilla, Bohol, May 16, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

17. Mr. Sulpicio Falcon, Tubigon, Bohol, May 15, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

18. Mr. Pablo Gonzaga, Baclayon, Bohol, May 20, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

19. Mr. Mariano Rocha, Tagbilaran City, May 6, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote, secured.

20. Mr. Juan Montoya, Tubigon, Bohol, May 15, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

of which the writer found very enlightening and interesting, regarding the religious image as well as the broader human image of the Boholano typical of those years in the past when religious folk-literature had its heyday in Bohol. The world of the Boholanos then seemed still fresh and young with none or very little of the complexities, problems, painful ironies and tragedies which today have begun to plague Boholano society, both urban and rural. Life then was in many ways simple, peaceful, happy, orderly. People's wants rarely went beyond what would be necessary or what would make life relatively easeful and comfortable. Even the truly rich Boholanos (there were just a handful really) lived simply and modestly and would not, even in the least degree, deserve to be branded as pretentious and ostentatious in the way some Boholanos today, who have acquired considerable riches, deserve to be branded.

Anyway, the conversations and discussions that the writer of this paper had with those previously mentioned Boholanos helped the writer to arrive at certain definite conclusions that would sum up the character of Pedring as well as the reasons behind the smooth interaction between Pedring and the religious folk-literature in vogue during his time.

Firstly, there's the social set-up of Pedring to consider. As stated earlier in this chapter, Pedring belonged to a community that was well-knit, truly democratic, with a strong sense of belonging and cooperation with that "we-feeling" orientation. It is precisely such a social set-up that would favor the rise and growth of a folk-literature and facilitate, as it were, its making a smooth and successful beachhead in preparation for its eventual capture or conquest of the hearts and minds and imaginations of the common people. Folk-literature is community-oriented. It is intended for a mass-audience rather than for an individual spectator or auditor. It implies acceptance or appreciation on the part of a group or mass of people or of a community. That is why it is called folk-literature. So in a community or town or barrio or sitio where the people are united (like in the case of Baclayon Pedring's hometown) such a community-oriented literature will surely have an easy time to develop and prosper. Without that



close-knit social relationship obtaining in Baclayon and, by extension, in practically every other Bohol municipality. Boholano religious folk-literature would not have prospered nor thrived the way it did.

Secondly, there's the fine mixture of several desirable qualities present in the person of Pedring to consider. These qualities made Pedring the charming, affable, likeable character that he was. As pointed out earlier, he was simple, trustful, reliable, patient, easy to satisfy, friendly, of an appreciative temperament, generally uncritical and unquestioning, fond of music, receptive, impressionable, of a sunny and humorous disposition, responsible, cooperative, hospitable and sincere. The image projected is that of a person who, when faced with something of value, of relevance, of interest, would more likely than not react to it favorably and even enthusiastically. Such a person would surely appreciate and respond warmly to a delightful moro-moro or to a sarzuela or to any other interesting or entertaining specimen of folk-literature. Between such a person that Pedring was and Boholano religious folk-literature there would not be even the least friction that would create a roadblock to the establishment of close rapport and empathy. On the basis of Pedring's personal traits there would be real emotional and intellectual compatibility. Real and meaningful and enduring dialogue between them would be only natural.

Thirdly, another point worth considering is Pedring's natural talent or gift that disposed him to be appreciative of what was beautiful, pleasureable, artistic. He had a good ear for music and could sing and play the guitar creditably. He had a ready liking for color, for spectacle, for make-believe, for command of language.

Of course, because of his very limited training and education, his taste for the artistic was necessarily less choosy, less demanding, less discriminating and was based solely on simple and popular norms which might be regarded as dubious by one who is better trained and educated. Pedring was, therefore, better suited to what was easy to follow, simple, direct and uncomplicated in its approach, readily comprehensible and communicable,

easily structured, clear in its development and manipulations.

It is this taste for easy and simple art (a category under which Boholano religious folk-literature fits in very well) which is another logical explanation for Pedring's ready and enthusiastic acceptance of the religious folk-literature that was flourishing during his lifetime. Between them there was some form of affinity — the sharing of something characteristic of both of them — a common simplicity, directness, clarity, unostentatiousness. Hence, Pedring would readily avail of every chance he could have of viewing, for example, a nilambay or rico-rico performance whenever it was in season. It would not matter substantially whether the script and manner of presentation were exactly the same as those used or followed in previous seasons. Normally, there would take place some changes only in the cast of participants. But year after year, notwithstanding the presence of the same acts, the same songs, the same dances with, perhaps, some few touches of improvement here and there, there would be in evidence the same old enthusiasm and rapt attention as far as Pedring was concerned.

One reason for this seeming permanence in audience appeal was, of course, the absence of competition. There were hardly other forms of public entertainment which could have diverted or else divided the attention of the common people. Except for, maybe, one or two, cinema houses were unheard of in Bohol before the outbreak of the second World War. Besides, the temper of the times which was one of pervasive conservatism called for the need more of stability, continuity and the retention of the status quo rather than of change. Hence, what was traditional was religiously followed and perpetuated. No wonder several forms of religious folk-literature survived for a long time. There just wasn't any worthy competitor or replacement. So that in the case of Boholano religious folk-literature, familiarity bred not contempt but renewed or sustained interest.

Fourthly, there's the religious character of Pedring to consider. He was a catholic like almost everybody else in Bohol; and he was, by and large, a good catholic. This religious character complemented and enhanced his basic human character as a good

man, honest and sincere in his dealings with other people, serious and industrious, charitable and helpful, faithful and responsible. His religious faith reinforced his basic integrity.

Of course, Pedring's religious faith, as mentioned earlier, was more a matter of intuition and emotion rather than a matter of reason and logical conviction. He was hardly knowledgeable in matters of catholic theology. He was, therefore, susceptible to errors of judgment due, perhaps, to misplaced emphasis or to misconceptions or to ignorance. Although he did not frequent the sacraments, his loyalty to the church was unquestioned. He was respectful to the priests, occasionally gave to his parish priest gifts in kind which were within his means, dutifully observed the law regarding Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, went to confession and communion at least once a year during the Easter time, tried earnestly to bring up his children in the fear and love of the Lord.

With such a religious orientation influencing his life, his values and attitudes, it would only be logical and natural for Pedring to get exposed to Boholano religious folk-literature which was in vogue in his time. After all, it was the church in Bohol through the instrumentality of either the priests or some lay people with artistic propensities that gave Boholano religious folk-literature directly or indirectly, the essential push or stimulus for it to get moving as well as its basic content and substance. It was the church that acted as its promoter and that popularized it, for the Church saw in it a powerful instrument for the instruction, inspiration and edification of the faithful.

So, it would be only logical to think of Pedring as one among the many happy beneficiaries and fervent sympathizers of Boholano religious folk-literature. His exposure to it could be regarded as a form of extension of his education as a catholic and, in some respects, as a form of extension of his own catholic practice. With Pedring and his fellow catholics composing the overwhelming majority in every Boholano community, an audience problem for Boholano religious folk-literature would be unthinkable. There was definitely a ready audience for it. Besides, the profit motive was truly one of the minor points in its moti-

vation. Those responsible for its composition as well as those who had a part in its presentation to the public were less concerned with remuneration. They had a more serious motive than that — like a sincere desire to serve or please the public or a commitment to a vow made in return for favors asked and granted. Moreover, there were always ready donors in the community who would give needed financial support thus enhancing even more its essential image as a community undertaking.

Finally, there's the external phase of the religious orientation of Pedring discussed above to be considered. Pedring grew up in a province where centuries of christianization left many enduring signs of religious enrichment. One sees that even today in the imposing and massive stone church structures, many of which are centuries-old, which grace several Bohol towns, in the numerous little chapels, mostly pre-war structures, dotting many a Bohol barrio or sitio where a black wooden cross and an old statue of Our Lady invariably hold a place of prominence; in the various religious traditions, customs and practices which today are still faithfully observed; etc. One further sees that in the pervasive climate of peace, unity, religious faith and fervor which today may not be as tangible as it was in the time of Pedring.

Anyway, to dwell in a place where such an environment existed, Pedring would have to be like a hermit living in complete isolation far from the society of men if he were to really escape the influence and impact of Boholano religious folk-literature which drew its very life and inspiration from that external religious orientation in evidence during his time. The seasonal observance of the pamukaw, the dayegon, the nilambay or moro-moro or *dula* or sarzuela, the pasion, the flores de mayo, the novena or *debosion*, etc. was a natural consequent of the externalization of the religious faith and fervor of the Boholanos. The church liturgy dictated in one way or another which specimen of Boholano religious folk-literature would be presented.

The five observations or conclusions reviewed above all point to some kind of happy co-existence of mutually complementary and interrelated or interacting factors which made it possible

and easy for Boholano religious folk-literature to become, at one phase of Boholano history, an important and enriching element in the cultural and religious life of the Boholano people. Given a type of people like Pedring and his contemporaries, with the same social pattern, the same personal qualities, the same artistic mood, the same religious faith and fervor, and the same religious background as described, there would be no more logical and suitable course for Boholano religious folk-literature to take than that given it providentially for it to develop and prosper as it did at a given period in the history of the Boholanos.

Pedring was a veritable rock on which the catholic church built Boholano religious folk-literature. The writer of this paper is inclined to believe that as long as there are Boholanos essentially of the same human image as that of Pedring, such folk-creations will continue to rest on a foundation not of sand but of solid rock and it shall survive until the consumation of time.