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**Fr. Bernardino Melendreras, OFM (1815-1867)**

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Reading the amazing story of this Dominican friar who had never attended an engineering school, one asks what inner power had so energized him. This is, unfortunately, one of the weaker points in this biography. Emphasis is on Villaverde's external work. Except for a few incidents that offer some kind of a glimpse into his soul (pp. 159-160, 225, 239), there is very little character portrayal. But the evidence is there: his reaction when faced with difficulties or negatively criticized by his fellow Dominicans; his correspondence (admittedly limited) with some nuns in Spain; the catechetical lessons he prepared, and the few personal prayers he wrote, etc. A fellow Dominican (as the author is) can readily empathize and understand this aspect of their life; but for the rest of us, this has to be explicated. Otherwise, the view is incomplete and one is left with the impression of a wooden character.

The author deserves congratulations for a meticulously researched book. One hopes that the series of publications to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the coming of the Dominicans to the Philippines (1587-1987), of which this is the initial volume, will continue with the same kind of scholarship as that here presented by Fr. Tejon. It will not only fill the gaps in our knowledge of Philippine mission history and the growth of our towns, but will also correct the stereotype of the friar pictured in the angry novels of Rizal.

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FR. BERNARDINO MELENDREAS, OFM (1815-1867), Y SU OBRA POETICA SOBRE LA REGION DEL BICOL (FILIPINAS). By Apolinar Pastrana Riol, OFM. Separata from *Missionalia Hispanica* 39 (1982): 85-181.

What is unfortunate about *Handiong*, the epic of Kabikolan's ancient heroes, is that the Bikol original had been apparently lost. What we have is the Spanish translation—or version—by Fray Jose Castaño, O.F.M., which is just the first part of what was probably a long epic.

This is how the editors of a mimeographed volume, entitled "Readings on Bikol Culture" (City of Naga: University of Nueva Caceres, 1972, 265 pages), introduce what has been believed to be a Spanish translation or version of a Bikol epic variously known as *Handiong*, *Ibalong*, *Ibal*, etc., with an English translation by poet Luis G. Dato, and annotations by Ignacio Meliton. The book under review says that there was no "Bikol original," nor is the Spanish a "translation" nor a "version." It was not by "Fray Jose Castaño," and was of course no "long epic."

A few other academic commonplaces in Philippine studies may also need revision or rethinking after Fr. Pastrana's monograph. In 1963, dean of Filipino folklorists Professor Dr. E. Arsenio Manuel said in his "Survey of Philippine Epics" (*Asian Folklore Studies*, 22[1963]:1-76) that "the Bikol epic *Handiong*" had

no text in the Bikol language . . . available, the epic being known only in Spanish translation made by Fr. Jose Castaño and found in W.E. Retana (comp. and ed.): *Archivo del Bibliófilo Filipino*, vol. 1 (Madrid: 1895; 57 pp.), as part of "Breve Noticia Acerca del Origen, Religion, Creencias y Supersticiones de los Antiguos Indios del Bicol"; translated into Dutch by Hendrik Kern, "Een Mythologisch Gedicht uit de Filippijnen," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land -en Volkenkunde van Ned. Indie*, 1897; which translation is reprinted in *Verspreide Geschriften*, vol. 11 ('s-Gravenhage, Martinus Nijnhoff, 1923), pp. 107-127; and translated into English from the Dutch by A.V.H. Hartendorp, 1920, with revision by H. Otley Beyer, in *Philippine Ethnographic Series*, Bikol, vol. 2, paper 32 (p. 14).

This informative bibliographic note simply carried over the term "translation" and attributed it to Fr. Castaño. The origin of the notion that the text contained in the work of Fr. Castaño and published by Retana is a "translation" probably comes from Hendrik Kern who in 1897 read too much into the Castaño report that a "Homero de Ibalon" who sang about the horrible eruption of Mt. Mayon on 1 February 1814 was also the source of the poem about the Ibal mythical heroes. But, Kern seems to have reasoned, since the text in Retana was in Spanish, it must be a *translation* (p. 151).

Then came the Hartendorp translation from Dutch to English in 1920.

In 1957, Domingo Abella was firmly convinced that the Spanish text was a translation, and he felt it such a misfortune that the *original* Bikol text had not been published (pp. 86; 151).

At about the same time that Abella was searching for the missing Bikol text, a graduate student, Ms. Lilia Realubit, was also requesting the Franciscans for a copy of the Bikol original which was supposed to be at the Franciscan archives at Pastrana (p. 86).

No original Bikol text was found, but the two decades that followed the 1957 inquiry saw studies made by avid students of Bikol culture, among whom are Merito B. Espinas, Jose Calleja Reyes, and Lilia Realubit, whose pertinent works have been reviewed in the book under review. In that period, a small controversy about translatorship arose: between those who thought it was Fr. Castaño, and those who thought it was Fr. Bernardino de Melendreras, O.F.M. Among the latter was Espinas. (See "Readings on Bikol Culture," p. 171).

This monograph is a very careful, excellently documented result of an investigation by Fr. Pastrana into the life of his nineteenth-century confrere Fray Bernardino Melendreras, O.F.M. (1815-1867), who spent many years

as a missionary among the Bikolanos. Fr. Melendreras was a priest-poet who, by the evidence of the body of poetry he left behind and the testimony of his contemporaries, was a lover of nature, from flowers to volcanic eruptions. Among the papers he has left behind is the *El Ibal* from which Fr. Castaño took the poem he inserted in his report on Bikol (p. 155). And Fr. Melendreras was the sole author of *El Ibal* (p. 154).

En conclusion, apoyandonos en los testimonios y razonamientos hasta aqui expuestos, creemos que, mientras no se aduzcan pruebas mas convincentes en contrario, ha de tenerse por verdadero y unico autor del Ibal al P. Bernardino Melendreras (p. 176).

Dr. Manuel's survey of Philippine folk epics in 1963 and Jesuit Father Francisco Demetrio's 1979 "Overview of Philippine Epics," (*Kinaadman*, vol. 1, pp. 9-28), say that the Christianized Filipinos have only *two* folk epics to show because whatever epics they may have had before Christianization were "displaced" or "swallowed up" by the metrical romances (Manuel, op. cit., p. 10) or the *pasyon* (Demetrio, op. cit., p. 16). The book under review says only *one* remains: *Lam-ang* of the Ilokanos.

Obviously, this monograph may disappoint some Bikol enthusiasts, but it may strengthen the thesis of Manuel and Demetrio on literary displacement. This is the latest in the series of works by various scholars that demythologize documents of Philippine political and cultural history.

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THE PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE MISSIONS TO THE UNITED STATES 1919-1934. By Bernardita Reyes Churchill. Manila: National Historical Institute, 1983. xv, 442 pages, plates, appendices.

The Philippine independence movement during the first third of the twentieth century is rightly considered unique in the history of colonies. Die-hard nationalists notwithstanding, there was much altruism in the unprecedented policy of the United States government to assume jurisdiction over the Philippines in order to prepare it for independent statehood. Everyone knows that this was not the exclusive motivation. But one cannot close his eyes to the reality that the Philippine republic was born through peaceful, legal arbitration and not by means of bullets spilling blood across battlefields. Ms. Churchill's *The Philippine Independence Missions* is an analysis of part of that movement. Twelve chapters of varying length present in clear detail the chronology of the effort to transform a dream into reality.