

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2009

## Postscript

By FEDERICO D. PASCUAL Jr.

### ✓ Crossing a river, their 'itlog' turns into 'ebun'

ANGELES CITY (PLDT/WeRoam) — It surprises many to learn that Bulacan, a bustling province adjacent to Manila, was once a part of Pampanga, its neighbor to the north.

If that is not astounding enough, note that parts of old Maynila itself, especially that area in Tondo north of the Pasig, also had a pronounced Capampangan presence.

The subject harks back to the Spanish colonial times when all of Luzon was divided into only three mega-provinces: from upper Pangasinan all the way to the extreme north was Ylocos, Central Luzon was La Pampanga, and the Tagalog region stretching down to Bicol was Manila.

The PamBul connection is one of some 20 research topics being discussed by historians and members of academe in the May 12-14 conference on Bulacan-Pampanga history, arts (including culinary) and culture at the Holy Angel University here.

The conference is sponsored by the Arte Bulakenyo Foundation Inc., the Juan D. Nepomuceno Center for Kapampangan Studies of HAU, and the Center for Bulacan Studies, with the help of the Pambansang Komisyon para sa Kultura at mga Sining.

Today, the participants will go to Pulilan, Bulacan, for the carabao kneeling festival capping the novena to the town's patron, San Isidro Labrador. Hundreds of these work animals have been trained to kneel in front of the church to be blessed.

**'ITLOG' TO 'EBUN':** In his remarks last Tuesday, Dr. Mariano C. de Jesus, Bulacan State University president, recalled that in their youth they used to wonder why when they crossed the Calumpit river from Bulacan to Pampanga their eggs ("itlog") suddenly turned into "ebun." ("Eburn" is Capampangan for "egg.")

On the BulSU campus in Malolos, De Jesus said, a third of the 20,700 students speak Capampangan. When he passes a group, he said, he knows if the students are Capampangan, because they are more talkative (meaning "maingay" or noisy but not in the sense of being uncouth).

Note: The conference spells it Kapampangan. But like their elders, many Pampangueños still write Kapampangan with a "C" and spell the "k" sound with a "q" — as in "mequeni" ("come here") instead of "mekeni," and "qng leon, qng tigri, eku tatacut, queca pa?" instead of "king leon, king tigri, eku tatacut, keca pa?" (Tagalog: "Kung sa leon o sa tigre di ako tatacut, anig pa?")



**REVEALING NAMES:** In many areas of Bulacan there are words in the vernacular and names of places that are quiet reminders that once upon a time the inhabitants were Capampangan.

Some Bulacan towns have Capampangan names: Malolos (from *malustus*), Baliuag (ancient Capampangan word meaning "untouched"; also an old name of Sto. Tomas town in Pampanga); Quingwa (old name of Plaridel which means "taken from"); Bulacan (from *burakan*); San Miguel de Mayumu, and Guiguinto.

There are also many barrios in Bulacan with names that local folk may not realize have also come from Pampanga. Samples: King Kabayo, Cutcut, Calantipay, Salapungan, Pinaud, Sacdalan, Batasan, Masalipit, Meyto, Bulusan, and Cacarong.

**LOCAL HISTORY:** Years ago, Pampanga also partnered with Cavite in a similar conference titled "*Inyo ang Cavite, Amin ang Pampanga: The Historical and Cultural Convergences and Divergences Between the Two Provinces*," also held at HAU.

Director Robby Tandingan of the JDN Center for Kapampangan Studies said this development is significant as provinces and regions outside the national capital are now asserting their local histories and cultures instead of just relying on what Manila-based historians say.

He said: "Most of the history books we read when we were in school talked only about the big historical events that occurred in and around Manila, or events that had a direct impact on the nation as a whole."

"We were taught every detail of the Battle of Manila Bay and nothing about the Battle of Bangkusay where the Macabebes shed blood in defense of their homeland. We know all our national heroes by name, but cannot name a single Kapampangan hero other than Jose Abad Santos.

"We've read all the works of Tagalog poets and playwrights, and not a single work by Kapampangan writers, who are as good as their Tagalog counterparts. But because they never registered on the radar screen of national historians and anthologists, they remain unknown to other Filipinos and unappreciated even by their fellow Kapampangans."

**RIVER LINE:** Going north on the old MacArthur Highway, the last Bulacan town is Calumpit, with the river separating it from Apalit town on the other side in Pampanga.

But the Calumpit River is just a legal and physical boundary since the cultures of communities on both sides — Candaba, Apalit and Macabebe on the Pampanga side, and Hagonoy, San Miguel and Calumpit in Bulacan — seem to overlap, merge and sometimes lose their identity.

Tandingan said these are "the towns where the two languages osmosize and mutate, producing a Tagalog language that is more Kapampangan and a Kapampangan language that is more Tagalog."

Along either bank of the river, it is hard to tell which of the two regions is absorbing the other culturally. However, with the Pilipino national language having been based by law on Tagalog — the *lingua franca* in Bulacan — that tongue is likely to have a big say, literally.

In sum, as they reach out to each other and focus on their commonalities, rather than their differences, the people of the two neighboring provinces can promote bayanihan and national unity, and thereby derive mutual benefits.