

The Psychology of the Filipino

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(Continuation)

f). Coinage.

Passing to another topic, let me say something about coinage.

We know that the Latin word *pecunia* (money) is derived from *pecus* which means cattle, an idea that came from the Brahmans among whom the monetary unit was the head of an ox. We also know that the Sanskrit *rupya* was a term used by the Malays to mean money, *rupya* being derived from *rupa* (cattle). I am not informed, however, whether this *rupya* ever reached the Philippines and was used here as coin before the coming of the Spaniards. But what we see here is that both the *pecunia*, the idea of which originated from the Brahmans, and the *rupya*, originated from the Sanskrit, came from India, the original home of most of the pre-Spanish immigrants to this Archipelago.

It is interesting to observe that, in the Panay Bisayan, the verb "buy" is "*bakál*"; and *bákál* in Tagalog means *iron*. Does this mean that the Indonesians and the Malays, being short of the coin of their native country, resorted to the use of iron as current money?

It is also interesting to mention here that Dr. José Bantug, acting

Executive Officer of the Philippine Health Service, is in possession of a solid piece of gold in the shape of a cone, the base of which is about nine millimeters, or $\frac{1}{3}$ of an inch, in diameter, and about 6 millimeters, or $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch, in height.

At its base, a figure, which looks like the letter *M* of the old Filipino writing is cut in bold relief. It is believed that this piece of gold must have represented a coin in the early Filipino currency.

Mr. Fuster, of the Ateneo Faculty, tried his best to photograph this object, different views of which are shown in this slide:



The conic form is, probably, due to the old method of melting gold powder. It is known that the Igorots melt gold powder in tobacco leaves folded in conical shape wherein the gold powder is poured; the leaf is tied with a hair, and placed in the fire. They prefer to tie with

hair, because a string or filament of other material is liable to get mixed with the gold.

The first figure is a front view of the base, where the figure or letter cut in relief appears. The second is a side-view of the same object; and the third, a front view of the apex of the cone.

According to informations received by Dr. Bantug, this piece of gold was found with other pieces in October 1914, by an old man, Alberto Ledesma, in the Barrio of Tiis, Municipality of Bagak, Province of Bataan, while said Mr. Ledesma was plowing his field. This piece is one of the 70 other pieces of the same kind found near a broken earthen pot, within which these pieces of gold must have been undoubtedly kept. It is said that besides these 70 pieces of gold, others of similar kind were found by the people of that barrio. Out of the 70 pieces found by Alberto Ledesma, several were melted and made into jewelry, only two of the original pieces having been left.

Last year, Mr. Maglaki, an employee in the Health Service, was in the municipality of Bagák and saw these two pieces of gold in the possession of the old Ledesma. Dr. Bantug, who got a knowledge of this discovery, tried to obtain one of these pieces, and he succeeded in getting this one, by exchanging it with a Spanish gold coin of \$4.00. The other piece is said to be now in the possession of a native of Balağã.

Thus far, I have no sufficient data

to assure positively that this piece of gold is really a coin, but the inscription it bears, does not seem to be a design or capricious ornament, but rather, it looks very much like the letter *M* of the old Filipino writing.

As already stated, the primitive Filipinos had the custom of burying with their dead the treasures and wealth accumulated by the deceased, and they also used to bury treasures in earthen-ware or pots. It would not be too venturesome to suppose that this piece of gold might have been a species of coin used by the early inhabitants of these Islands—at least in the regions where they were found—kept and buried in earthen pots as was their custom.

Since the early times of Spanish rule, the coin called *tahel* in Tagalog was in use. *Tahel* is *tail* in Malay, transformed in Spanish into *tael*. At the beginning, it was nothing more than a unit of weight of gold powder. Later, the *tael* was coined.

As to the Spanish currency, the first that reached the Philippines as currency must have been the half-silver-peso, or the *4 reales*, or 50 cents, which the Filipinos called *salapí*, a word which means silver in general without reference to coin.

That the *salapí* was the first Spanish coin that reached the Philippines, is shown by the fact that said coin was made the basis of the native names of the different monetary fractions, and as can be inferred from some deeds executed in the beginning of the 17th century, of which deeds I shall speak later.

Half of this *salapít*, or 25 cents was called *kahattí* (from *kalahattí*, which means one half); a fourth part of the same, or 12 and $\frac{1}{2}$ cents, was called *sikapat* (from *saikapat*) meaning one-fourth; an eighth fraction, or 6 and $\frac{1}{4}$ cents, was called *sikolo* (from *sa ikawaló*, an eighth part).

The Bontok Igurot people have their *sipen*, which is an eightieth part of one peso. It is a copper coin manufactured by themselves (The Bontok Igorot, p. 155).

Later, due to the commercial intercourse between this country and Mexico, the Mexican money, called mex was introduced in the Philippines as local currency and was known as pesos. This was part of the money which the Americans found in the Islands, together with the gold, silver and copper coins from Spain.

At present, we have the Filipino currency authorized by Act of Congress of the United States on the second day of March, 1903, and by several legislative acts of the Philippine Commission Nos. 696 and others. This currency is known as the Conant currency.

g). Religion and Morals.

The people of these Islands are essentially religious, in so far as they tend to recognize a supernatural being having a power superior to man's, and beyond the grasp of reason, that rules and governs the fate and destinies of man, and all events of life. Should Christianity, by a lamentable misfortune ever disap-

pear from these Islands, our simple people would soon fall into idolatry and superstition.

This inborn religiousness is impressed in the very character of the Filipino, who inherited it from his forefathers in India and Sumatra. The two streams of immigrations brought to the Islands Brahmanic ideas and rites, which were practised and preserved, and even to this date, are kept in some non-Christian regions of Luzon, Mindanaw, and Palawan. These religious ideas and ceremonies have suffered considerable alterations and modifications due to the lack of communications for centuries, between the immigrants; and India, and to the influence of Jewish religious ideas, as can be inferred from some mythological data which I shall presently cite.

The legend of the Manubò *Ango* of Agusan valley in Mindanaw, who, with all his family was turned into stone for having attempted to silence the frogs that were croaking in mount Binaoy, calls to mind the passage in the Bible referring to the wife of Lot who was turned into salt for looking back at burning Sodom. (Genesis, XIX, 26). In oriental-Leyte, there is a current superstition that any one speaking with an animal, or committing incest, will be struck by lightning and turned into stone.

The legend among the Iphugaws about the god called Balituk, who drew forth water from a rock by means of his arrow, reminds us of

Moses who struck with his rod a rock in Mount Horeb, and caused water to spring (Exodus, VII, 9, 10).

In and after the 14th century, Mohammedanism was introduced in Mindanaw, but the Spanish conquest hindered its propagation, throughout the whole Archipelago.

When catholic Spain came to the Islands, she found here a people imbued with ideas seemingly derived from the Old Testament. This may explain, in part, how this people passed without difficulty, from myth to truth, from Paganism to Christianity, which took root and is blooming in this spot of the Orient that claims the privilege of being the first Christian nation of the Far East.

In ancient times, Religion was closely related to Medicine. To the common mind, in general, the cause of all physical abnormalities is not known, due to the complication of the human organism. The simple mind, therefore, generally tends to attribute all sickness and diseases to supernatural causes. Hence, in primitive society, medicine was con-

sidered as a part of the mission of the priests and ministers of religion.

Something of the kind existed in the Philippines, where, in the times past, medicine consisted in the external and internal use of roots, barks, leaves, flowers, and fruits of herbs, and also in certain superstitious practices. So that in Tagalog, *medicine* or *to cure* is *gamót*, which means *root* in Bisayan. On the other hand, *medicine* or the *art of curing* is called in Bisayan *bulóg*, which in Tagalog means *whisper*, because one of the means by which Filipino priestesses or *babaylanes* cured the sick, was to whisper certain sacred words to the patient. It was believed that by so doing, the evil spirit to which the sickness was attributed, was being driven out from the body of the sick person.

The word *babaylan* (priest or priestess) must have meant *learned person*, for, I believe, this word is derived from *baba*, *babay*, or *baybayan*, which was the old name for the ancient Filipino alphabet.

(To be continued)



Two years ago Austria was faced by bankruptcy and starvation. Panic reigned in Vienna; the currency collapsed, and prices mounted at terrific speed. In the eyes of the civilised world nothing but a miracle could save Austria. The miracle took place, and he who worked it was a Catholic priest—Mgr. Seipel. In six months he had made such a change in the state of affairs

that the League of Nations was converted to the recommendation of a loan, and Austria was once more solvent. Under his influence Austria, from a potential storm-centre, has become a State respected by her neighbors and an example of what can be achieved by an anti-Bolshevik policy, even under the most unfavorable conditions.