



HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Chapter 30

FRIAR LANDS

1. *Origin and Nature of Estates.* When Legazpi came to the Philippines, the country was still thinly populated, the land was scarcely cultivated, techniques and tools that were quite rudimentary, and many areas were untilled, the greater majority being covered with thick forests and cogon.¹

The first haciendas of the Friars date back to the time of the conquest. Legazpi himself had granted a hacienda in Cebu to the Augustinians, and another one around Manila. Other lands were acquired in the 17th, 18th, and finally, in the 19th century. Outside of those two donations of land, and probably a third, the other land properties were acquired through purchase at public auction, or directly from the proprietor. Some were bought at one deal, others by parts. In this way, the friar lands were augmented. These did not cost them much, since in the beginning they were lands that were for the most part untouched and to a large extent unproductive.

These lands began to incite the envy of many people as they increased in productivity and value. The Propaganda Movement made use of them as one of their weap-

¹ Fray Joaquin M. de Zúñiga has this to say about the haciendas in Cavite: "... since there were few natives in the region when the Spaniards came and the land was empty, except a few fields cultivated by the people of Bacoor and Cavite Viejo—at that time two small ranches—the King granted those rough lands to a few of the early conquistadores, and the province was then filled with haciendas. The proprietors built dykes across the many streams which watered them, and these have furnished water to the fields, fertilizing them in no small way." (*Estadismo*, I, pp. 306-307).

ons against the religious orders. But, if one studies carefully the administration and use of the estates, he will easily deduce how unjust the campaign was, for the beneficiaries of this land system were mainly *inquilinos*, or the Filipinos, native born or mestizo, who tilled them. The proprietor received only 10% of the net harvest, the rest remained with the *inquilino*, although the latter had the obligation, on receiving the parcel of land, of clearing it, of weeding out the tares and preparing the seedlings, farm implements and work animals.

Besides, when through a plague of locusts or typhoons, part or all of the harvest was lost, it was the practice of the Brother Administrator to cancel part or all of the revenue due, or the *canon*.² Neither was anything to be paid for the first four or five years in the lease. Likewise, it was established practice to allot a piece of land more or less wide enough for the *inquilino* to build his house, plant fruit trees and vegetables, and raise domestic animals. Another benefit which some tenants of the religious orders enjoyed was the right to exploit the land through *casamajans* or sub-tenants. In this way, without toiling himself or being greatly bothered, except for the sole obligation of paying the land rent to the proprietor, they used to receive one half of the liquid produce from the leased property.

And as if this was not enough, the *inquilino* had the option — always, of course, in this matter, with the proprietor's consent — to bequeathe that part of the land which had fallen to him by lot to his sons or descendants by testament or leaving it or transferring it to another land tenant, or mortgage it. The landowner, for his part, was not averse to these transactions, unless there were strong reasons against them, as, for example, if the tenant intended to transfer his lot to others, with prejudice to his legitimate heirs. Furthermore, this system of land lease operated for the benefit of the Filipinos of those times. Accustomed to sell their lands easily to cover their need of the moment to their own loss and that of their sons, they could not in this case do the same for the simple reason that the land was not theirs.

² " . . . it is true that when (the harvest) is lost, the land rental is lowered in favor of the *inquilinos* in proportion to the losses that each one suffers." (Zúñiga, I, 142-143).

The costly works which redounded to the good of all or part of the hacienda, like constructing dikes, opening canals and drainage systems, digging tunnels for the waters to flow, raising bridges and lining up roads, were all charged to the landowner.

The system was paternalistic, advantageous to the *inquilinos* who, on the one hand, enjoyed many of the proprietor's privileges, but, on the other were not subject to his worries. For this reason, there were many who wanted to cultivate a parcel of the estates of the friars. This was easy to see from the fact that very many sought to occupy the lands an *inquilino* left vacant, either through death if he had no heirs, or through eriction (*deshaucio*).

It is likewise certain that the towns where the religious orders had lands were prosperous towns. One of them, Biñan, was perhaps the most prosperous of all.³

II. *Administration.* These lands used to be under the direct and immediate management of a lay Brother, but under the overall supervision of the Procurator of the religious order in Manila. It was the duty of the Brother, who was the top man in the hacienda, to parcel out the land, collect the *canon* or fixed rental, settle disputes among the tenants, transfer the lease of lands to others, when the tenants freely left or were obliged to vacate the farms when they failed to exploit them well or did not pay the canon. These tasks, many times unpleasant and rather unavoidable if one wished to have some order and the farm was to prosper, won for the Brother administrators, and later for the religious owners, antipathy, rancor more or less justified or unjustified.

When a hacienda was located within the boundaries of a parish administered by a member of the same religious order, the latter never or seldom interfered with the collection of the rentals or with any other matters, except when on certain occasions he interceded before the Brother Administrator in favor of some tenant or leaseholder.

Some perhaps may think of reading available data that the friar lands were a rich treasure. They were, if viewed from their actual level of development. But in the beginning,

³ *Libertas*, 13 October 1899. "San Francisco de Malabon."

they were in the vast majority of cases, nothing but a stretch of forests, lands, underwater swamps and cogon fields, and only, by the passage of time, expense and effort were the religious proprietors able to produce the minimum necessary to cover with some margin the needs of the tenants and land-owners. We could say that some were throughout the 17th and 18th centuries a perpetual source of debt for their owners. This was the case with the Biñan hacienda of the University of Santo Tomas in the 17th century of the hacienda in Santa Cruz de Malabon (today, Tanza in Cavite) in the second half of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. And so, one can see why the tribunal, after listening to the well-founded complaints of the creditors, put on public auction the haciendas which had ruined their secular proprietors and passed them on to the steadier administration of the religious, who, not without overcoming great obstacles, were able to make them prosper and converted them into sources of wealth and comfort. These words of Bravo and Buceta are not without truth: "By good fortune, this is now disappearing, and the widespread care to exploit this unexhaustible stock of riches is disproving the unfounded opinion which has been prevalent for so long, that every European who dedicates himself to agriculture in the Philippines could not but ruin himself."⁴

III. *Purpose.* With the produce from the haciendas, the religious orders took care of the support of a Procurator or Commissary in Madrid, who recruited boatloads of missionaries and transacted in the royal court the concerns of his order. They also maintained hospices in Mexico, where the missionaries on their way to the Philippines lodged while awaiting in Acapulco the departure of the galleon for Manila.⁵ Other expenses included the maintenance in Spain of houses of formation for missionaries to the Philippines, partial or total expenses of the costly travel of the friars who sailed to the missions, and the *asignacion*, or annual aid sent by the religious orders who had missions in Asia.

The Malolos government passed a law, actually an added article to their Constitution, depriving the religious orders of

⁴ *Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de las Islas Filipinas*, Madrid, 1851, I, 180.

⁵ Zúñiga, I, 226-227.

ownership of their lands. But the latter paid no attention to this provision, since they recognized the sovereignty only of the Spanish government and later that of the United States. In certain cases, the revolutionary government exacted a higher fee than what had been collected by the orders from the inquilinos of the friar lands.

IV. *Haciendas of the Augustinians.* The Augustinian order owned these haciendas in the Philippines. *San Francisco de Malabon* (now General Trias) in Cavite, of which five out of 8 parcels were purchased from Don Gaspar Godoy on 26 August 1877. Three other parcels were acquired by either exchange or cash transaction in the same year.

Malinta, in Polo, Bulacan, acquired part by part over a number of years from their various owners. The entire territory already cleared and marked by 26 May 1725, became legal property of the Augustinian on certification by the Notary Public, Mateo Vasquez, and confirmed by the royal audiencia on 13 February 1734.

Dampol, *Matame*, and *Marcos*, three integral parts of one hacienda purchased at a public bidding on 27 January 1834, for the price of 26,000 pesos.

Muntinglupa, bought partly by Don Antonio Quijano, the agent for Augustinian order from various Filipinos, in virtue a license conceded by the royal tribunal of Justice in 1665.⁶ "Within its jurisdiction were individual haciendas cultivated by tenants who have to pay the canon and dues of partnership (*aparcería*) to the landowners, the greatest of which gave the name to the [present] town."⁷

Tala. When the General Miguel Martinez died on 1 August 1715, the Augustinians became owners of 119 *quinones* and 8 *balitas* of a hacienda in Tala which he had owned. Much later, in 1725 and 1726, they purchased more property from other creditors of the General, such as the Board of Mercy, Santa Catalina College, the Manila cabildo, and several others. But they were not the total owners of the hacienda until they were able to buy from the Jesuits certain farmlands in Polo.

⁶ Marín, *Ensayo*, II, 147-148.

⁷ *Libertad*, 16 October 1899, "Munting-lupa."

and others in a sitio called Tipandoc, within the municipal boundaries of Meycauayan.

Mandaluyong. This hacienda also belonged to the Augustinians, when they obtained a portion of it at a public auction, while another part was purchased from Doña Jeronima Venegas in 1675.⁸

Outside of Luzon, they possessed the hacienda of Talamaban in Cebu, which Legazpi himself had granted to them on 27 May 1571. They also owned haciendas in Talisay, Minglanilla and Pasay,⁹ the hacienda of Guiguinto which they had owned since 1654 and paid for by the revenue from the economic savings of Father Antonio Ocampo.¹⁰

The government granted them on 25 April 1880 a vast estate in Isabela for the purpose of making them help in the agricultural progress of that far-flung and half-populated region. The following was the plan behind the acquisition of this land.

On 15 September 1877, Governor General Domingo Moriones sent a circular to the Provincials of the Augustinians, Dominicans, and Recollects, asking them to found agricultural colonies in Cagayan Valley in order to establish in time three big municipalities, using as the nucleus the people who might work those lands.¹¹ The Augustinians and the Recollects accepted the invitation, but the Dominican Provincial courteously declined for the double reason that he did not wish the Order to possess haciendas in those places where it had parishes and missions, and that much ill-feeling and expense would be occasioned by the cultivation of those lands. The acquisition of these lands was by *Composition*, that is, the government sold public lands at a low price to the citizens who promised to exploit them, in order by this system to help promote agricultural progress and the peopling of wide unsettled lands. It was through this that the *Compañía General de Tabacos* acquired extensive lands in Cagayan and Tarlac, and many Spaniards their haciendas in Negros.¹²

⁸ Zúñiga, *Op. cit.* I, 212-213.

⁹ Marín, II, 147-151.

¹⁰ Elviro, 91.

¹¹ *The Civilizers*, p. 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 43-44.

Finally, since 27 May 1571, the haciendas of Talisay, Minglanilla,¹³ and Pasay had been owned by Augustinian Order in the Philippines. *Maysapang*, in Pasig district, was also Augustinian property granted by Legazpi in order that they might raise livestock, and where they built a stone house.

Before the British occupation of Manila, they had their many carabaos, cattle, and horses, but when peace was concluded, the farm decreased in value because rustlers robbed them of their animals.¹⁴

V. *Dominican Estates*. One estate located in the town of Orion, Bataan, was acquired from donations and duly registered on 29 December 1637 and 29 August 1673, to which were attached certain conditions by some town residents who had left it untilled for many years.

Two adjacent haciendas, in *Santa Rosa* and *Biñan*, Laguna, actually formed one large estate within the municipal jurisdictions of these two towns. The Dominican Order obtained it in favor of the University of Santo Tomas in the course of the seventeenth century, 1641, 1653, 1677.

The hacienda of *Santa Cruz de Malabon*, (Tanza) located in this same town and partly in Naic, plus a house in Tanza, was purchased in the name of the University from Don Diego O'Kenedy and his wife on 7 April 1761.

Pandi estate, located in the towns of Bocaue, Santa Maria, Norzagaray, Bigaa, Angat, and Bustos in Bulacan, was acquired part by part in the seventeenth century. A good sector of Pandi was located in the mountains east of Bocaue, and Meycauayan, and produced nothing useful for its owners.

Lolomboy, comprising lands within the towns of Bocaue, Santa Maria, San José, Marilao in Bulacan, and including a house and its appurtenances was acquired with various titles through the course of the seventeenth century.¹⁵ Zúñiga wrote that "these lands belong to the Dominicans who own a stone house with a *tilod* roof where the lay administrator of the

¹³ Marin, II, 147-151.

¹⁴ Zúñiga, I, 198.

¹⁵ AUST, "Folletos," t. 17, fol. 42. Zúñiga, I. 37, 45-48.

hacienda resided, and a *tambobong* or granary for storing the rice they collect as fees. In this hacienda, the house is a few *brazas* away from the road. The land produces up to 6,000 sacks of rice and can bring in revenue as high as 4,000 pesos, after subtracting expenses. It is owned by the Province and, from its income, the missionaries are brought to the Philippines and those in China and Tonkin are supported.¹⁶

San Isidro Labrador estate was located within the municipal boundaries of Naic, Cavite. The Dominican order obtained it for 25,000 pesos from Don José Orbezcia, according to a notarized statement in Binondo on 18 August 1831.¹⁷

San Juan Bautista estate in Calamba, Laguna formerly belonged to the Jesuits, but it was claimed by the government in 1768, and sold to the Dominicans at public auction on 19 November 1832 by the *Junta Real de Almonedas* for the sum of 51,263 pesos.¹⁸

All of these estates were almost all planted with rice and sugar cane, and had thick forests and wide sectors that remained untilled. From 1896, the year the Philippine revolution broke out, until their sale in 1903 and 1905, their owners hardly received any income from them because the *inquilinos* refused to pay the traditional *canon*.

VI. *Haciendas of the Recollects.* The hacienda of *Imus*, Cavite was obtained by the Master of the Camp Tomás de Andaya at a public auction authorized by the royal audiencia on 1 December 1685, and transferred the following 5 November to the ownership of the Recollect Order since, as he himself said in a notarized statement, he had bought it "with the money and in the name of the Province of San Nicolás de Tolentino." On 3 November 1690, the secular priest Don José de Solís who was "*sacristan mayor*" of the Parish Church of Cavite, sold to the Recollects the hacienda of Bagombay which was contiguous to and formed part of Imus. A donation of Doña Hipólita de Zarte made on 4 November 1666, gave the fathers a third piece of land which also became part of the hacienda

¹⁶ Zúñiga, I, 355.

¹⁷ AUST, "Folletos," t. 76, fols. 85-86, 90.

¹⁸ Zúñiga, I, 53, 179-180.

of Imus or the state of Santa Cruz, later known as San Nicolas.¹⁹

The *Tunasan* (Muntinglupa) estate was acquired for the Recollects with the money (12,000 pesos) of General Tomás de Andaya on 12 April 1695; on 7 November that same year, the Procurator of the order took possession of the property. This had been the property of, among others, the famous Dean of the Metropolitan Church of Manila, Miguel Ortiz de Cobarubias.²⁰

San José in Mindoro came into the possession of the Recollects on 15 May 1897 in exchange for a piece of land in Isabela which the government had already donated to them in 1880. The one they had given up was about 80 to 100 square kilometers, while the grant in Mindoro measured 23,666 hectares, excluding the livestock and grazing lands of 1,674 hectares which the Order had acquired for 43,250 pesos.²¹

The *Talaja* hacienda in Morong was owned by the Frenchman Jules Dayllard. In 1896, it was adjudicated by the court to his foremost creditors, the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China; on 28 January 1899, the bank sold it to another of his creditors, the Recollect Order.²²

VII. *The Jesuit Lands.* Although, historically, the Jesuit lands were not classified as "Friar Lands," they still were an important element in agricultural and economic growth of the Philippines. These lands were: 1) those that were the property of the Jesuit Order; 2) those that belonged to the Colégio Máximo de San Ignacio; and 3) the haciendas of the Colégio de San José.

1. *The Jesuit Properties.* These were the lands in San Pedro Makati, Nagtahan, and San Juan Bautista in Calamba, Laguna. The first, located in the boundaries of the old province of Tondo but situated in the municipality of Makati, consisted of farm land and pasturage for cattle and horses. There was a central residence, ovens for baking lime, roof-tiles, and brick, and a *trapiche* for milling sugar-cane. After the Jesuits were

¹⁹ Marin, II, 245-47: 210.

²⁰ Marin, 247-248; Zúñiga, I, 29.

²¹ Marin, 248-251.

²² Zúñiga, I, 189.

expelled, Don Pedro de Galarraga, Marquis of Villamediana, acquired it at a public auction.²³ He tried to improve it at great expense to himself, renovating, maintaining or improving not only the house, but also the irrigation dyke, the pottery shop, as well as, by an act of generosity, the parochial church.²⁴

The *Calamba hacienda* in Laguna passed on, after the expulsion, to the property of Don José Clemente de Azana, who paid 44,007 pesos at a public sale, and later on to the Dominican order.

Doña Petrona Tuazon obtained the *Nagtahan* lands located in the old province of Tondo for 7,100 pesos paid in cash.²⁵

The *Colégio Máximo de S. Ignacio* owned the following estates: *Mayhaligue*, in the old municipality of Santa Cruz in Tondo, estimated after the departure of the Jesuits at 9,075 pesos, and which the Governor and the Audiencia set aside to support the leprosarium of San Lazaro run by the Franciscans. This arrangement received royal confirmation on 4 June 1784.

Maysilo, in Tambobong and Bocaue, Bulacan, evaluated with all its fields, ovens, sheds at 12,746 pesos, was acquired by Don Vicente Dolores Tuason for 22,206 pesos at a public auction to replenish the royal treasury. A house there used to be the rest house for the Jesuits.²⁶

A third piece of land in Tondo province and known as *Piedad* was acquired, also at public bidding, by Don Pedro de Gallaraga, Marquis of Villamediana, for 4,741 pesos.²⁷

The same Don Vicente Dolores Tuason acquired at a public auction the hacienda of *Marikina* for 33,750 pesos.²⁸ In this region, the hacienda of *Payatas* was acquired for 15,011 pesos by Augustín del Rosario. Finally, *Nasugbu* in Batangas became the property of Don José Isaac who paid for it 7,742 pesos payable in Mexico.²⁹

²³ Zúñiga, I, 211-212.

²⁴ *Loc. cit.*

²⁵ AUST, "Folletos," t. 117, fols. 138v-139.

²⁶ Zúñiga, I, 206.

²⁷ Zúñiga, I, 331-332, 337.

²⁸ Zúñiga, I, 338-339.

²⁹ AUST, "Folletos," t. 117, fols. 82v-84.

The *Colégio de San José* owned two properties: *San Pedro Tunasan* in Laguna and *Lian* in Batangas. Their revenue was intended to support the faculty, the administrator, and eleven scholars of the College, besides certain pious works.³⁰

VIII. *Other Properties.* Besides these estates which belonged to the religious orders, except a few which we have indicated, the orders and other convents or religious houses had some rural property, neither extensive ordinarily nor too productive, plus some urban lots in Intramuros or in the suburbs. Of these urban lots, we could use Fr. Zúñiga's words describing the residential houses of Manila: "... they are leased at a rather low rate since some earn annually 300 to 400 pesos, an amount that appears excessive, but actually leaving very little profit to the proprietors because of the high cost of building and maintenance, which can cost much because the wood quickly rots."³¹

Some of these houses belonged to the *Obras Pias*. Often, during earthquakes, both the building itself and the capital of the *Obra Pia* were lost.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 96v.

³¹ Zúñiga, I, 137.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

To Our Readers:

It has been my privilege to serve you as Editor of the *Boletín Eclesiástico* for the years 1971 and 1972, the 45th and 46th years of its existence. As I fade away with this issue, I thank the Fr. Rector of U.S.T. for having appointed me to this job two years ago, I thank all those who have helped me in this apostolate and extend my best wishes to the incoming Editor and his Associates. To all the members of the *Boletín Eclesiástico* family, prayerful greetings this Christmas and New Year 1973.

Fr. Jaime N. Boquiren, O.P.