



HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES

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CHAPTER 28

THE CHURCH AND SOME SOCIAL PROBLEMS

I. **SLAVERY** Slavery was already a social problem in the Philippines when the missionaries came. Probably, informed by one of them, King Philip II of Spain ordered the Governor General of Manila on 18 May 1572 to prepare a report on slaves in the country, including the causes and the system of enslavement.

Guido de Lavezares, acting governor after the death of Legaspi, enumerated the principal causes which gave rise to this social plague.

Some are slaves from birth . . . because their fathers, grand-fathers, and ancestors were also slaves . . . Some are captives in wars that different villages wage against each other, for certain injuries, and acts of injustice, committed either recently or in ancient times.

Some are made captives in wars waged by villages . . . without any cause . . . Some are enslaved by those who rob them for a very small matter, as, for instance, a knife, a few sugarcanes, or a little rice. Some are slaves because they bear testimony, or make statements about someone, which they could not prove. Some are thus punished for committing some crime; or transgressing rules regarding some of their rites or ceremonies, or things forbidden among them, or not coming quickly enough at the summons of some chief, or any other like thing; and if they do not have the wherewithal to pay, they are made slaves for it.

If any one is guilty, of a grave crime — that is, has committed murder, or adultery, or given poison, or any other like serious matter — although there may be no proof of

it . . . they take for their slaves, or kill, not only the culprit but his sons, brothers, parents, relatives and slaves.

If any one who is left an orphan came to the house of another, even of a kinsman (unless it be his uncle, paternal or maternal), for food only, its inmates enslave him. Likewise in time of famine and distress, during which they may have given their relatives food only a few times, they have sold the latter for their slaves.

Many also become slaves on account of loans, because these loans increase steadily every three or four months; and so . . . at the end of little more or less than two years, they become slaves.¹

The Spanish encomendero Miguel de Loarca who came to the Philippines in 1566, notes three kinds of slaves:

The first and most thoroughly enslaved, is the bondsman of him who is served in his own dwelling; such a slave they call ayuey. These slaves work three days for the master, and one for themselves.

Another class of slaves are those called tumarapoc. They live in their own houses and are obliged to work for their master one day out of four, having three days for themselves. If they fail to work for their master, in order to cultivate their own fields, they give the master each year ten chicubites or rice, each chicubite being equal to one fanega.

There are other slaves, whom these people hold in utmost respect, who are called tomatabans; these work in the house of the master only when there is some banquet or revel . . .

The ayueys [and tumarapocs] are worth among these people two gold taes . . . the equivalent of twelve pesos. The tumatabans are worth one tae, or six pesos.²

In its general description, this classification corresponds to what was indicated by other historians, like Francisco Colin, Juan Francisco de San Antonio, and, especially, the first of them all, the Franciscan Fray Juan de Plasencia, who wrote *A Report On Indian Customs*. These authors classify the slaves into: 1) *Aliping sa guiguilid*, or "servants around the house," who lived with their masters and served him in all things. 2) *Aliping namamahay*, or "servants who live in their own

¹ Guido de Lavezares, "Slavery Among the Natives," in BR, III, 286-288; Francisco Colin, S.J., "Native Races and Their Customs, in BR, XL, 93.

² *Relation of the Filipinas Islands*, in BR, V, 143-145.

house." These dwelt in homes they owned, with their wives and children, and had movable and immovable property. But they had to assist their master in tilling his fields or in rowing his boats. 3) *Kabalangay*, that is to say, "those persons who begged from their chief who was the head of their barangay whatever they needed, the obligation of serving him whenever they were summoned to row, work in his fields or serve in his banquets."³

From this preliminary information, we can say that slavery in the Philippines, which was widespread, was not as onerous as in other nations, especially of antiquity, like the Greeks and the Romans. Philippines slavery was a mixture; it had elements that smacked of real servitude, as well as elements that seemed more in keeping with the feudal practices of medieval Europe and of the present Philippine tradition of domestic service.

This was the situation of this segment of the native population when the heralds of the Gospel arrived. Urged on by their ardor and love for the Filipino nation, they were not dismayed by any difficulties and constantly strove to meet the problem even in the face of the opposition from the civil government.

From a letter of Bishop Salazar, we know that a royal cedula had arrived on the same galleon that had brought him to the Islands, by which the king ordered in rather peremptory terms that the slaves owned by Spaniards be freed, without giving any consideration to how or when they had been acquired. However, Governor Gonzalo Ronquillo decided it was more prudent to disregard the royal order, in view of the serious difficulties that would ensue.⁴

The clergy, for their part, held a conference on 16 October 1581 in the Augustinian convent in Tondo to solve the moral problems occasioned by the Governor's decision. Present were, besides the Bishop, some representatives of the religious orders.⁵

The royal order on the manumission of slaves was read, together with Governor Ronquillo de Peñalosa's resolutions. The

³ Juan Francisco de San Antonio, O.F.M., "The Native Peoples and Their Customs," in BR, XL, 350-354; Colin, *Ibid.*, 86, 93, ff; Pedro Torres y Lanzas, *Catálogo de los documentos relativos a las Islas Filipinas*, etc. (Barcelona, 1926), II, CCLXXVI-VII.

⁴ Peñalosa to Philip II, June 16, 1582, in BR, V, 32; Domingo de Salazar, "Affairs of the Philippine Islands," in BR, V, 241.

⁵ Torres y Lanzas, *Op. cit.*, CXLIV-V.

fathers asserted that the new cedula was merely a confirmation of an earlier cedula signed by Charles I in 1530 and which was still in force and, therefore, there was no reason to counter it by suspending the new decree; that since His Majesty was well informed about the situation, it would be an injustice to suspend execution of his mandate; that immediate freedom should be granted to the slaves or, at least, within thirty days.⁶

The civic-religious Junta of 30 April 1586 reported to the Crown that in the Philippines there were still Spaniards who held on to their slaves in contravention of the Royal cedula, and it pleaded before the king to expedite another new cedula to end this anomaly.⁷ It also made some suggestions to gradually end slavery among the native population, seeing that it was impossible to suddenly stop a tradition so deeply rooted among them.⁸

But despite the good will of the churchmen gathered in that assembly, despite the instructions of Philip II to the newly-named Governor of the Philippines, Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, as he was about to sail from Spain,⁹ the problem of slavery in the Philippines had so deeply dug roots among the people and their traditional way of life that it could not be easily resolved at one stroke of the royal pen or a conference of ecclesiastics. Time and prudence were needed. It involved masters' rights and interests, and perhaps the well-being of many slaves who would not have found an easy way of earning a living. Seventeenth-century documents frequently mention slaves; some show that even religious orders had slaves for domestic chores and to till their farms.

Slavery can perhaps be said to have ended in the lowland communities of the Philippines in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Thus, Fray Juan Francisco de San Antonio could write in 1738 in his *History*:

... now there is not the slightest amount of slavery among the Indians, in accordance with the apostolic briefs, which have been confirmed by various royal decrees of our Catholic

⁶ De Vera, Melencio, "Theologico-Juridical Problems in the Occupation and Evangelization of the Philippines," *Philippiniana Sacra*, Vol. V, No. 15, pp. 282-284.

⁷ Colin, *Labor evangélica*, Madrid, 1663, p. 248, col. 2.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 248-249.

⁹ Torres y Lanzas, *Op. cit.*, CXXIX, No. 50.

*monarchs. Thus we are all soldiers of one and the same divine Lord; all militia under the holy cross, which is our Catholic standard; and citizens and sharers of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is our Kingdom. Thus do we live in these Islands, Spaniards and Indians, all vassals of one Catholic monarch in regard to human nature.*¹⁰

II. **TRIBUTE** Shortly after Legazpi had conquered the city of Cebu and the neighboring settlements, he proposed to the native chiefs that they pay a tribute. Probably forced by the circumstances, the latter promised to pay it, perhaps even against their will.¹¹ After a few years, when the Spanish government was already firmly established in the islands, the first clash between the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions occurred regarding the matter. On 21 June 1574, Fray Martin de Rada put in writing his opinion regarding the collection of tribute by the Spaniards. He believed the rate was extremely high (3 times as high as it ought to be) in view of the poverty of the people, and he urged the government to reduce it by a third.

Lavezares' answer, endorsed by some of the officials to the king, is in striking contrast by its sobriety and moderate

¹⁰ BR, LX, 355.

¹¹ He indicated the tribute which the natives had to pay to their encomenderos, and it was a piece of cotton cloth in the provinces where it was woven, valued at four *reales*, the equivalent of two *fanegas* of rice, and a hen — all of these once a year. Those who could not give cotton cloth gave its equivalent of another product taken from the harvest of that town; where they did not harvest rice, they gave two and half *reales* in lieu of the hen. (San Agustin, *Conquistas*, 245). In other places however, like Camarines and Ilocos, the people paid the tribute in gold at about this period, which they owned more in abundance than cloth and other products. The inhabitants around Manila Bay and the neighboring area paid by arrangement of Legazpi himself, two *fanegas* of unwinnowed rice "for a year's tribute, and a piece of colored cloth of two *varas* in length and one in breadth; and, in default of this, three *taes* of gold — in gold or in produce, as they prefer. This said tribute is so moderate, that with six silver *reals*, which an indian gives to his encomendero each year, he pays his tribute entirely. The Moros pay this tribute of three *taes* as being more wealthy people, and because they are excellent farmers and traders. . . . The Pintados (Visayans) are not so rich as the natives of the island of Luzon (who are called Moros), because they are not as capable in labor and agriculture. So they are taxed to a less amount, each Indian being taxed for a *fanega* and a half of unwinnowed rice, and a piece of cloth, white or colored, woven from a plant. In other districts they have other tax-rates, each suitable to their prosperity. ("Reply to Fray Rada's Opinion" in BR, III, 267-268).

tone. In it the governor answers the accusations of the religious point by point, which he considers "harsh, harmful to this whole Community, and very prejudicial to the development of this land."¹² On the amount and kind of tribute, he adds:

*They are not considered friends, nor do they have any security, without first having paid the tribute — which is, in proportion to their condition and wealth, very little; and which they are willing to give gladly and without compulsion. To each island, district and village the natives give what they please, for in some places they give provisions, and in others, wax, cloth, and other things which they obtain from their harvests. To them it is little, and almost nothing, because they have those things abundantly.*¹³

Governor Gonzalo Ronquillo de Peñalosa consulted Bishop Salazar about the advantages of adding two *reales* to the eight of the tribute for the maintenance of the soldiers who, because they did not receive their wages regularly, committed abuses on the people in order to support themselves. Both the bishop and the ecclesiastics whom he summoned to a Junta agreed in principle that the king could raise the tribute if it was of divine law that those who paid the tribute had the obligation to maintain soldiers and encomenderos in return for religious instruction and protection; but, because of their poverty, the Governor ought not to come to a decision without first consulting the king.¹⁴

The Junta attended by the residents of Manila in 1586 recommended to His Majesty that the people could pay the tribute in specie — 8 *reales* — or its equivalent in kind, and that they add two *reales* for the purpose of better carrying out the pacification and evangelization of the islands.¹⁵

More concretely, of these two *reales*, a half *real* would be for the bishop and the church ministers, and the remaining one and one-half for the soldiers who performed guard duty in the islands.¹⁶

¹² BR, III, 260; Torres y Lanzas, II, XIII-XIV, CCCXLI-II.

¹³ BR, III, 265.

¹⁴ "Affairs in the Philippine Islands," BR, V, 244-246.

¹⁵ "Memorial to the Council by the citizens of the Philippine Islands," Santiago de Vera and others, July 26, 1586, in BR, VI, 161.

¹⁶ Colin, *Op. cit.*, p. 240, cols. 1, 2.

The same Junta took note of the abuses by the Spaniards in the collection of the tribute:

" . . . where the tribute is eight reals, some collect fifteen, and others twenty, twenty-five, thirty and more, on account of the value of the articles they demand, which they compel the Indians to search for and bring from other districts . . . It is necessary that the tributes be in the standard of the Castilian reals, paid in money, or in the produce of the soil, as the Indian has them, and as he chooses, provided their value remains."¹⁷

On the same date, 25 June 1586, the Royal Audiencia proposed to the king that the tribute be increased to one *real* for every married man, one half *real* for the unmarried, to pay for the troops which having spent the salary given them when they sailed from Mexico, were suffering from hunger and sickness and were abusing the native population.¹⁸

One of the instructions which Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas brought to the Philippines in 1590 was to settle the question of the collection of the tribute. After listening to the opinions of the churchmen gathered at the Junta of 18 January 1591, he issued the following order on 28 February that same year, containing these points: 1) Full tribute would be collected from every *encomienda*, whether royal or private, if the *encomienda* was enjoying the benefits of the administration of justice and the maintenance of peace and order, and was receiving religious instruction. The *encomendero* ought to set aside about one fourth of the tribute for the support of the minister of Christian doctrine, the erection of church buildings and the maintenance of Christian worship. Otherwise, he would be deprived of his *encomienda*. 2) If an *encomienda* enjoyed the administration of justice, but did not receive religious instruction, the tribute should still be collected, but with a deduction of one fourth of the tribute (more or less) which was due to the minister of Christian doctrine, this part being retained by the people instead. 3) The tribute would not be collected from the *encomienda* which enjoys neither the administration of justice nor religious instruction, until with the improvement of conditions in the islands, there would be an opportunity to provide both; in the meantime, His Majesty would be duly informed in order that he might provide the most convenient solution.

¹⁷ "Memorial to the Council," BR, VI, 191.

¹⁸ Letter from the Audiencia of Manila to Philip II, BR, VI, 255.

This decree did not fail to occasion friction between Bishop Salazar and Governor Dasmariñas, for the former found certain measures — as the nomination of the tribute collectors or fiscals who were not always honest or prudent men — a threat to the peace and well-being of the people.¹⁹

III. *PROTECTORS OF THE INDIOS* One of the tasks, in many aspects unrewarding and demanding, which the missionaries assumed on their own initiative only out of love for souls, or which the Crown in one form or another entrusted to them was the duty and title of "Protector of the Indios." In discussing this, we might distinguish, for a better understanding of what follows, between the protectors *de iure* and protectors *de facto*.

As far as is known, the only Protectors of the Indios *de iure* were Fray Andrés de Urdaneta and Bishop Domingo Salazar. Probably there was also someone else. Outside of these, the protectors *de facto* were legion — a pleiade of religious missionaries who, moved by the sufferings of the Filipino people, were convinced that it was their duty to go forth in their defense against oppression by the officials in the government.

Already Father Herrera was writing to His Majesty on 16 January 1570: "I came to this Nueva España to give information of the great need of supplies there [Philippines], and of some injuries done to the natives on account of the extremities that the soldiers suffer . . ."²⁰

Regarding some problems that demanded solution which he presented in his "Affairs of the Philippines," a Memorial to His Majesty and the members of the Royal Council of the

¹⁹ "Collection of the tributes in the Philippines Islands," BR, VIII, 25. In order to have funds to maintain the garrison of Zamboanga, conquered in 1635, the acting Governor Cerezo de Salamanca, added a ganta of rice for every tribute in the Visayas, an obligation which was much later extended to the rest of the Philippines and which is known in history as the "donativo de Zamboanga." Cfr. BR, XXV, 88, note. (Buceta y Bravo, *Diccionario Geográfico-Estadístico-Histórico de las Islas Filipinas*, Madrid, 1851, I, 133).

²⁰ Letter of Fray Diego de Herrera to Philip II, BR, III, 71. ". . . and of Father Fray Andrés de Urdaneta (who was bringing from the Audiencia of Mexico the title of protector of the indios) . . ." (San Agustín, *Conquistas*, 115, col. 1).

Indies, Bishop Salazar says about some Filipinos who quickly abandoned the Faith because of the misconduct and the kind of treatment meted them by some encomenderos,

But this is not the case with what we preach to them, for, as it is accompanied with so much bad treatment and with so evil examples, they say "yes" with the mouth and "no" with the heart; and thus when occasion arises, they leave it, although by the mercy of God, this is becoming somewhat remedied by the coming of ministers of the gospel, with whose advent these grievances cease in some places.²¹

More than one encomienda and more than one town owed their continued existence to the influence of some religious missionary over the people who, harrassed by the ill treatment of some encomendero or civil official, were seriously planning to return to the forest thicknesses, in such wise, according to Juan de Medina, although with apparent exaggeration perhaps that "If it were not for the protection of the religious, there would not now be any Indian, or any settlement."²²

So convinced were the Filipinos of this truth that, when Bishop Miguel de Benavides, first bishop of Nueva Segovia, gathered together the people of his diocese to ask their oath of vassallage to the Crown of Castille in the name of Philip II, one of them arose and said, "We answer that we wish the King of Spain to be our King and sovereign, for he has sent Castilians to us, who are freeing us from the tyranny and domination of our chiefs, as well as fathers who aid us against some Castilians and protect us from them."²³ "The religious have suffered, and still are suffering, innumerable things like the above, for making those Indians sincere Christians, for teaching them civilization, and for serving your Majesty in pacifying the country for you," adds the historian Juan de Medina.²⁴

²¹ *Affairs in the Philippines*, BR, V, 225-226.

²² "History of the Augustinian Order in the Filipinas," BR, XXIII, 253.

²³ *Ibid.*, 253-254.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, 258.