



## HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES

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### Chapter 26

### COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

"They have a special talent for imitation and, with good teachers, they would make things perfectly. They serve as scribes; they run barbershops, tailoring shops, carpentry shops. They are good at masonry, ironwork, silverwork, embroidery, and weaving. They can sing in the choir, play the organ, and perform other similar musical tasks. They are not inventive nor are they given to the abstract sciences which call for deeper reflection or prolonged thinking, or the like. However, there is a great difference between the provinces and Manila, where people are more advanced and sophisticated.

*Manufacturers:* These are limited to abaca, cotton, and silk, which is the best. There is in general very very little weaving, but some excellent cloths are made . . . In Camarines, Ilocos, and the Visayas, the people frequently wear these roughly woven cloths, while those of finer weave are exchanged as gifts and serve to flatter the vanity of the rich."

This is how a Dominican writer described the native industry in the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The present chapter will briefly show how these native talents and industries developed under the guidance of the missionaries.

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<sup>1</sup> Collantes, Domingo, O.P., "Informe al Gobernador General, Felix Berenguer de Marquina," Manila, Sept. 7, 1788: APSR, MSS, HCF, Tomo 4 Documento 25, folios 4v-5.

## INDUSTRY

1. *Sugar.* It was the Augustinian fathers who brought to the Philippines the Mexican *trapiche*, a primitive contraption of wood or stone to extract the juice from the sugar cane which they had been raising in Panay Island. Naturally, the *trapiche* was a crude and rudimentary machine which only partially extracted the cane juice from the plant fibers, or bagasse. The machine consisted of two wooden or stone cylinders which, by a combination of gears, also of wood, revolved in opposite directions to each other when started in motion by the pull of a carabao tied to another wooden gadget called *caballo*. The cane was crushed between the cylinders, while the juice was channeled into several cauldron, or *caua*, lined up inside a long oven. The juice was boiled as it passed from one *caua* to another, until by the fifth *caua*, the juice had solidified into sugar. This they kept in big kettles.<sup>2</sup> The native Filipinos quickly learned the process, realizing the benefits they could gain for themselves by exploiting the sugar cane.<sup>3</sup>

2. *Silk and Cotton.* Father Antonio Sedeño, one of the first Jesuits who came to the Philippines in 1581, had thought of introducing the silk industry to the country in order to stop the flow of silver to China. He planted mulberry trees and initiated similar projects, even building a loom and teaching the people the European method of weaving.<sup>4</sup> About two centuries later, urged on by the ambitious socio-economic program of the Governor General Don José Basco (1778-87) to make the islands economically independent of Mexico and encouraged by the *Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País*, the Rector of the College of San José ordered the planting of mulberry trees in the estate of San Pedro Tunasan which belonged to the college. The trees bloomed, silkworms were brought in from China, and enough silk cloth was produced, just as in the other parts of the Philippines where the same program was inaugurated. But, at sales time, the planters found out that they lost more in raising mulberry trees than if they had planted another kind of crop from which they earned more money, even if it were only *camote*. This initial

<sup>2</sup> Zamora Eladio, *Las corporaciones religiosas en Filipinas* (Madrid, 1900), 284-285.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, 327.

<sup>4</sup> Chirino, Pedro, S.J., *Relación de las Islas Filipinas* (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1969), 37.

failure, plus the labor required to raise the silkworm and the expenses of silk weaving, explained why the silk industry in the Philippines was discontinued.<sup>5</sup>

Besides raising silk worms or mulberry trees, the missionaries also taught the people the use of the weaving loom. Made only of bamboo, it was necessarily crude and poorly built; but it surprisingly served the purpose when plied by the native weavers, who produced various kinds of fine cloth which for a long time won the admiration of foreigners.<sup>6</sup>

It was mainly the Augustinians who introduced weaving to the people: Fray Juan Zallo in Laoag (Ilocos Norte), where the new industry earned rich profits for the natives; Fray M. Pérez in Argao (Cebu), Fray M. Alvarez in Santander (Cebu), and Fray Bermejo in Boljón (Cebu) who, besides, set up two machines for seeding the cotton pods and spinning the thread.<sup>7</sup> Another Augustinian friar introduced linen and cotton weaving in Paoay (Ilocos), while a Franciscan, the Venerable Fray Antonio de Nombela († 1627) introduced the production of *lambong* cloth by the women of Nacarlang (Laguna), whence its use spread to the rest of the country.<sup>8</sup>

The Dominican missionaries also promoted the manufacture of cloths in Bataan in the middle of the nineteenth century, and the industry served to supply the needs not only of the of Orani but of the entire province.<sup>9</sup> Somehow, the efforts of the Dominican Fray Balbino Ezpeleta in Mangatarem (Pangasinan) failed to improve the local cloth industry. Some Ilocanos in the town were already weaving cotton, and Fray Ezpeleta's bigger loom brought in from Europe did not attract the people who preferred their own rough, crude looms to which they were accustomed. However, enough cotton and indigo were raised to satisfy local needs for weaving and dyeing.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Zúniga, Martínez de, *Estadismo*, I, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Zamora, *op. cit.*, 288-289.

<sup>7</sup> Marín y Morales, Valentín, O.P., *Síntesis de un ensayo de los trabajos realizados por las corporaciones religiosas de Filipinas* (Manila, 1901) II, 89, 93, 113, 115, 116.

<sup>8</sup> Gómez Platero, *Catálogo biográfico de los religiosos franciscanos* (Manila, 1880), 42.

<sup>9</sup> *Libertad*, 7 October 1899.

<sup>10</sup> *Libertad*, 1 December 1899.

We might mention here the Recollect Fray Juan Tuseu, parish priest of Catmon (Cebu), who taught the women to make their own looms and occupy themselves in works "proper to their sex."<sup>11</sup>

3. *Quarries, Brick and Mortar.* It was the need to rebuild the Manila Cathedral in the middle of the seventeenth century that occasioned the discovery of marble deposits in the mountains of Antipolo by the Peruvian Canon Melo.<sup>12</sup> In Aguilar (Pangasinan), Fray Victor Herrero, the last Dominican priest of the town, discovered extensive quarries of marble in the mountains nearby. He provided the people with the work tools and taught them himself how to block off and polish the stones. It is from these stone deposits that the government house in Lingayen was constructed, just as the flag stones on the ground floor of the parish rectory and the courtyard of the parish church.<sup>13</sup>

But it was the Jesuit Father Sedeño who first introduced lime and made the first tiles with which he raised the first concrete building in the Philippines.<sup>14</sup>

Philippine masonry of the 17th and 18th centuries was of such durability and consistency that on several recent occasions it had been quite difficult to destroy cisterns or flying buttresses when people wanted to remodel or construct modern structures. Some say it was made with molasses; others, with sea shells; but probably at least in Nueva Vizcaya, it was made with a certain kind of white stone which was subjected to a full week's burning. The lime industry was introduced by an old Augustinian missionary in Pasulquin (Ilocos), while another helped develop it in San Miguel de Sarrat (Ilocos Norte). This is why this latter town is known for its good houses.<sup>15</sup> The Augustinian Fray Juan Albarian (†1761) wrote an essay, the manuscript of which was preserved in Cebu, entitled *The Art of Building in the Philippines*, and a *Method* of making bricks, tiles, lime, etc.<sup>16</sup> Finally, it was on the occasion of the cons-

<sup>11</sup> Ruiz, Liciniano, *Sinopsis histórica de la provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* (Manila: Tip. Pont. de la Univ. de Sto. Tomás, 1925), I, 634.

<sup>12</sup> *The Sunday Times Magazine* (Manila), 25 October 1970, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Libertus*, 16 December 1899.

<sup>14</sup> Chirino, *op. cit.*, 37.

<sup>15</sup> Marín y Morales, *Op. cit.*, II, 90, 91.

<sup>16</sup> Pérez, Elviro, *Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos* (Manila, 1906).

truction of the hospital in Nueva Cáceres which the Franciscan missionaries called "San Diego" but which the people called "San Lázaro" that the friars taught the people how to make tiles and heat brick.<sup>17</sup>

4. *FISHERIES AND SALT FARMS.* The town of San Dionisio of the old district of Concepción in Panay Island owes its fishing industry to the efforts of two Augustinian priests, Fray Pedro Bartolomé and Fray Casto Rosa. These two missionaries also taught the people how to make salt.<sup>18</sup> Other Augustinians encouraged the salt industry in two towns of the same name Talisay one of Batangas and the other in Cebu province,<sup>19</sup> while Fray Manuel Camañes, also an Augustinian, helped the people of Betis exploit the fishing industry and salt making.<sup>20</sup>

5. *Other Industries.* There were many other industries which the missionaries encouraged, for besides their spiritual tasks, they felt they could also help the people by teaching them to improve their material condition. Some of these industries were:

a) *The Gathering of Resin.* At the suggestion of the Recollect missionary Fray Pedro de San Miguel (†1774), Governor Anda wrote the Recollect Provincial to encourage the people of Zambales to extract as much resin as they could from the pine in the province and bring it down to the government storehouses in Manila, for which the Royal Treasury would pay the workers. In this way, both the government and the people would be benefited.<sup>21</sup>

b) *Oil.* The same priest discovered oil in Zambales, where he was working. It was produced from the cane called *balao*, the kind used for the bitumen needed for the boats. Governor Anda also ordered the Recollect Provincial to develop industry for the benefit of the state and the people.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Marín y Morales, *Op. cit.*, 315.

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, 133.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, 110.

<sup>20</sup> *Op. cit.*, 76.

<sup>21</sup> *Op. cit.*, II, 259.

<sup>22</sup> *Op. cit.*, 259-260.

c) *Tanneries.* Fray Mariano Gutiérrez, a Recollect (†1855), taught the people of Jagna (Iloilo) to tan the skin of the big bats, an industry that brought in good results for the people.<sup>23</sup>

d) *Pottery.* The people of San Nicolás (Ilocos Norte) owe to their Augustinian parish the beginning and the development of their pottery industry. In the farms of Makati, which once had belonged to the Jesuits, there was already by the early nineteenth century, a factory for roof-tiles, bricks, earthen pots, and other kitchen utensils. These were however priced dearly and found few buyers.<sup>24</sup>

e) *Wood.* The people of the Philippines also learned from the missionaries the full use of the wood in the country, of which there is so much good and hard wood, some of them incorruptible, for building houses and furniture.<sup>25</sup>

f) *Foundries.* During the time of Archbishop Juan Angel Rodríguez, a Recollect priest who was knowledgeable in the technique of smelting, conducted an early experiment successfully in the casting of bells.<sup>26</sup>

g) *Mines.* In his excursions into the mountains of Siniloan, the Franciscan missionary Fray Agustín Jiménez discovered some iron and copper mines from which he took samples that won a "diploma of honor" in the Regional Exposition of the Philippines.<sup>27</sup>

h) *Other Wearing Industries.* Fray Mariano Granja, O.F.M. encouraged in Lucena (Quezon) the weaving of hats and cigar-cases, while an unknown Franciscan whose memory is kept alive in legends taught the people how to exploit and make use of the piña fiber.<sup>28</sup>

## COMMERCE

The principal contribution of the religious orders in the improvement of commerce in the Philippines was the opening and building of roads to facilitate exchange and communication

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*, 208.

<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.*, 92; Zúñiga, I, 212.

<sup>25</sup> Zamora, *Op. cit.*, 323.

<sup>26</sup> Concepción, Juan de la, *Historia de Filipinas*, XI, 98-99, No. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Marín y Morales, *Op. cit.*, 359.

<sup>28</sup> *Op. cit.*, 360, 369.

among the towns. The road, for example, that Fray Juan F. Villaverde, O.P. opened from Aritao to San Nicolas in Nueva Vizcaya was so important that on 27 July 1905, a member of the Commission on Roads mentioned at one of their meetings how transportation in that province had been facilitated such that transporting 6,000 pounds of goods from the region cost as much as transporting 600 pounds in the past. An engineer added that traffic along the same road was very important: ". . . in one day alone, 800 beasts of burden had carried goods for loading in the train to Pangasinan."<sup>29</sup>

Besides roadbuilding, however, some missionaries directly encouraged commerce, like the already mentioned Fray Granja, who founded the town of Lucena. He himself sought out the persons to attend to the sale of copra to the commercial agencies in Manila.<sup>30</sup> The Franciscans in Albay also developed, together with the coconut and abaca industries, the system to export these products, thus opening a source of wealth and freeing the Bicolanos from their poverty. "Between 1835 and 1840, the towns under the Franciscans exported not more than 3,000 piculs of abaca; but from 1890, the same district, called Itaya, reached an annual export of 300,000 piculs, and the population grew in proportion to its increased wealth."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Correo Sino-anamita*, XXIII (1889), 487; XXIV (1890), 456, 460.

<sup>30</sup> Marín y Morales, *Op. cit.*, 360.

<sup>31</sup> *Op. cit.*, 361.