

PORTRAIT OF THE BIKOLS AT SPANISH CONTACT AND THE FIRST SEVEN DECADES OF THEIR EVANGELIZATION

By

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Before the Spaniards had set foot on Bikol soil, contemporary events were fast happening in the central part of the Philippine Archipelago. Legazpi had successfully implanted the cross in Cebu in 1565. The Legazpi expedition had enlarged its foothold in the Visayan Island group by moving on to Panay from whence explorations into the Mindoro and Manila Bay areas were made.

By 1569, one group of these explorations jointly headed by Capt. Luis Enriquez de Guzman and Fray Alfonso Jimenez, an Augustinian friar, chanced upon the islands of Masbate, Tikaw and Burias. In Burias, Fr. Jimenez baptized its powerful chieftain. The expedition moved on and sailed to the bigger island across the sea to what is now the southern part of Sorsogon. This island across the sea was called "Tierra de Ibalón" by the expedition. Fray Jimenez stayed in Ibalón for sometime and baptized many native leaders. From here they explored the adjoining territory and discovered a thriving inland balangay or rancheria on what is now the present town of Camalig in the province of Albay. The party was welcomed by the hospitable natives and given shelter in their habitations which consisted of many lineal sheds each called in the native tongue "Kamalig". In Spanish, "Kamalig" meant "Camarin", and since the Spaniards saw many of these habitations, the expedition later reported the area covered by their exploration to be "Ibalón of the region of Camarines". Thenceforth, "Ibalón" and "Camarines" began to appear interchangeably in records and charts of the time to mean the present day Bikol Region.¹

Since the objective of these incursions was to secure provisions for Legazpi's main expeditionary force in the island of Panay, not much had been accomplished in the way of firmly implanting the cross and the sword in these Bikol areas first touched by the Spanish

¹ Domingo Abella, *Bikol Annals*, Vol. I pp. 3-4.

conquistadores. The serious business of conquest and evangelization had to wait until 1573 when the future Maestre de Campo, Captain Juan de Salcedo with a group of 120 soldiers made his second thrust of conquest from the north, the first having been made two years earlier but aborted at Paracale because Salcedo was urgently summoned by Legaspi to return to Manila.²

Salcedo and his group of soldiers re-traced their path of conquest to Bicol from the conquered settlement of Maynilad. They crossed the Laguna de Bay and the mountains of Tayabas, and from Mauban, Quezon set sail across Lamón Bay onward to San Miguel Bay and from the east of what is now the Bicol peninsula sailed upstream into the Bicol River at Cabusao until they reached its headwaters at Lake Bato where on its lakeshore he found the flourishing balangals of Kalilingo and Libong.³ In Libong, Juan de Salcedo decided to set up the Spanish villa of Santiago de Libong in honor of the Spanish famous patron Saint Santiago de Compostela.⁴ Libong then became the first Spanish settlement in the Bikol region, and one of the four (4) special villas the Spaniards would set up in their 400 years of stay in the Philippines. The other three were Villa del Santo Niño in Cebu, Villa Fernandina in Vigan, Ilocos Sur and Villa de Lipa in Batangas.⁵ When Salcedo returned to Manila, he left a garrison force of seventy soldiers under the command of Pedro de Chavez. The latter would shortly found the city of Nueva Caceres upstream along the Bicol River across another flourishing balangal called Nagá.

What was the portrait of the Bicolano, so to speak, at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards and during the early post conquest period? Is it possible to describe the features of this people whom Salcedo heard to be "gente rica, buena y bellicosa?"

Four 16th century letters, two of which were written by a governor-general, one by crown officials and the fourth by an Augustinian friar give us an overview of the early Bikols — his countenance and accouterments.

Governor Guido Lavezares who succeeded Legaspi wrote to his majesty, Philip II, the then reigning monarch of Spain — "the people there (Bicol) are the most vallant yet found in these regions".⁶ This was corroborated by Fray Martín de Rada, an Augustinian friar who

² La Region Bicolana (Printed and unauthored) Jose Calleja Reyes Collection.

³ Ibid

⁴ In the province of Leon, Spain.

⁵ La Region Bicolana (Printed and unauthored). Jose Calleja Reyes Collection

⁶ Guido Lavezares to Felipe II, July 17, 1574 Blair and Robertson, Vol. III pp. 272-282.

wrote to the Viceroy of Spain and reported — "the people there (Bicol) are the most valiant and the best armed men of all these islands. — Although they never attacked the Spaniards, still they defended themselves in all their villages and would not surrender unless conquered by force of arms".⁷

These letters were written after the Cebu of Rajah Tupas and the Maynilad of Rajah Sulayman and Rajah Matanda had been attacked and conquered by the Spanish conquistadores. In these campaigns, the might of Spanish arms had clashed with native valor. The Spaniards little thought that in some uncharted peninsula in the big island of Luzon they would encounter natives who would display raw courage far superior than what they had met in their previous campaigns of conquest in Cebu and Maynilad.

Governor Guido Lavezares, in his Letter to King Phillip II, added "the Bicol possess much gold armor — as iron corselets, greaves, writlets, gauntlets and helmets — some arquebuses and culverins".⁸ This report was once more corroborated in the letter of the crown officials Andres Cauchela and Salvador Aldave to Phillip II when they said — "the men are warlike and well armed for Indians — for they have corselets of buffalo hide, iron greaves and helmets set with fish bones and stout shells which no weapon except the arquebus can damage".⁹ Picture the Bicol warrior his upper torso accoutered with a heavy armor of carabao hide perhaps in-laid with filigreed gold of geometric designs. His head wore a helmet of some indigenous fiber material like the abaca set with the hardy bones of some sea mammal like the "tiburon"¹⁰ and capped with the stout shellbone of the "pawikan" or tortoise. His legs were protected at knee high by an iron corselet of cylindrical greaves. His arms wore writlets of the same material. The fighting hand that held the deadly "minasbad" or the "budiak"¹¹ wore a gauntlet of hammered iron richly inlaid with gold. In spite of this colorful and sophisticated battle regalia, Fray Martin de Rada reported — "the natives never attacked the Spaniards". The sight of a strange people intruding into the tranquil grounds of their villages and whose intentions were absolutely unknown to them, was not enough cause for the early Bikols to display a hostile attitude for threats of aggression against the Spaniards. A people possessed of such values and

⁷ Martin de Rada to the Viceroy Martin Enriquez, June 30, 1574 — Blair and Robertson, Vol. XXXIV pp. 286-287.

⁸ Guido de Lavezares to Felipe II, July 30, 1574. Blair and Robertson, Vol. III pp. 283-285.

⁹ Andres Cauchela and Salvador Aldave to Felipe II, March 17, 1574 — Blair and Robertson, Vol. XXXIV p. 397.

¹⁰ a sea mammal.

¹¹ a spear.

attitudes could only mean a degree of culture and discernment which was far from barbaric. These sentiments belonged to a race that was refined in its thoughts and beliefs, proof that the early Bikols were possessed of a substantially high degree of culture despite the primitiveness of their society. A serious provocation was needed to arouse in them the spirit of self-preservation and to defend their villages with consummate valor. Governor Lavezares, in his letter-reports to King Phillip II little thought that he was indeed paying the highest compliment to a hardy people who would not surrender their birthright except to overwhelming force beyond their capacity to resist.

The early Bikols were also said to be "the best and most skillful artificers in jewels and gold that we have seen in the land. Almost all the people of Los Camarines pursue this handicraft".¹² Picture early Bicol maidens bedecked with ornaments of shining gold. From their ears hung cylindrical coils of gold earrings (*hikaw*); their heads decked with shell of tortoise combs inlaid with filigreed gold of many designs; strung around their necks were intricate necklaces of pure gold chains with pendants of carnelian and agathe stones (*kolintas*); wrapped around their wrists were filigreed gold bracelets called "*kalombjga*". In this respect, the early Bicolns were indeed comparable to the Incas of the South American continent whose gold artifacts and jewels brought about the loss of their ancient civilization and their almost total annihilation.

In the Bicol conquest a similar thing occurred. It was the news of the gold that fired Salcedo to launch the conquest of Bicol even before the fires of the conquered Maynilad had died down. Salcedo received reports that on the estuary of a mighty river called Bicol lived "*gente rica, buena y bellicosa*", and "that many maguinoos possessed great treasures consisting of quintales of powdered gold and precious chains of filigreed gold crafted by natives who were excellent artificers in jewels".¹³ The conquistadores determination to put their hands on such fabulous treasure must have been irresistible that Fray Martin de Rada in his letter said — "all the villages entered in the same way, by first summoning them peacefully and to pay tribute immediately unless they wished war. They replied they would first prove to those to whom they were to pay tribute and consequently, the Spaniards attacking them, an entrance was made by forc of arms and the village was overthrown and whatever found pillaged. Then the Spaniards summoned the natives to submit peacefully. When the natives came, they asked them to immediately give them tribute in gold and in an excessive amount,

¹² Guido de Lavezares to Felipe II, July 17, 1574. Ibid.

¹³ La Region Bicolana (Ibid).

for which they promised to give them writs of peace. Therefore, since all the people defended themselves, more have perished in that land than in any other yet conquered. After he had accomplished this, Juan de Salcedo returned with the gold and left Pedro de Chavez settled in the river of Vicor with seventy men".¹⁴

Picture a typical besieged settlement along the mighty Bicol river. Clustered thatched-roof "Kamaligs" bordered the water's edge. On the river bank are moored rudderless 'barotos'¹⁵ which the natives used in moving from one village to the other along the estuary. On higher ground could be seen the fortified "moog"¹⁶ of the maguinoo or village chief flying many buntings multicolored pennants indicative of prestige and authority. The nearby fields are "middle-sized, of color (acietunado) similar to the quince fruit and both men and women have good features with very black hair, scarce beard and are quite ingenious in every way, keen and quick tempered and quite resolute".¹⁷ They possess gold mines, gold and plenty of provisions.¹⁸ Menfolk can be seen in the "toltoogan",¹⁹ a huge marble-like stone grinding the precious metals of gold and iron. Nearby was the "sanghiran"²⁰ where the gold dust was assayed and gathered for the melting kilns. In another section of the village menfolk and womenfolk are busy pounding and moulding the thin sheets of gold into filigrees which will be fashioned into jewels of intricate native designs. In one quite but revered corner of the village was the "gulanggulañgan",²¹ a native temple dedicated to the god of good, "Gugurang",²² where offerings were made on bamboo pedestals called "salañgat"²³ accompanied by the enchanting air of the "soraque"²⁴ ritual chant. In this almost eden-like setting, the "patong"²⁵ beat was sounded in the bamboo-look-outs perched on the village periphery, signalling the alarm of approaching strangers. The menfolk quickly abandoned their tasks.

¹⁴ Martin de Rada to the Viceroy Martin Enriquez, June 30, 1574 — Ibid.

¹⁵ a river boat without outriggers, rudder or sail.

¹⁶ a tall house like a tower which in ancient Bicol was constructed on tree tops.

¹⁷ Antonio de Morga, "Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas".

¹⁸ Guido de Lavezares to Felipe II, July 30, 1574. Ibid.

¹⁹ P. Fr. Marcos de Lisboa, Vocabulario de la Lengua Bicol, Manila 1865, p. 403.

²⁰ Ibid p. 334.

²¹ P. Fr. José Castaño, "Breve Noticia Acerca del Origin, Religion, Creencias y Supersticiones de los Antiguos Indios del Bicol" — W. E. Retana, Archivo del Bibliofilo Filipino, Vol. II.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ a gong-like wooden instrument hollowed out like a boat used by the natives for transmitting calls and signals.

and in their warrior attire clambered to the ledges of the wooden palisades surrounding the vilage. The chief, with hushed and perturbed gaze, looked down into the estuary and watched the approach of strong sailing crafts festooned with the standard of Castile, filled with men clad in iron armors and helmets brandishing glistening arms of steel. The encounter was set. The events as related above by Fray Martin de Rada ensued and the early Bicolis are born into history.

The village conquered, the tribute of gold exacted, the conquerors moved on along the Bicol estuary and the surrounding region in search of other villages until all have been similarly subdued and the sword of Castile firmly implanted. The names of some village magulnoos would be recorded as Pagkilatan, Makaboñgoy, Sampuñgan, Maabau, Hocoman, Pañga, Domogma,²⁶ chiefs who governed the balangais surrounding the present day towns of Ligao, Polangui, Bato, Nabua and Iriga. Although small in number, they served to identify a few of the early Bicol chiefs in what would otherwise be a nameless multitude.

To those who survived the holocaust of conquest, the seeds of Christianity would be implanted in 1578 by the early Franciscan missionaries Fray Bartolome Ruiz²⁷ and Fray Pablo de Jesus.²⁸

Twenty four years later (1602), Fray Marcelo P. de Ribadeniera,²⁹ would write of the early Christian Bicolis in words which bring to our mind a picture of the catechumens in the early days of Christianity —

“Soon after the arrival of the Franciscans in Manila, a few of them were sent to Camarines which is in the island of Luzon, seven leagues distant from Manila. Those who have been there and are still there say that the province is the most mild and has the best climate in all of Filipinas, in hot or cold weather. The people there are healthy and have long life expectancy. They are the least vicious of the tribes that have been discovered in these islands. — Their customs and political way of life are aligned to natural reason. They are a composed and temperate people, particularly the women folk who are very honest and reserved.

²⁶ Felix Huerta, O.F.M. Estado Geografico, topografico, estadistico, historico-religioso de la santa y apostolica provincia de San Gregorio Magno — en las Islas Filipinas (Binondo, 1865).

²⁷ Fr. Eusebio Gomez Platero, Catalogo Biographico de los Religiosos Franciscanos de la Provincia de San Gregorio Magno de Filipinas. Imprenta del Real Colegio de Santo Tomas, Manila, 1880, pp. 22-25.

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 15-17.

²⁹ Fray Ribadeniera was in the Philippines between 1594 and 1600.

It is now 24 years that the religious of our order have preached the gospel to these people — thanks to the Lord a very bright summer has come — there is an abundant harvest of new christians who have heard and lived the words of the Lord. They even forget to eat and drink when, spellbound, they listen to the word of the minister during which the days become hours and they would listen even by day or night. The enthusiasm with which they hear the word of the gospel is such that they take down notes in their own syllabary all that the missionary preaches to them so they may not forget. They ask the fathers to relate to them the lives of saints most especially the life and miracles of the Blessed Virgin of whom they like to hear so much.

Those christians amongst them who by their virtues have been allowed to receive the Holy Eucharist do so with great devotion and reverence at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. — The change of their old ways of life is so evident that when their confessors ask them about their old rites, beliefs and superstitions, they feel embarrassed and run away, giving the impression that it is no longer proper to impute those old beliefs on them.

They mortify themselves willingly. Some do not even use salt in their meals by way of mortification. Others forego bathing, which is a great sacrifice to them because to wash clean is their custom from birth. — They endeavor to rise in prayer in their dwellings the moment they hear the matens of the religious and at this hour they offer themselves to God and do mental prayer. — When Holy Week comes, they perform bloody mortifications and even carry a heavy cross as an act of expiation. There are some houses where the faithful gather to talk about the Lord and perform penitential exercises, making these habitations a refuge for souls. — Some do not eat for three days by way of joining themselves to the passion of Our Lord. Others will go to secluded places where following the example of the Lord they would go into deep meditation and mortification, all for the love of God. — Their confessions are frequent and voluntary, done after the proper examination of conscience. They would kneel at the foot of the confessor with great fervor and with copious tears that it takes a while before they can speak out. —

The friars teach the children to read, write and sing songs with the accompaniment of the organ. Some friars even had to learn to play the flute and the clarinet. Some

boys who study latin in our convents do so with facility as though they are Spaniards. They write well although some of their writings are curious. They are lovers of music. In Quipayo,³⁰ there is a man who with his two sons on his side serve mass, a very edifying sight to behold. In the town of Minalabag,³¹ the children, from their young days know the prayers to the Blessed Virgin and they help the priest say the prayers outside of the choir. The church choir is composed of many singers. They practice daily and are divided in such a way that some sing in church in the morning the *Prima de Nuestra Señora*, some play the flute at mass and others sing the *Salve Regina* in honor of the Immaculate Conception at dusk. They have many bells in high towers which are rung in their solemn festivities. The church is kept clean by those who serve in the church. They would decorate the altars with fresh flowers daily, since the land around is so fertile that there are flowers and roses the year round in the fields and gardens. — The natives are taught to be devoted to the Blessed Virgin and they carry rosary around their necks with the crucifix carved by their own hands. When the priests pass by they would kiss their hands and ask for their blessing. In order that the others may come to church and learn the christian doctrine, there are certain guardians who look after them and who impose punishments for those who are less faithful.

In the faraway places in the hinterlands where the non-Christians still live, a religious would come to preach the gospel and the natives would be asked to bring out their idols which they still believe and reverence by offering perfumes and odorous scents. The natives would gather all their idols, in one case some 400 of them, and in the presence of the villagers they burn them, giving thanks to the Lord now they have received the true light of the gospel. In the place of the idols, they would put images and a cross and in their houses they would construct altars in some decent corner".³²

Seven decades later (1649), an unauthored manuscript entitled "Entrada de la Seraphica Religion de Nuestro P. S. Francisco En Las ISLAS PHILIPINAS"³³ pictured the extent that the work of

³⁰ A town along the Bicol River near the present day City of Naga.

³¹ An inland town near the present day City of Naga.

³² P. Marcelo De Ribadeneira. *Historia de las Archipiélago Filipino y Reinos de la Gran China, Tartaria, Conchinchina, Malaca, Siam, Cambodge y Japon* (Edition of P. Juan R. de Legisima, P.F. M. Madrid 1947. pp. 59-70. Interpretative Translation by Jose Calleja Reyes.

³³ W. E. Retana, *Archivo del Bibliófilo Filipino*, Vol. II.

evangelization had accomplished in the Bicol Region in a mission-chain that extended from Capalonga in the north to Bulusan in the south. This 17th century cronicle also gives us an insight into the beginnings of the townships in the region which later would be welded into the growing political structure of the incipient Filipino nation.

Provincia de Tagalogs³⁴

32. Ten leagues by sea (from the convent of San Diego de Gumaca) is the convent of Santa Lucia de Capalogan (Capalonga) which has 100 tributes and 400 persons. The church and convent is made of bamboo, the previous one having been burned by the Dutch. It is served by one religious.

33. Twelve leagues by sea is the convent of the La Purificacion de Paracali (Paracale) which has 200 tributes and 300 persons. The church and convent is made of bamboo, the previous one having been burned by the Dutch.

Provincia de Camarines³⁵

1. In the City of Caceres is the convent of our father San Francisco, which is a community administering a part of the city called Naga, having 150 tributes and 600 persons. The administration in this convent covers also the town of Canaman and Mllaor. In this town of Canaman there are 400 tributes and 1,500 persons. It is served by one religious under Naga which is two leagues from the town of Milanix (Mllaor). The latter has 300 tributes and 1,200 persons.

There is in the convent in Naga normally four priests and two lay brothers for the infirmaary.

2. In the convent of Indar (Indang) which from Paracale is distant six leagues from the sea, there are 400 tributes and 1,800 persons; it has one visita on the higher bank of the river; it has a wooden church and convent and served by two religious.

3. Two leagues by land is the convent of San Juan Bautista of Dait (Daet) with one visita having 300 tributes 1,200 persons; it has a wooden church and convent and served by one religious.

³⁴ In this unauthored manuscript the Bikol missions of Capalonga and Paracale were placed under the Tagalog provinces. Interpretative translation of the manuscript by Jose Calleja Reyes.

³⁵ Province of Camarines — the name by which the missions in the Bicol Region where classified. Interpretative translation of the manuscript by Jose Calleja Reyes.

4. Eight leagues by sea is the convent of Santiago de Ligmanan (Libmanan) which has 200 tributes and 800 persons; it has a wooden church and convent and served by one religious.

5. Four leagues by sea and land is the convent of Nuestra Señora de Quipayo which has 3 visitas, 800 tributes and 2,400 persons; the church and convent are made of red bricks and served by two religious.

6. The other part of Caceres or Naga, in the middle of the province, three leagues upstream is the convent of Minalana (Minalabag) which has 300 tributes and 1,300 persons. It has a wooden church and convent and served by one religious.

7. Six leagues away is the convent of Santa María Magdalena de Bula with one visita having 250 tributes and 900 persons. It has a wooden church and convent and served by one religious.

8. Three leagues from here is the convent of Santa Cruz de Nabua which has 600 tributes with some negritos that live in the mountains; the tributes are made only to the doctrine. It has 2,400 persons with a wooden church and convent served by two religious.

9. One league away is the convent of San Antonio de Iragá which has 460 tributes and 1,600 persons. It has a wooden church and convent and served by one religious.

10. Three leagues away is the convent of our father San Francisco de Buy (Buhí) which has 200 tributes and 800 persons. It has a wooden church and convent and served by one religious.

11. Six leagues from it is the convent of Santiago de Libon which has 300 tributes and 1,200 persons with a brick church and convent, served by one religious

12. One league away is the convent of San Pedro de Polangui which has 300 tributes and 1,400 persons with a stone church and convent, served by one religious.

13. One league away is the convent of San Miguel de Oasque (Oas) with one visita. It has 600 tributes and 2,500 persons. It has a stone church and convent served by one religious.

14. Four leagues away is the convent of San Juan Bautista de Camarines with its visita called Cagsawa. It has

700 tributes and 3,000 persons. It has a stone church and convent and served by several religious and one lay religious in the infirmary which this convent has.

15. One league away is the convent of San Gregorio de Albay which has 300 tributes and 1,200 persons. The town is administered by Spaniards. It has stone church and convent surrounded partly by stone walls which serve as a defense for the province, the town being very near the sea and the port for the vessels of his majesty which come to load abaca and other tributes. Last year the stone church and convent were destroyed by the Dutch. A part has been rebuilt with bamboos. It is served by two religious.

16. Eight leagues by sea is the convent of San Juan Evangelista de Tanaco (Tabaco) which has 340 tributes and 1,350 persons with a visita one and a half leagues distant. The church-convent is of bamboo, the former edifices having been burned by the Dutch, Camucon y Mindanao (moros). It has one strong house for its defense against enemies. It is served by one religious.

17. One league by land is the convent of Santa Ana de Malinas (Mallnao) with one visita. It has 300 tributes and 1,200 persons. It has a wooden church and convent and served by one religious.

18. Eight leagues by sea is the convent of the Anunciacion de Bacon with a visita called Solsogon (Sorsogon). It has 400 tributes and 1,600 persons. The church and convent both are of bamboo, having been burned by the enemy Camucon and Mindanao. There is one religious who also administers to the Spaniards who usually arrive in the port of Solsogon (Sorsogon) in the vessels of his Majesty.

19. Three leagues by sea is the convent of the Visitacion de Casiguran with one visita. It has 430 tributes and 1,560 persons with a wooden church and convent, served by one religious.

20. Eight leagues through high mountains and twelve leagues by sea is the convent of Bososan (Bulusan) with 3 visitas. It has 400 tributes and 1,500 persons. It has a bamboo church and convent served by one religious.

21. Thirty leagues by sea is the convent of Quilpa (Quipla) with its visita, Donsol. It has 300 tributes and 1,200 persons with a church and convent made of bamboos. It is served by one religious.

At this point in time, it may also be said that the Bicol Region and the Bicolanos had been firmly locked into the chain of Christendom, the Bicol provinces and its growing missions being within the area of the suffragan diocese which was earlier proclaimed in Rome (August 14, 1595) by Pope Clement VIII as the "Ecclesia de Caceres in Indis Orientalibus (Church of Caceres in the Oriental Indies)".³⁶

This portrait of the early Bikols is their manner of reaching and participating in the quadri-centennial anniversary of Bikol's evangelization which begins on October 7, 1977 and ends on December 8, 1978³⁷ — a portentous event to which they gave the full measure of their fortunes and life itself that the Bicol region may be born to Christ. This portrait is also their enduring cultural legacy for all time to Bicolandia and the Filipino nation.

After 400 years, their succeeding generations would be characterized as the the one ethnic group in the country whose religiosity is a shining gem in Philippine Christian tradition.

In the forthcoming quadri-centennial of Bikol's evangelization (1578-1978) the present day Bicolanos must look hard and well at this portrait of their ancient forebears. They, too, must have a portrait of themselves in the context of the present with a related view to their past. For to paraphrase a Jesuit priest-scholar "by means of a critical evaluation of our past and an understanding of the new dimensions of the present, we can better determine for ourselves what our moral ideals should be in the future. This is what the philosopher Heidegger meant by history as "Geschichte", that is, to see in the "said" of the past, the "unsaid" of the future",³⁸ a sentiment so well expressed by our national hero, Dr. Jose P. Rizal, almost a century ago — "to foretell the destiny of a nation, it is necessary to open the book that tells of the past".³⁹

³⁶ Domingo Abella, *Bikol Annals*, Vol. II, p. 12.

³⁷ Joint Pastoral Letter by the Bikol Bishops, May 29, 1977 — On the Quadricentennial of the Evangelization of the Bicol Region.

³⁸ Vitaliano R. Gorospe, *Sources of Filipino Moral Consciousness*, *Philippine Studies*, Vol. 25/ Third Qt., 1977, p. 279.

³⁹ Jose P. Rizal, "The Philippines a Century Hence". *La Solidaridad*, 30 September 1889, p. 178.