

ELEMENTARY SCIENCE SECTION✓ **PHILIPPINE LIGHTING IN FORMER DAYS**

By FRANCISCO CARBALLO

(With Illustrations by the Author)

IN former days in the Philippines the methods of lighting were quite crude compared with the modern means of securing light. Of course there were no electric lights or gas lights. During the Spanish regime most of the people in the Philippines used coconut oil, *lumbang* oil, or wax as fuel for lighting.

The oil lamp was in common use. In the olden days this consisted of a metal bowl (*tinghoy*) on the edge of which rested a wick (*tinsin*) made from the absorbent pith of a certain plant. This wick was sold by Chinese shop keepers. In the absence of the usual *tinsin*, cotton fiber was used. The lower end of the wick rested in the oil which had been poured into the bowl of the lamp. When lighted, this lamp produced a dim, mellow flame. It served as a light in the more humble homes. (See illustration No. 1.)

As an improvement over the *tinghoy*, a glass oil receptacle with a tin wick-holder was used. (See illustration No. 2.)

In the homes of the well-to-do the glass oil lamp was placed in a glass *globo* which was hung in the main room. *Globos* were used very much during fiestas and other special occasions. (See illustration No. 4.)

For outdoor use the glass lantern or *parol* was used as a protection of the oil lamp from wind. (See illustration No. 5.) A great many of these glass lanterns were needed to light *facades* of churches,

open air shows, towers, arches, etc.

During fiestas and other important celebrations paper lanterns of various colors and designs were also used, and the townfolk vied with one another in the brightness and beauty of their designs.

Chinese candles of the soft variety were used for altars, shrines, and religious processions. They are still in demand for church fiestas, and are used particularly for lighting graves in cemeteries during the celebration of All Saints Day. The hard variety of candles (*ballena*) was used on religious floats, on dining tables, in costly chandeliers and candlesticks, and in lamps on vehicles. The Chinese in Manila still carry on a profitable business in the manufacture of candles for church, home, and various uses.

In the barrios the market people used the *huepe* to light their displays of merchandise as well as to light the way when walking in the road. The *huepe* was a torch consisting of a piece of wax (*sahing*) stuck in a cylindrical *nipa*, covering which, when used, was placed on a tripod or on the end of a bamboo pole. (See illustration No. 3) The name implies that the *huepe* was of Chinese origin.

When kerosene or petroleum oil was introduced into the Islands not long before the advent of the Americans, oil lamps and lanterns came into use, but it was expensive, and so coconut and *lumbang* oil remained in use in country houses for many years.

In Manila important streets were lighted with oil lamps and lanterns placed on posts, or on brackets on walls facing the streets. A certain number of these lamps were in charge of a lamp-lighter (*parolero*) who made his daily rounds, carrying a short ladder and oil. In the morning he filled the lamps with oil, adjusted the wicks, and cleaned the chimneys. At sunset he lighted the lamps, and at dawn extinguished them.

The lamp-lighter's job was not an easy one. If the street lights failed, he was blamed by those who had to grope their way in the dark.

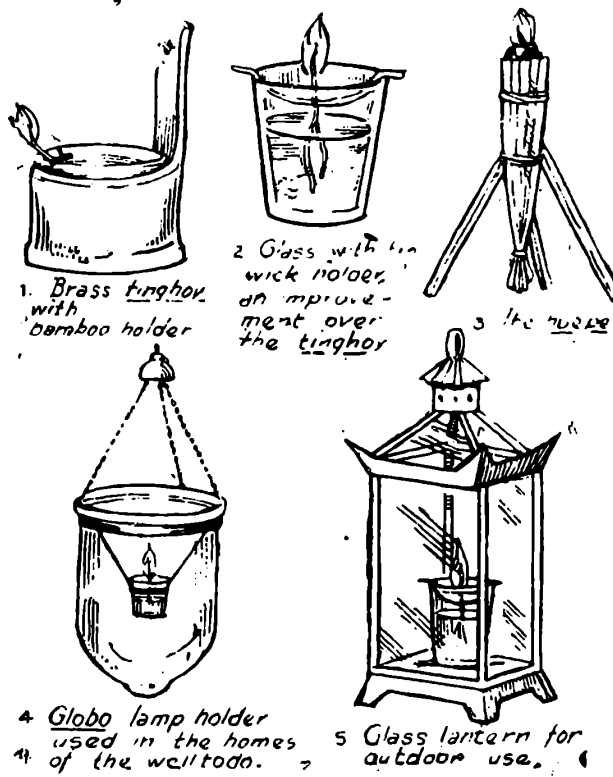
Many streets, particularly those in outlying districts, had no lights at all, and the people there had to do the best they could without them. People traveling at night were required to carry torches or lanterns. If anyone failed to do so, the police (*guardia civil*) would consider such a person as a suspicious character, especially if he did not have his *cedula* with him.

On account of inadequate lighting facilities in the olden days, there were not many public entertainments or social gatherings. Usually people went to bed early in the evening after supper and the customary evening prayer.

When electricity was introduced into the Philippines, methods of lighting

were greatly improved. Homes, public places, and streets have become brighter, thanks to improved lighting facilities. As a result of the improved lighting systems, the country has progressed, and homes are more comfortable. In places without electric service, kerosene is still the chief fuel for lighting, but the Philippine government is planning to develop the water power in the Islands to enable the rural communities to have cheap electricity for light and power.

When this plan is fully developed, still further progress will be made by our people.



Lamps and Torches of Former Days in the Philippines

A REVIEW

1. What can you say of former methods of lighting in the Philippines compared with the present methods?
2. What fuels were used for lighting in former days.
3. Describe the oil lamp of the olden days.
4. What improvement was made on the oil lamp?
5. In what were oil lamps placed in the homes of wealthy people?
6. For outdoor use how was the oil lamp protected?
7. For what purpose were paper lanterns used in the Philippines.
8. Are they still used?
9. Tell of the use of candles in the Philippines.
10. Tell of the use of the *huepe*.