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The Little Town of Cuenca in Batangas

II

It is a hard task, words and their portents being what they are, and mental inertia what it is, effectually to erase the *y* from *they* in allusions to foreign peoples. Yet it is an important thing to do, here in the Philippines, and to make Americans known not as *they* to Filipinos, but as Browns, Smiths, Roes and Does, and Filipinos known to Americans not as *they*, but as Morenos, Herreros, Fulanos de Tal; or, in other words, to bring it out that *they* applied whole peoples means nothing, that a people is only to be known by strangers through a knowledge of individuals and individual communities.

Such was the fugitive thought in mind, still unreduced to words when the first article was written, which induced the *Journal* to undertake a brief study of the native Tagalog culture of Cuenca, a little town in Batangas, southern Luzon. For Cuenca is very old, but has had neither native nor foreign immigration and remains little affected by foreign culture save that of the Church.

Where customs have not run contrary to Christian doctrine, under the Spanish church they have usually been left alone; and Tagalog customs are so tenacious, as will be seen, that some of them have persisted despite the fact that they run counter to doctrine. It seems as if there would be three articles in all, this being the second, the first having been published in the October issue.

Social customs of Cuenca will appear in the third article, and the fourth if the material runs to that length. Let it be said that Cuenca folk cannot in fairness to them be lumped into a general *they* with the Filipinos as a whole. They are veritable Puritants (in culture, only Roman Catholic in religion), and distinct, of course, in this respect, from many other native communities. Then, too, they are all peasants; their wealthy families are wealthy peasant families; these families hold firmly to the town's customs and traditions. These families would no more dare *put on airs* than would a rich Connecticut plantation family have so dared at the time of the Revolution. Their wealth is in the land, ostracism by their neighbors would undo them. In Cuenca, and in other communities which are similar, it is a reproach to be called proud. More than that, it is decidedly inconvenient.

Yet Cuenca folk are all unconsciously proud; they take intuitive pride in being frugally independent. Their crops are upland rice, hemp, coconuts and coffee; to these they add garden products, tobacco, for their own use, and fruits. They weave much of the cloth they need, from hemp fiber; they have products to exchange for the imported cloth they use. Pedlars from Bauan, a neighboring town, bring packs of cloth to Cuenca on Sundays, since Sunday is market day; in these packs are blankets, mats, camisas, and goods suitable for skirts, chemises and men's coats. With something sold in the market, households have the wherewithal to buy.

To know what the world was like before the advent of the industrial revolution, know Cuenca. Even these pedlars from Bauan are not pedlars all the time; they too work the land in season; the land claims everyone, high or low, at least during a part of the year.

Cuenca has craftsmen, such as carpenters; but they combine their trade with farming. All Cuenca men are fishermen, but they are all farmers too. There is little division of labor; he who can weave a fish net can likewise shape a plow beam; he goes from lake or sea to field, from field to stream; he can snare the deer and the wild boar, and set a trap for birds. Cuenca women are equally dexterous at the loom and in the rice field; they can thresh rice, with their bare feet; they can macerate fiber in a mortar, then select and knot it for weaving; and she who weaves can thread her loom and spindle.

Just over 120 years ago, when General Alava (he for whom the commandant's yacht is named) was at Cavite with his squadron in anticipation of an attack by the French, while waiting for the war which never came he made a tour of the provinces round Manila, with his friend Father Zuñiga of the Augustinian order as his cicerone. After this tour, Father Zuñiga compiled a report, two volumes, *Estadismo de las Islas Filipinas*. This report anticipated the Angat irrigation project, the project to divert the flood waters of the Pasig through a canal traversing Pasay, the project to control floods in central Luzon, and many another of the projects which are now being executed by the government.

Father Zuñiga not only said all these things could be done, but, with his knowledge as a skillful engineer, he told precisely how they could be done and forecast very accurately the

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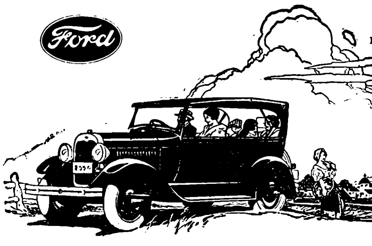

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economic results. He made many helpful observations regarding Batangas: indeed, at least the first volume of his report might well be translated and made a reference in the public works bureau. "But," he never failed to wind up, "while all this could be done, with results as I have stated them, making the people more prosperous, I am not sure that they would be more happy!"

In England, Chesterton and Shaw have been the active protagonists on the opposing sides of this moot question for twenty years: those holding with Chesterton mourn the age of merry Charles; those who hold with Shaw recall its horrors for the poor. But in Cuenca we behold even an earlier and a happier age, or, about the age which prevailed in England prior to the Norman conquest. In America it was much later; Pennsylvania at the period of the Revolution was, in its peaceful, remote settlements, much like Cuenca today.

Of course these are approximations, not profound exactitudes.

Too poor to own boats, and too far from the sea and from Taal lake, Cuenca men lash six bamboo poles into a raft, and use such rafts to do their fishing from. They catch sardines, mullet, milk fish, red snapper, gobies and pompanos. They catch cardinals. They seine both lake and sea, taking fisherman's luck as their fortune. Sometimes the catch is small, there are no fish to sell, possibly not even enough to eat. But sometimes the catch is large, there are plenty of sardines to salt and dry and take to Batangas and Lipa—where there are folk with more money and less skill as fishermen living.

For the game fish, Cuenca men set up a pole in the shallow shore waters and tie a line to it which, with hook baited sagaciously, is carried out a quarter-mile or so, to the deep waters where the game fish are found. When a fish strikes, the pole wiggles; the men mount their rafts and make a fight for it! It is fine sport, and, in rough weather, dangerous enough for the hardiest. Cuenca boys swim like eels.

Aside from what they make for themselves, of hemp, fishermen outfit themselves on calle Gandara, Binondo, Manila.

There is so little for blacksmiths to do in Cuenca that they do not live there. Good ones live in Bauan. Cuenca horses are shod in Bauan, and Bauan bolos, highly prized, are sold on Sundays in the Cuenca market. In no other province of the civilized Philippines is the bolo more indispensable to men than in Batangas, where it is strictly connected with the enforcement of customs. It is at once a tool and a weapon; its razor edge is a part of social etiquette. Because the people of Cuenca are a simple, frugal, abstemious folk, no one should conclude that they are craven. There are conditions under which they must kill, or be ready to kill; and they are always ready.

"Custom," said oldtime copybooks, "makes many laws:" you could filigree the "C". Some two years ago a learned thesis was sustained in the *Atlantic Monthly* that only custom does make law; the erudite writer mottled the United States with *dry* territory where the prohibition enforcement act is law, and *wet* territory where it is a nullity. He also cited many examples throughout the story of mankind, as might readily be done here. But it is unnecessary. The elemental fact is that back in the mists of time the law of the bolo was, by custom, the law of Batangas, specifically the law of Cuenca, and in this modern day it is not more than obsolescent.

The story, however, belongs in another paper, that for next month.

An Incident of the Inquisition

By Percy A. Hill

"In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen. In the Year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred and sixty-eight before me, Fray Joseph Paternina, Grand Inquisitor and Commissary of the Holy Office, appeared this day Sebastian, surnamed Rayodoria, who having sworn by the salvation of his soul and with his hand of the Four Holy Evangelists to state nothing but the truth hereby sayeth":—The foregoing, in old Latin, appears on a document relating very clearly indeed the story—too much glossed over in what is being written these days as history—of the part played by the Inquisition in the drama of the unfortunate governor general, Don Diego de Salcedo.

The Spanish Inquisition was established in the Philippines as early as 1583, but at no time did it function as it did either in Spain or Mexico. The Commissary was a friar of the regular orders; following custom, he was often unknown in his official character except to a few; but his word was law in all that related to doctrine and religion. Originally founded by St. Dominic, the Inquisition's chief purpose was to extirpate heresy; but it often lent itself to other purposes, demonstrating that however holy its office might be, it would occasionally at least partake of the frailties of the very human individuals required for the execution of its functions. Instruments of torture not only existed in Santo Domingo convent, but in Fort Santiago and the *Audiencia* as well. And during the good old times they were used, but few of their subjects cared to publish what they had experienced. The Inquisition did not conduct in Manila, or elsewhere in the Philippines, any *autos da fe*, for the obvious reason that the Chinese and Moros would only have been too willing to resort to the law of reprisal, with disastrous results for the Spaniards.

But the crown, the boot, the *presa* and the rack have all been seen in Manila, where they functioned for the Inquisition; while the salt, the pebble and water as means to extract liberal confession were known long before the advent of the Spaniard and made use of long afterward. Painfully exact Latin documents of the early period defined all crimes and prescribed the degrees of pain and torture necessary for confession under duress. A member of a gang of robbers committed *latrocinium;* he who won the affections of another's wife, *adulterium;* he who used a false name, *larvatus*; he who committed forgery, *falsorium;* he who robbed a church, *sacrilegium;* he who abused a money trust, *barattaria;* he who cheated in business, *stellionatus;* he who conjured, *sorcellaria;* and so on down the grim list, to parricide, uxoricide, heresy and treason.

A woman of tender years and innocent pulchritude played a part quite unwillingly in Salcedo's downfall.

Don Diego de Salcedo, master of camp, arrived in the Philippines as royal governor for Philip IV in 1663. Born in Brussels of a Spanish father and Flemish mother, both of the nobility, Salcedo bore the name of a just and impartial governor and cavalier. Of commanding stature and well proportioned, with gray eyes, fair skin, jet mustachios and gray abundant hair, he was the ideal figure of a ruler. The galleon on which he came was delayed in sailing from Mexico on account of Dutch and British corsairs. The season grew late and when the galleon finally reached the Philippines it was forced to make port at Pansipit, Cagayan, whence Salcedo came overland to Manila. The city prepared a pompous reception, with ornate triumphal arches, bands of music, public parading and addresses of unbounded laudation. Manila always did so for its newly arrived governors; it does so still; but in Spanish times, at the close of their terms they either became prisoners on account of their rigid *residencia* or lost through fines whatever competence or wealth they had accumulated.

With Salcedo came some score of captains, veterans of the campaigns in Flanders, to whom he gave the places vacated by the retiring officials. A pretty niece of Archbishop Poblete seems also to have been a passenger on the galleon—a piece of inflammable baggage on a ship destined to be so long at sea. The gallant governor was soon a victim to her beauty, and she is said to have returned his admiration. Archbishop Poblete took umbrage at Salcedo's conduct, and his irritation soon grew into hatred or a feeling near akin to it. The bishop's nephew, José Millan de Poblete, was bishop likewise of Nueva Segovia. Of course, therefore, the clergy took up the petty incident; they only needed trifles upon which to hang resentment. Though Salcedo came with a reputation for honesty, justice and integrity, reports were soon reaching Spain that the soldier had turned the merchant. This we can safely put down as mere bitterness toward him. He had reallotted space in the annual galleon: the greater portion had been engrossed by the clergy themselves. We may believe the slanders just that, slanders—complaints of the out's against the in's.

Trouble also arose in connection with the two *oidores* who came out with Salcedo on the galleon. They disembarked in Cagayan and the youngest, Mansilla, was more able to make a quick trip overland to Manila than his senior in rank, *Oidor* Francisco Coloma. So before Coloma came Mansilla had been officially received and had taken his seat in the *Audiencia* (the supreme court), and Coloma upon arrival was forced to take the seat of junior member. This situation caused endless controversy and in the end almost cost the sticklers for precedent their lives. However, they were saved by the storm that soon loosed itself over the incident

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