VOL. I

The Philippines:

A PAST REVISITED

(Pre-Spanish – 1941)

by

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IV

Pacification
and Exploitation

Magellan's voyage to the East Indies fired the ambition of many Spaniards for similar expeditions of discovery and conquest. The Spanish monarchs themselves were anxious to expand their empire and to protect their claimed domains in the East from their rivals, the Portuguese. They were equally interested in bringing back to Mexico and Spain the gold and spices thought to be abundant in the Isles of the West — *Las Islas del Poniente* — the Spanish name for the East Indies from the Philippines to New Guinea. When King Philip of Spain decided to finance an expedition to the East Indies, both his mercantilist motives and his concern with the rivalry between Spain and Portugal were evident in his instructions.

Crown and Conquistador

Charged by the King to organize the expedition, the Spanish Viceroy in Mexico gave its command to Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, a Spanish colonist who had arrived in Mexico in 1530 and made his fortune there. The Viceroy told his friend Legazpi that the purpose of the voyage was to secure a foothold in the Indies outside the area granted the Portuguese under the Alexandrian donation. Legazpi was also charged with the task of finding a way back to Mexico by sailing eastward so that the gold and spices of the region could be brought back without running afoul of the Portuguese who by papal edict had jurisdiction over the Western parts of the Indies. Legazpi was further informed that although this expedition was being financed by the royal treasury, some demands on his private fortune were expected. However, if he succeeded in founding a settlement in the Indies, he was to be rewarded with 4,000 ducats and with concessions for trade, mining, and pearl fisheries as well as with other honors.¹

Agreeing to the terms, Legazpi began to spend his own funds in the course of the preparations, even selling his *hacienda* in Mechoacan for 40,000 pesos. By the time his fleet of ships sailed from the port of La Navidad, Mexico on November 20, 1564, he had already spent 100,000 pesos of his own.² The voyage was something like a high-risk business venture with the possibility of tremendous profits. Hunger for riches was the strong motivating factor for such expeditions, from the Spanish monarchs down to the last sailor on the ships. Thus, Legazpi sought not just honor but great wealth as a conquistador.

This type of contractual agreement for exploration and colonization which had its origins in the practices of the reconquista (See Chapter 2) in turn provided the basis for the exploitative policies of the officers sent by the Crown to newly-conquered lands. Legazpi and his successors instituted certain measures for the pacification of the people the better to pursue their private goals of enrichment while at the same time consolidating the rule of Spain in what was to be an outpost of empire in this part of the globe. The instruments of pacification thus served the dual purpose of strengthening Spanish sovereignty and of enriching the men who had made possible the annexation of the territory.

The terms of agreement drawn up in 1578 between Philip II and Gonzalo Ronquillo de Peñalosa reveal this dual purpose clearly. Ronquillo bound himself to finance an expedition of six hundred men in consideration for which he was appointed governor of the Philippines for life, promised an *encomienda* in each major town, and empowered to fill certain administrative positions with men of his choice.³ In effect, he had royal sanction to recover his investment — and more — through the use of his public office. Barring a few exceptions, subsequent governors and other officials regarded public office as a golden opportunity to make their fortune as quickly as possible. Needless to say, this attitude spawned rampant graft and corruption, much injustice, and cruel exploitation of the people.

Origins of the Encomienda

One institution that served both as an instrument of pacification and of personal enrichment during the early part of the conquest was the encomienda. Etymologically, the word *encomienda* is derived from the verb *encomendar* meaning to
commend or to commit or charge to one’s care. A definite number of “souls” or inhabitants of a territory were entrusted to the care of an encomendero.

Originally, the encomienda was a feudal institution used in Spain during the reconquista to reward deserving generals and conquerors. But since the reconquista itself was part of the capitalist impulse of the time, it is not surprising that after its introduction in the West Indies, this feudal institution underwent several transformations reflecting the development of the Spanish economic base from feudal to capitalist.

The Crown delegated to the earliest encomenderos in the West Indies the power to collect tribute and to use the personal services of the inhabitants of their encomiendas. In return, the encomenderos were supposed to look after the welfare of the natives and to give them some education. The encomenderos exercised their powers and prerogatives to the full but for the most part ignored their duties and treated the natives as their slaves.

Taming the Encomiendas

Because of the abuses of the encomenderos, advocates of the suppression of this institution succeeded in persuading Charles V to decree the abolition of the encomiendas in 1542. But the encomenderos protested and, supported by royal officials in the colonies, were able to extend the life of the institution under a compromise which forbade the use of Indians in the mines and the commutation of the tributes into personal services of whatever kind. Tribute was to be paid in money or in produce. Additional decrees had the intention of further humanizing the encomienda, thus prompting historians to refer to it in its last period in Hispanic America as the “tamed encomienda.”

It is of course doubtful that these prohibitions against the inhuman abuses of encomenderos were complied with to a significant degree. However, the attitude of the Crown towards this institution and the regulations it tried to enforce provide us with a useful background for understanding the various regulations governing the encomienda as subsequently established in the Philippines.

It should be noted that although the encomenderos in the New World behaved as feudal lords, the enterprises they headed and the gold mines they operated were in furtherance of the mercantilist objectives of Spain. The establishment of the feudal structure was thus induced by the capitalist impulses of mercantilist Spain. Evidently, the Crown was aware of the natural affinity between the encomienda and the fief, for it took pains to avert the rise of feudal principalities which could challenge the royal jurisdiction. The limitations which Ferdinand and Isabella originally placed on the encomiendas in the New World clearly indicate this objective.

Although the Spanish monarchs allowed encomiendas in the New World, they were careful to preserve the rights of the Crown. They did not want the encomienda system to give rise to a feudal aristocracy. They decreed that all uninhabited lands should be reserved for the Crown, thus forestalling a repetition of what happened during the reconquista when nobles extended their domains without royal authority by simply taking possession of unoccupied lands.

The royal couple was quite niggardly in granting titles of nobility and carefully limited the amount of land under the jurisdiction of each encomendero. Encomiendas were not hereditary beyond the third or at most the fourth generation and when they fell vacant, most of them were supposed to revert to the Crown, thus insuring the eventual demise of the institution.

Philippine Encomienda not a Land Grant

In view of the foregoing, it is not surprising that Legazpi’s instructions did not bestow on him any encomiendas nor empower him to grant the same to his men. However, when Legazpi arrived in Cebu, he found a people whose primitive economy produced barely enough for their subsistence. Certainly the booty that had made the fortunes of the Spanish conquistadores of the New World was not to be had in the islands. Pleading the poverty of his men, Legazpi asked for a just reward for their services to the Crown. The King granted his request. By the time Legazpi died in 1572, he had assigned 143 encomiendas to his men. Guido de Lavezares, his successor, not only assigned new encomiendas but even reassigned those that fell vacant, thus disregarding explicit orders that such vacant encomiendas should revert to the Crown.

Like its Latin American model, the encomienda in the Philippines was not a land grant. It was an administrative unit for the purpose of exacting tribute from the natives. Theoretically, each encomendero in whose care a native settlement was entrusted had a threefold responsibility: (1) to protect the natives by maintaining peace and order within the encomienda,
(2) to support the missionaries in their work of converting the people to Catholicism, and (3) to help in the defense of the colony. In return for these services, the Crown authorized the encomendero to collect a tribute of eight reales annually from all male inhabitants of his encomienda between the ages of nineteen and sixty. His share was not supposed to exceed one-fourth of the total collection. Part of the tribute was to go to the friars, the rest to the government. This tribute was payable in money or its equivalent in kind. The chiefs, now called cabezas de barangay, were usually charged with the duty of collecting the tribute and forwarding it to the encomendero who lived in the pueblo or even in the capital.

The Laws of the Indies contained a provision forbidding encomenderos to own a house in the native settlements within their encomiendas or even to stay there for more than one night. While this prohibition was supposedly intended to minimize abuses by encomenderos, the rule also served to prevent them from consolidating their control over the area inhabited by natives under their jurisdiction, a royal precaution that helped to assure the primacy of the king in his Latin American colonies. The Laws of the Indies were supposed to apply to the Philippines. However, in his instructions to Governor Gomez Perez Dasmariñas, King Philip II did urge that encomenderos be encouraged to reside near their wards, the better to care for the latter’s welfare. But the amenities of urban life and the lure of profits to be made from the China trade made most encomenderos prefer to locate themselves in the city.

An encomendero did not own the land inhabited by “his indios.” He and his heirs could hold the encomienda for only two lifetimes, sometimes three, after which it reverted back to the Crown. When a native died, the encomendero had no right to his property; the right descended to the heirs of the native. In the event that he had no heirs, the property was given to the town or village to which he belonged so that the community could use it to help pay its tribute assessment.

Abuses of the Encomenderos

But these limitations on the encomenderos did not prevent them from committing abuses. The encomienda system was generally characterized by greed and cruelty. The benevolent tenor of the terms of the encomienda concealed the basic purpose of this grant — as the grantee saw it. For the encomendero, this grant was nothing more than an opportunity to enrich himself, and he used every opportunity open to him whether in the collection of tributes or in the unlawful exaction of numerous services.

Despite the prohibition against draft labor, the encomenderos invariably required the people in their encomiendas to serve them in various ways. Antonio de Morga writes:

They employ the Indians in building houses and large vessels, grinding rice, cutting wood, and carrying it all to their houses and to Manila and then pay them little or nothing for their labor.

Regarding the collection of tributes, Fray Domingo de Salazar in his memorial to the king in 1583, described the brutalities inflicted by the encomenderos in these words:

... I can find no words, to express to your Majesty the misfortunes, injuries, and vexations, the torments and miseries, which the Indians are made to suffer in the collection of the tributes... If the chief does not give them as much gold as they demand, or does not pay for as many Indians as they say there are, they crucify the unfortunate chief, or put his hand in the stocks — for all the encomenderos, when they go to collect, have their stocks, and there they lash and torment the chiefs until they give the entire sum demanded from them. Sometimes the wife or daughter of the chief is seized, when he himself does not appear. Many are the chiefs who have died of torture in the manner which I have stated... one who was collecting the tributes... killed a chief by... crucifixion, and hanging him by the arms... Likewise I learned that an encomendero — because a chief had neither gold nor silver nor cloth with which to pay the tribute — exacted from him an Indian for nine pesos, in payment of nine tributes which he owed; and then took this Indian to the ship and sold him for thirty-five pesos... They collect tribute from children, old men, and slaves, and many remain unmarried because of the tribute, while others kill their children.

As agents of Spanish power and for their own personal gain, the encomenderos, like the various government officials who would later take over their functions, made so many cruel exactions from the population that they reduced the natives to a state of degradation such as these had never experienced before. As far as the colonized areas were concerned, instances of actual slavery in the classic sense were a Spanish transplantation.
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Administrative Agencies

The encomienda was an integral part of the early Spanish administrative machinery. Besides being rewards for supposedly deserving individuals, the encomiendas were established as a means of hastening the pacification of the Philippines and to give some measure of local government and control. These encomiendas served as political units along with regular provinces, corregimientos and other agencies for administration. In the beginning, it was the encomenderos who performed the functions of provincial officers.

Certain encomiendas were reserved for the Crown. These were under the care of the alcaldes mayores, the heads of the alcaldías or provinces. They supervised the tax collection from the Crown encomiendas and were responsible only to the royal officials in Manila. As more and more private encomiendas reverted to the Crown, the power of the alcaldes mayores increased.

No exact date for the abolition of the private encomienda can be given. However, it had already declined by the middle of the 17th century, and in 1721 a cédula provided that encomiendas that fell vacant were not to be reassigned to private persons or to charitable institutions but were to revert to the Crown.

Encomienda and Hacienda

It is appropriate at this point to differentiate between the hacienda and the encomienda in order to dispose of the ancient myth that the Philippine hacienda grew out of the encomienda. While both were forms of colonial appropriation, they were not the same and one did not necessarily lead to the other.

The exploitative practices of the encomienda system were not based on land ownership. The exactions of the encomendero were incidental to their positions as representatives of the king. In the hacienda, the exploitative relations are based on and grow out of the ownership by the landlord of the tracts of land from which the tenants derive their livelihood. By virtue of his ownership of the land, the hacendado has the right of inheritance and free disposition, two rights not covered by an encomienda grant.

The exploitation by the encomenderos was direct and undisguised. They extracted tribute and drafted labor. The hacendado on the other hand disguises his exploitation with the fiction of partnership, hence the term kasamahan to denote a joint venture and the reference to the tenant as a kasam or companion. Moreover, whereas the amount of tribute was a fixed amount, the fiction of a joint undertaking is maintained in share-cropping in terms of a sharing of risks. It may also be pointed out that tributaries generally regarded the tribute as an unwarranted exaction but tenants until politicized recognized the right of the hacendado to a lion’s share of their produce by virtue of his ownership of the land.

To determine the real historical origins of the hacienda and of the feudal practices that adhered to it, one must not look to the encomienda as its progenitor. The vast haciendas were products of a later development and not of the encomienda system. Proof of this is that while the number of private encomiendas had rapidly declined by 1755, large latifundia did not become significant until the nineteenth century. (See Chapters 9 and 10)

Furthermore, the habitual absence of the encomenderos from their encomiendas militated against their acquiring ownership of land occupied by their tributaries. This was not however true of the religious. Unlike the encomenderos, the religious lived with their flock and thus had better opportunities to acquire landholdings, whether within the area of encomiendas or outside them, from the royal domain as well as from the natives. They acquired their estates through various means. (See Chapter 6)

From all the foregoing, it may be safely concluded that the encomienda was not the origin of the present system of land tenure.

Instruments of Pacification

Both the encomenderos and the government officials were instruments of pacification and exploitation. This exploitation, basic to all colonization, was made more cruel and onerous by the personal greed of Spanish colonial administrators. Exactions took various forms such as the tribute, forced labor, the bandala (see below), and military conscription. All these exactions assumed greater urgency and were therefore collected or enforced with greater severity during those periods when Spain was at war.

During the early years of the occupation, Spain was at war with the Portuguese and the Dutch. Since Spain was using the islands as a base for operations against her rivals, the Philippines
was under constant attack or threat of attack from these other powers. The Portuguese harassed Legazpi in 1567 and asked him to leave Cebu on the ground that the Spaniards were violating Portugal's rights in the area. When Legazpi refused to heed their warnings, the Portuguese under the command of General Gonzalo de Pereira attacked Cebu in 1568 and blockaded its harbor. In 1570, the Portuguese again tried to land but were repulsed. Such harassments ended only after the annexation of Portugal by Spain in 1580.

The eighty years' war between the Dutch and the Spaniards began in 1568. After the union of the Crowns of Portugal and Spain, the Dutch seized Portuguese colonies in the East. The Dutch under Admiral Van Noort first attacked the Philippines in 1600. Dutch incursions into Philippine waters continued up to 1647. A year later, the Treaty of Westphalia ended the war between Spain and the Netherlands.

To finance the expeditions of Spain against her enemies, tribute had to be exacted at all costs. Labor had to be recruited for the building of ships, rowers had to be forced to man these ships, and fighting men had to be conscripted to beef up the Spanish forces. In addition, the government commandeered rice supplies, giving in return mere promises to pay which were honored only partially, if at all.

The social and economic distress that each of these Spanish impositions inflicted on the population can be fully appreciated only if it is borne in mind that both labor and produce were being forcibly extracted from an economy that had hardly any surplus of either. Social units largely dependent on subsistence agriculture were suddenly being compelled to yield a surplus to support a group of people who did no work at all.

Colonial exploitation was therefore intensified to a critical degree by the exigencies of war, by the avarice of the colonizers, and by the low productivity of the local economy—an economy which the Spaniards did very little to develop in the first three hundred years of their rule.

The Tribute

Because it was exacted throughout the archipelago and was collected from Legazpi's time until 1884, the tribute was the imposition most consistently complained of. It was levied on all Filipinos from nineteen to sixty with the exception of incumbent gobernadorcillos and cabezas and their families, government employees, soldiers with distinguished service, descendants of Lakandula and a few other native chieftains, choir members, sacristanes, and porters of the churches. Also exempted: government witnesses.

The tribute-collectors—alcaldes mayores, encomenderos, gobernadorcillos, and cabezas—often abused their offices by collecting more than the law required and appropriating the difference. The act itself of collecting was the occasion for much cruelty. Since the people did not regard the exacting of tribute to be justified, they often defied the authorities and refused to pay it. Historical accounts contain numerous references to communities which refused to submit to this imposition. Encomenderos often had to send soldiers to collect the tribute by force. Many who did not pay, or could not pay, were tortured or imprisoned. Others fled to the mountains only to have their houses looted or burned down by the Spaniards in punishment for the defiance.¹⁹

A more sophisticated method of abuse took advantage of the proviso that the tribute could be paid in cash or in kind. By depriving the people of their right to choose the form of payment, the tribute collector could increase the profits from his office. During periods when money was scarce or produce plentiful, the alcalde or the encomendero required payment in cash. When there was scarcity of goods and prices were high, he insisted on payment in goods which he then sold at the prevailing high prices. Goods offered as tribute payments were invariably underpriced.

The amount of tribute may seem small to us who take a money economy for granted, but it was a heavy load for a people who were just evolving a money economy. On the other hand, the fact that the amount of tribute required rose from the original eight reales to only twelve in 1851, and fourteen by 1874—a total span of almost three centuries—surely reflects the lack of economic progress in the islands.

Forced Labor

In addition to the tribute, men between the ages of sixteen and sixty except chieftains and their eldest sons were required to serve for forty days each year in the labor pool or polo. This was instituted in 1580 and reduced to fifteen days per year only in 1884.

Regulations on the polo provided for a payment of 1/4 real a day plus rice to each polista. In addition, the polista was not supposed to be brought to a distant place nor required to work
during the planting and harvesting seasons. Private enterprises and public works of a non-military nature were not to use polo labor. Also, the government was not supposed to use polistas if voluntary Chinese labor was available. All these conditions were violated with impunity especially when the exigencies of war required the impressment of large labor pools to fell trees for the construction of ships. Polistas were also recruited to man these vessels, a duty which took them far away from their homes for many months. Others were forced to work in mines.

Forced labor often resulted in the ruin of the communities the men left behind. Since polo laborers were seldom paid, their villages were forced to provide them with a monthly allowance of four pesos worth of rice to keep them alive. This burden was made doubly onerous by the fact that the absence of these men caused a manpower shortage. Shortage of manpower meant abandoned fields; as a consequence, many people died of hunger.

Fray Pedro de San Pablo, writing in 1620 to the Spanish king regarding compulsory service, revealed other evil consequences of the practice in these words:

When personal services are commanded, the Indian, in order not to go to the forests to cut and haul the wood, subject to the cruel treatment of the Spaniard, incurred debt, and borrowed some money at usury; and for the month falling to him, he gave another Indian six or seven reals of eight at his own cost, in order that the other should go in his stead. He who was taxed as his share one-half arroba of oil went, if he did not have it from his own harvest, to the rich man who gathered it; and, not having the money wherewith to buy it, he became the other’s slave or borrowed the money at usurious rates. Thus, in the space of ten years, did the country become in great measure ruined. Some natives took to the woods; others were made slaves; many others were killed; and the rest were exhausted and ruined . . . 20

The corruption and greed of alcaldes compounded the misery of the people. Alcaldes often drafted hundreds more men than was necessary for woodcutting or shipbuilding. They then pocketed the money that many draftees paid to be exempted from work. Gobernadorcillos made money too by cornering the business of supplying the work gangs with their needs. Work gangs averaged a thousand a month but sometimes numbered as many as six to eight thousand men.

PACIFICATION AND EXPLOITATION

The Bandala

Another exploitative device was instituted by Governor Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera during the first half of the seventeenth century. This was the bandala. It consisted of the assignment of annual quotas to each province for the compulsory sale of products to the government. Provincial quotas were subdivided among the towns. Since the government claimed not to have enough funds, the bandala meant virtual confiscation. All that the people got were promissory notes which were seldom redeemed in full. To compound the abuse, the prices the government set were lower than the prevailing prices of these products so that if a person could not fill his quota with his own produce, he had to buy at a higher price in order to sell at a lower rate to the government, which seldom paid anyway.

The bandala caused the people a great deal of suffering. Even if rats or drought destroyed their crops, they still had to buy rice in order to give it to the government on credit. Moreover, Spanish officials often collected more than was assessed and pocketed the difference. The excessive assessments forced many natives to become indebted to the chiefs thus entrenching the socio-economic position of these local leaders. By the first decades of the 17th century, the government already owed the different provinces millions of pesos. 21

Divide and Rule

The Spaniards never had a large military contingent in the Philippines. Spanish soldiers had to be backed up by locally recruited forces. Applying the age-old technique of divide and rule, the Spaniards were able to avail themselves of the services of local mercenaries. Recruitment was facilitated by the lack of a national consciousness. Each locality regarded itself as separate and apart from the others so that invariably the Spaniards were able to use native troops from one region to put down revolts in other regions. It would take centuries of common grievances to develop a consciousness of national solidarity.

Meanwhile, the native constabulary was a reliable source of strength for the Spanish colonialism. The Spaniards set up a separate army modeled after the Spanish military organization, with native officers bearing high-sounding ranks such as capitan and maestre de campo. Trained in European military science,
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these troops formed the bulk of the Spanish fighting force against Spain's foreign enemies as well as against domestic rebels.²

The Intermediaries

The encomienda system was the first administrative agency of Spanish colonization. It was augmented and later supplanted by an administrative network which took over its functions of pacification and exploitation. These interrelated colonial goals could hardly be achieved, however, by the small Spanish community alone. As the Spaniards conscripted native mercenaries for pacification, so did they enlist, through a combination of coercion and accommodation, the participation of the traditional native leaders in the exploitation of their communities. The roles assigned to them in extracting the tribute, the polo and the bandala inevitably contraposed them to their countrymen. When they took advantage of their positions to enrich themselves, the cleavage became both political and economic.

These leaders of the native communities were thus transformed into pillars of colonial administration and intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled.

The Colonial Landscape

Spanish conquest eventually wrought fundamental changes in the lives of the native population. The Spaniards introduced new customs and a new religion. They brought over new practices and institutions from their earlier colonial experiences in Latin America. And even when they chose to retain certain indigenous social institutions to serve colonial ends, the use of these institutions for purposes alien to native society transformed them in a profound way.

Then, too, the presence of the new colonizers stimulated the influx of the Chinese who by their activities in catering to the needs of the Spaniards became another factor for change in Philippine social and economic life.

Spaniards introduced new plants and animals which not only modified the eating habits of the natives but also affected economic development since some of these plants and animals were later produced commercially. Over the years, the galleons from Mexico brought Mexican corn, arrowroot, cassava and sweet potato, cotton and maguey, indigo and achuete, tobacco, cacao, peanut and cashew nut, pineapple, avocado, pepper, squash, tomato, lima bean, turnip and eggplant. They also brought over from Mexico horses, cows, sheep, and goats while water buffaloes, geese, ducks, and swans were imported from China and Japan.¹

Colonial Outpost

Although initially there were high expectations that the new colony would yield for the Crown financial gains as bountiful as those extracted from America, these hopes were soon dissipated. The Spaniards did not find the same rich mines as they
did in South America; there were no temples of Montezuma, nor edifices that housed vessels of gold; nor did they find an abundance of spices. In fact, as early as the year after Legazpi’s arrival in Cebu, the abandonment of the archipelago was already being proposed.

The colony was retained despite its lack of economic promise because the religious were able to convince the royal court that the Philippines would be a valuable stepping stone to China and Japan. Besides being a prospective staging ground for missionary efforts in Asia, the islands were also useful as an outport of empire. Spain was then engaged in continuous wars with the Dutch, the English and the Portuguese. With ships built and manned by natives, the Spanish fleet sailed out of the islands to do battle in defense of the empire. Moreover, eager to duplicate their feat in the New World, the Spaniards entertained dreams of carving out an Oriental empire. The Philippines was to be the base for the conquest of neighboring nations.

The lack of riches ready to hand and the preoccupation with war and further conquest relegated the Philippines to the role of a mere missionary and military way-station. This attitude was a factor that initially discouraged serious effort for economic development. A more basic factor was the mercantilist philosophy of the time with its emphasis on trade. But for this purpose the Philippines also suffered from a disadvantage. Its geographic isolation from Europe precluded the growth of direct trade with the rich countries of the continent and required that the islands be administered through Mexico.

Up to the middle of the eighteenth century, therefore, the Philippine colony was not much more than a defense outpost in the East ruled by a group of military administrators. These received a situado, an annual subsidy from Mexico, the rest of their needs had to be extracted from the population.

**Economic Neglect**

For two hundred years, the Philippine colony remained largely undeveloped economically except for the limited effects of the activities of encomenderos and Spanish officials and of the friars who settled in the provinces.

One institution that also contributed to the relative lack of interest in developing the economy of the country was the galleon trade. This trade which lasted for over two centuries up to 1815 involved only the Spaniards who were concentrated in the city of Manila. It was essentially a trade between China and

Mexico, with Manila as the transhipment port. Goods from China brought to Manila by junks were loaded on the galleons and sent to Acapulco. The returning galleons brought back silver which was highly appreciated in China. Very little of the produce of the country made its way to the Mexican market, hence the galleon trade did little to develop the islands. On the contrary, because of the quick returns from this trade, the Spaniards were further dissuaded from productive work and therefore neglected to develop the agricultural potential of the colony.4

**Moves for Abandonment**

The early proposals to abandon the Philippines were raised once more, this time for more definite financial and commercial reasons. One point made was that the colony was not self-supporting inasmuch as the duties collected on imports into New Spain via the galleons rarely compensated for the situado that the Crown sent to Manila. In answer, proponents of the retention of the colony countered that a large part of the situado was used to finance the expeditions against the Moluccas, which was certainly not a legitimate expenditure of the Philippine colony.6

A more serious and significant objection to the retention of the colony was that of powerful commercial interests from Spain, particularly from the Andalusian cities. They supported the move for the abandonment of the Philippines because the Chinese silks brought to America by the Philippine galleons competed with their own exports to that region, thus seriously threatening the profits of the Spanish silk industry.7

**The Compromise**

In line with her mercantilist policy and responding to pressure from the merchants of Cadiz and Seville, Spain tried to save the trade of the American market for Spanish manufactures and to limit the outflow of silver from Mexico and Latin America to the East. Consequently, the galleon trade was restricted to only two ships a year and it was granted only one port of entry in Mexico: Acapulco. Exports from Manila were pegged at P250,000 worth of goods (later raised to P500,000) and imports from Mexico were not supposed to exceed double the value of the exports. The intention was obviously to limit the revenue from the galleon trade to an amount adequate to
maintain the Spanish establishment in the islands.

As on previous occasions, the most powerful advocate of retention was the Church which by then had, besides its missionary undertakings, substantial material interests in the archipelago. The idea of a base for future maneuvers in the region continued to be a factor favoring preservation of the colony. There was also the prestige of the Crown to be considered as well as the pride of the Spanish kings in being the sovereigns of a city as prosperous as Manila was at that time.

The prosperity of Manila and its development as the single metropolis of the country was a by-product of the galleon trade. The profits from this trade enabled Manila to construct its solid walls and imposing buildings. Some of the money made on the galleon trade was bequeathed to religious orders to finance pious works — obras pias — such as the establishment of schools, hospitals, and charitable institutions. Of course, the friars also borrowed heavily from the obras pias funds to finance their own participation in the lucrative galleon trade. Prosperity was evident in the abundance of luxury items for the persons and homes of the rich.

By 1650, the population of the walled city and its arrabales was approximately 42,000. Most of the Spaniards in the islands were concentrated in Intramuros while a thriving Chinese community occupied the Parian in the suburbs. By the standards of the times and of the region, Manila could indeed qualify as a principal city.

Plural Economies

The prosperity of the Spanish community in Manila encouraged the influx of fairly large numbers of Chinese. These Chinese constituted another factor which shaped the course of the colony's life and which was to have an enduring influence on the history of the country.

Some historians contend that during the early part of Spanish rule three distinct economic systems existed in the Philippines: a Western economy, a native economy, and a Chinese economy. The principal preoccupation of the Western or Spanish economy was the galleon trade which transhipped through Manila Chinese luxury goods to Mexico and Mexican silver to China. Some of these goods remained in the Philippines to satisfy the needs of the local Spanish community.

Inasmuch as Philippine products were not in great demand in either China or Mexico, Philippine Spaniards did not find it profitable to develop local products for export. The native economy remained locally oriented and undeveloped. This is not to say, however, that the Spanish economy had no effect on it, for in the regions surrounding Manila and wherever there were Spanish communities, the mere fact of having to provide for the needs of these Spaniards certainly altered the native economy in various ways.

The Chinese engaged in maritime trading between China and the Philippines both as an adjunct to the galleon trade and to provide the local Spaniards with the luxuries they required. Others worked as artisans. But the most important function of the Chinese and the one with the greatest long-range impact on the country was their role as intermediaries between the Western and the native economies. They distributed Chinese imports to the Philippine villages and gathered in return local products which they sold to the Spaniards.

The Chinese Role

Although the Spanish, Chinese, and native economies impinged upon one another, they remained identifiably separate to the same extent that the three races lived as distinct cultural communities. This fact was recognized by the colonial administration which classified residents as Spanish, indio or Chinese. When, by the eighteenth century, racial inter-marriage had produced a sizeable group of Chinese-mestizos, they, too, were classified separately as mestizos.

The existence of these apparently separate economies did not negate the fact that all three were in varying degrees beginning to respond to a single underlying propulsive factor: the growing linkage of the country to world capitalism, although this connection was not to become a compelling reality until the middle of the eighteenth century. In this development, the Chinese were to play a more vital role than the Spanish colonialists, for it was mainly the commercial activities of the Chinese in numerous towns and villages all over the country that accelerated the dissolution of the pre-conquest social patterns of the Filipinos. While the Spaniards were trying to graft their administrative institutions onto the indigenous social structures, the Chinese were wreaking havoc on the primitive economy of the natives.

A case in point was the economic deterioration of the Pampanga and Manila areas in the late sixteenth century. Rice production had fallen off and the local textile industry had
declined disastrously. An investigation of the situation revealed that a sizeable part of the rural population, attracted by the money wages paid by the Spaniards, had moved to the city to enter domestic service or provide such other services as the Spaniards required. Instead of planting rice and weaving their own cloth, they were now buying their staple food and their clothing from the Chinese. Since the Chinese were also selling Chinese textiles in the province, the competition caused many local weavers to abandon this occupation.  

Reducciones

It must not be concluded, however, that official neglect of the colony's internal economy was accompanied by administrative indifference. While the mercantilism of that period dictated in large part emphasis on trading activities rather than on internal economic development, the extraction of tribute and forced labor and the proselytizing tradition of Spanish colonization required the systematic extension of administrative control.

For these reasons, the barangay had to be integrated into the colonial framework. Obviously, a few hundred friars and Spanish officials could not carry out their colonialist plans while a population of approximately 750,000 lived in thousands of small communities scattered all over the islands. The remedy lay in a policy of resettlement or reduccion which would consolidate population in larger villages.

The reduccion was part of the Spanish colonial experience in Latin America which demonstrated that the Indians were more rapidly and efficiently organized for colonial purposes once they had been resettled in compact villages. This experience became the model for the Philippines, with the difference that whereas in Spain's American colonies resettlement was carried out jointly by Church and State, reduction in the Philippines was mainly the work of the friars.

But what seemed logical and desirable to the friars or to the government functionaries, given their own urban tradition and the requirements of colonization and conversion, was not so to the native population. They were subsistence, not surplus farmers. They needed to live close to the land they tilled and amid surroundings where they could easily hunt and fish to supplement their diet. To move to compact villages was highly impractical and contrary to their traditional life pattern. No wonder there was much hostility to the resettlement program of the Spaniards.

The friars used a variety of techniques to gain native assent to resettlement. Some offered gifts of "shirts, salt, needles, combs and tibors." Others promised free housing within the reducciones. The novelty of mass participation in colorful church rites was another attraction. The government added its own blandishments in the form of high-sounding titles and honors for the chiefs. If these enticements were insufficient to overcome barangay reluctance, friars were known to resort to threats and other pressures.

Quite often, barangays would elect resettlement out of fear of either encomenderos or soldiers. Aware of the power of ecclesiastical authorities, some sought protection from the oppression and cruelty of encomenderos and soldiers by joining settlements under the charge of the religious.

Population Centers

Although the persistence of the friars did effect some urban concentration, Filipino opposition to reduction, besides delaying the process, also induced a compromise: the poblacion-barrio-sitio system which prevails to this day.

The Church was the nucleus of each settlement complex and the community in which it was located was called the cabecera. Due to the importance of the Church in the Spanish colonial scheme, not only as a religious institution but as an economic and political force as well, it was to be expected that population would gravitate toward the edifice that symbolized its power. Cabeceras invariably became principal population centers or poblaciones. Surrounding each poblacion were subordinate villages or barrios and still smaller communities called sitios. Their existence was evidence of the resistance of the Filipinos to settle far from their fields. The friars adapted themselves to this fact of Philippine life by constructing chapels in the larger villages. These came to be called visitas, from the practice of the friars of making periodic visits to these villages to say Mass and impart the Christian doctrine.

Acceleration of Stratification

Besides facilitating Catholic indoctrination, resettlement opened the way for closer administrative control and supervision. It was not long before the growing population centers were given political and economic functions. In the process of
consolidating their religious and political control of these reducciones, religious and civil authorities put into effect policies that accelerated the process of stratification which had already begun operating in pre-conquest society.

Reduction itself was achieved in part through the application of positive inducements or pressures on the chiefs and their families, thus acknowledging and therefore confirming their higher status and authority. Missionaries worked on chiefs and their families to move to the cabeceras so that they might set the example for others. Their presence at the cabecera, that is, at the center of colonial power in the locality, provided these chiefs with opportunities to further entrench themselves in positions of dominance within the native community.

Spanish administrative policy, being itself the expression of a hierarchical society, was committed to the preservation of the traditional authority of the chiefs within the barangay, but this time under Spanish direction and control. Spanish colonial experience in Latin America had demonstrated the efficacy of incorporating the native hierarchy of authority within the colonial administration. This insured a measure of social continuity which facilitated acceptance of foreign rule.

Using the barangay as the basic unit of local administration, the Spaniards recruited barrio and poblacion officials from the ranks of the chieftains or cabezas de barangay. By confirming their political authority, the Spaniards converted most of the local chieftains into willing allies and useful intermediaries between themselves and the people. These chieftains and their families formed a ready reservoir of reliable minor civil servants whose former status was now bolstered by colonial recognition, as evidenced by their title of principales.

Colonial Intermediaries

The highest position open to Filipinos in the civil government was that of gobernadorcillo (petty governor), a position roughly equivalent to that of town mayor today. In return for exemption from paying tribute and from rendering forced labor, the gobernadorcillo was entrusted with the duty of collecting the tributes within his jurisdiction. Such tributes were supposed to tally with census estimates which, not being regularly updated, often included persons already dead. This was an additional burden which had to be shouldered by the gobernadorcillo unless he could pass it on to the relatives of the deceased. Needless to say, he was also held accountable for unpaid tributes or delayed payments inasmuch as the law set a definite date for their turn-over. Failure to deliver the required sum subjected the gobernadorcillo to a fine or imprisonment. It was also his responsibility to spend for the maintenance of the municipal guards and the jail, feed the prisoners, and supply the municipal government with personnel and supplies. The entertainment of visiting functionaries was likewise born by him.

Although many a gobernadorcillo ended his term in penury because of the expenses he had to shoulder and the unpaid tributes he had to make good, it was likewise true that the situation was made to order for others who wished to enrich themselves by exacting more tribute than was required and by other illegal means such as granting tribute exemptions in consideration of gifts or personal services.

Another function the gobernadorcillo discharged was that of mobilizing labor for government construction projects. This power was also susceptible to abuses such as the confiscation of the wages of polo laborers and the utilization of their labor for his personal benefit.

The foregoing also held true, though on a smaller scale, for the cabezas de barangay.

Third Prop of Power

To the twin supports for their leadership; namely, their traditional barangay authority and the political privileges granted by the Spaniards, the principalias soon added a third prop: that of economic power. Beginning their economic rise by exploiting the possibilities of their administrative offices, these intermediaries between the Spanish colonizer and the masses of the people further consolidated their economic position by taking advantage of the opportunities opened to them by the concept of private property in land which the Spaniards introduced.

In the pre-conquest barangays, land was communally owned and was not regarded as a source or a measure of wealth. While Spanish laws initially recognized the communal system of land ownership, the fact that the colonizers introduced the concept of individual land ownership and regarded the land itself, not merely its use, as a source of wealth, was bound to change native ideas on this point.
Appropriation of Communal Holdings

By virtue of their position as administrative and fiscal middlemen between the Spaniards and their own people, the principales were the ones most likely to become aware of this concept and to recognize its financial advantages to themselves. Furthermore, they already had some experience with the administrative and legal machinery. Since they retained their traditional authority over the communal lands, it was relatively simple to secure formal ownership of these landholdings or at least of those portions which their dependents habitually cultivated. Mindful of the principalia's usefulness as the conduit of colonial power, the Spaniards seldom placed any obstacle to such acquisitions, unfair to the people though these might be.

A pertinent example was the Jesuit purchase in 1603 of land in Quiapo, then a village in the suburbs of Manila. The Jesuits bought the land from some local chiefs, whereupon the villagers protested since the land, they claimed, belonged to the barangay, not to the chieftains. But despite the support of Archbishop Benavides, the villagers were not able to annul the sale and expel the Jesuits.20

The trend toward individual ownership with legal title accelerated during the seventeenth century when more and more chieftains appropriated the lands cultivated by their dependents and these tillers were institutionalized as tenants.

Resultant Stratifications

Economic and political standing conferred social prestige. Moreover, the principalia sought perpetuation of its dominant status through intra-class marriage. The physical expression of this socio-economic ascendancy was the existence of principalia residences in the plaza complex. The buildings around the town plaza of each poblacion nicely reflected the hierarchy of status in colonial society with the church-convent and the municipio or seat of civil authority dominating the square. That residences of principales were more and more frequently located at or near the plaza was suggestive of their growing importance as well as of the increasing stratification of native society. The intermediaries between the colonizer and the native population were becoming more closely identified with the colonial power as wealth separated them from the rest of their countrymen.

By 1800, rural society was characterized by a three-tiered hierarchy consisting of Spanish priest, principala, and masses. In
VI

Monastic Supremacy

The Spanish empire was deemed to be in the service of “both Majesties”: God and the king. This concept was the basis for the union of Church and State into one structure which, in the words of de la Costa, “might be viewed either as a civilizing Church or a missionary State.” The royal authority over the Spanish Church was based on the patronato real under which the king had secured from the pope the right to make nominations to most of the bishoprics and abbeys in Spain and in her dominions.

Any dual authority, however, is bound to give rise to jurisdictional disputes and to goad one or the other power into extending certain favors to individuals or groups jointly controlled in order to gain the upper hand in the rivalry for allegiance. In their struggle with the popes for jurisdiction and control over the Spanish Church, the kings granted the Church lands and other privileges and extended certain personal immunities to the clergy and even to their servants. As a rule, therefore, the clergy were inclined to favor the king to whose generosity they owed their rents and dignities. Many clergymen became royal counsellors.

Spiritual and Temporal Sovereigns

The Spanish Church became a powerful and influential factor in the theo-political enterprise that included among its ventures the colonization of the Philippines. But despite its uniquely national character, the Spanish Church still drew its sanction from the pope who exerted moral dominance over Church affairs all over the world. The religious missionaries who accompanied the conquistadores represented the spiritual sovereign, although they owed their benefices to the temporal one.

The religious orders came to the Philippines on the strength of an understanding between the pope in Rome and the king of Spain. To bring the light of Christianity to the natives was to be the primary justification for the Spanish presence in the islands. The pope stipulated that the Spanish king, as an ardent patron of the Church, should see to it that everything was done so that the religious orders could effectively carry out their mission in the islands. In exchange, the pope recognized the king as the legitimate arm of the Church west of the Indies. Under the patronato real, the king as patron of the Church in these islands was to have the authority to determine the limits of the mission territories and to have a voice in the assignment of missionaries. He also had the duty to protect the missionaries and provide for their support. This made the friars salaried employees of the Spanish king as well as representatives of Rome.

Clerical Ascendancy

The setup in the Philippines reflected the situation in Spain. In the colony, the Church was even more completely under the king’s control although, paradoxically enough, the clergy in the islands were more powerful than the king’s official administrators because the latter were so few in number and because the friars played such an important role in the pacification campaign.

There is no doubt that many of the early missionaries were sincere and zealous in their priestly duties, but by the beginning of the seventeenth century there had already occurred a decline in morals and in missionary enthusiasm. This may have been due in part to the deterioration of the clergy in Spain itself.

The great demand for priests in the new dominions of the Spanish empire and the economic and social privileges granted to the clergy by the king were two factors which brought about a lowering of the standards of the priesthood. The urgent need for more priests caused the training period before ordination to be reduced. The clergy’s power and wealth made priesthood an attractive career rather than a spiritual calling.

Since entry into the religious orders had become comparatively easy, the number of ecclesiastics increased although many of them continued to be businessmen, lawyers, administrative officers, and even jugglers and buffoons. Decadence set in; many religious led licentious lives. Even the mendicant orders lost their early ideals of poverty and self-sacrifice and devoted
themselves to the pursuit of wealth. The practice of barranga-
neria (concubinage) was rampant; the nuns of Seville and
Toledo even held beauty contests.5

Mission Rivalries

In the Philippines, one indication that considerations more
worldly than missionary endeavors occupied the friars’ minds
was the inter-order rivalry. The Augustinians, who having
arrived with Legazpi were the first religious in the islands, tried
hard to prevent the coming of the other religious orders. The
Franciscans, the Jesuits, the Dominicans and finally the
Recollects nevertheless succeeded in establishing their own
missions, although the entry of each one was opposed by all
those who had previously established their foothold in the
colony. They were assigned different territories but still
frequent quarrels occurred among them. These animosities
among the various orders doubtless had their origins in Spain.5

Other factors conducive to moral decline arose from the local
situation. The very enormity of the task of Catholicization in
comparison to the small numbers of missionaries bred dis-
couragement and apathy. The dispersal of the missions made
supervision by superiors difficult, while the increasing adminis-
trative duties the friars took on in the native communities soon
relegated proselytization to the background. The assumption of
administrative functions by the clergy was both an expedient
dictated by the small number of Spanish officials and an
expression of the union of Church and State.

Property Acquisitions

But the fundamental cause for the waning zeal and ensuing
corruption of the friars was their acquisition of property.
A letter to Governor Dasmariñas from Bishop Domingo
Salazar dated March 21, 1591, recounts in passing how the
religious in Mexico obtained the revocation of a royal prohi-
bition against their owning property.6 The religious contended
that there were too many disadvantages in having the friars live
alone. They proposed the establishment of houses to be manned
by at least four ecclesiastics. But this raised the problem of their
support. Declaring that they did not want their missionaries to
be a burden to their flock, the Dominicans and the Augustinians
suggested that the best solution would be for the king to grant
them some estates in the native villages so that the missionaries
could become self-supporting. This proposal ran counter to a
royal order that the clergy should not own lands in the Indian
villages; but the religious, through Bishop Salazar himself,
succeeded in persuading the king to revoke his decree.6

The friars in the Philippines had the same privilege to own
lands in their parishes for their support. Since the pope had
exempted them temporarily from their monastic vows so that
they could man the parishes until such time as a secular clergy
was available in sufficient numbers to take their place, the
combination of these two factors provided the religious
churches with the opportunity to amass large tracts of
land.6 Soon enough, the clergy were replacing the encomen-
deros whose cruel exactions they used to denounced.

Mode of Acquisition

How did the friars become wealthy landed proprietors? One
of the earliest means by which the friars acquired their
landholdings was by royal bequest. They also bought lands from
the State.

Later, when the concept of individual property in land had
become established among the inhabitants, the clergy benefited
from this development in a number of ways. They received
donations and inheritances from pious Filipinos — a large
portion in the form of deathbed bequests — in gratitude for
their religious ministrations and as a sort of down payment for a
place in heaven. It was often said that friars were wont to
whisper into the ears of their dying parishioners that a timely
donation to the Church would secure for them a shorter tenure
in purgatory. There must have been more than a grain of truth
in this popular belief for in the American colonies, for example,
the Crown issued a royal order prohibiting the friars from
drawing up wills for members of their flock. The king likewise
barred priests and their convents from inheriting property from
those they habitually confessed.

The friars also bought land from the natives with the money
they obtained from church fees, from trade, or from the profits
gained from the produce of lands which utilized forced labor.
With their prestige and power, it was easy for them to pressure
villagers into selling them their lands at very low prices.16

From Partners to Landlords

Other landholdings were acquired through the foreclosure of
mortgages. The story of how friars became mortgagees often began innocuously enough. Living as they did among the people, the religious were in the best position to appreciate the possibilities of agricultural development. Seeing that the obstacle to more extensive cultivation was lack of capital, many priests entered into partnership with farmers, advancing them money for seeds, work animals and tools. The priests received half of the harvest.\textsuperscript{11}

Although this arrangement favored the money lender who received a fat share without working, at least he ran the same risk as the farmer of getting little if the harvest was poor. But when the dependence on priestly capital had become more or less established, the friars began to demand that their advances be regarded as loans payable at a fixed rate of interest whether the harvests were good or bad. The risks were now borne by the tillers alone, and in bad seasons they ran into debt.

When such debts accumulated, the friars forced the farmers to mortgage their land to them and eventually foreclosed the mortgage. The friars then obtained title to such lands and the farmer-owners were either driven away or became tenants.

It is interesting to note that as early as the reign of Philip II (1556-1598), a law had been enacted forbidding such mortgages and setting a limit to the amount that could be lent to the natives. This law, like so many other similarly well-intentioned ones, was virtually a dead letter. It was later revoked at the instance of the friars.

Another statute that was also ignored was the one that reserved all lands “within one thousand meters of the principal market place of every town” as the communal property of the town residents. Many pieces of real estate within this perimeter became friar lands.\textsuperscript{12}

Outright Land-grabbing

Some friar lands were obtained through outright usurpation. With the help of corrupt surveyors and other government officials, religious corporations were able to expand their landholdings. Additional hectares of land outside original boundaries of friar property were simply gobbled up each time a new survey was undertaken. Many times, the priests just claimed pieces of land, drew maps of them, had them titled, and set themselves up as owners.

The original native settlers who had tilled the land for years were summarily declared to be squatters. When the natives protested, they were asked for legal proofs of ownership of the land in question. More often than not, they could not show any legal document attesting to their ownership of the land. The natives did not have “titulos reales” since their claim to the land was based on de facto possession.\textsuperscript{13}

Patterns of Land Tenancy

The friars were in the main absentee landlords. Supervision was usually entrusted to a lay brother of the order. The estate was parceled out to lessees or inquilinos who themselves had sub-tenants to work the land. The inquilinos paid a fixed lease or canon in money or in kind.\textsuperscript{14}

The kasamas or sub-tenants received half of the harvest after the fixed rent was deducted while the inquilino, the middle man, received the other half.\textsuperscript{15} As is usual in a hierarchy of exploitation, the fellow at the bottom bore the brunt of it since only he actually worked the land and therefore supported with his labor both inquilino and clerical landlord.

The inquilino served much the same purpose as the cabeza and the gobernadorcillo: that of facilitating the exactions of his master. Like his counterparts in the political hierarchy, the inquilino as economic intermediary shared in the benefits of exploitation and could sometimes manage to amass enough wealth to buy some lands from impoverished native farmers and become a landowner himself while retaining his lucrative position as inquilino of a religious corporation.

Seeds of Discontent

The royal bequests by which the religious acquired their original landholdings already wrought an injustice on the natives since each bequest meant that they were being dispossessed of their ancestral lands. When in addition the friars used a variety of questionable means to enlarge their estates, one can well understand the smoldering resentment of those who tilled the soil.

One can imagine the feelings of those driven away from lands they had tilled for generations or forced to work as tenants on their own lands simply because a mortgage had been foreclosed or the land had been fraudulently resurveyed in someone else’s favor. For that matter, even deathbed donations and straight sales of lands could be sources of grievance if
A PAST REVISITED

these lands had been obtained by the use of the moral influence and the power of the friars.

Friar Abuses

Taxes, tributes, exorbitant rents and arbitrary increases of the same, forced labor and personal services — all these intensified the hardships of natives who now had to give up a good part of their produce to their landlords. In addition, some administrators practiced other petty cruelties which caused much suffering among the people.

In 1745, in the Jesuit ranches of Lian and Nasugbu, Batangas, for example, the people accused the religious not only of usurping the cultivated lands and the hills that belonged to them but also of refusing to allow the tenants to get wood, rattan and bamboo for their personal use unless they paid the sums charged by the friars.16

In Bulacan, villagers complained that the religious cheated them out of their lands and then cruelly proceeded to deny them the right to fish in the rivers, to cut firewood, and to gather wild fruits from the forests. The friars would not even allow their carabaos to graze on the hills since the religious now claimed all these areas as their own.17

In Cavite, Manila and Bulacan, small landholders complained that since the friars owned the land through which the rivers passed, they had to agree to the friars’ terms if they wanted water for irrigation purposes.18

Lessees of friar lands protested bitterly that their landlords raised their rents almost every year and particularly whenever they saw that through the farmers’ labor the land had become more productive. In some cases, they even imposed a surtax on trees planted by the tenants. When they accepted rental payments in kind, the administrators of the friar estates arbitrarily fixed the prices of these products, naturally at lower than prevailing prices.19

Side-lines and Other Abuses

Aside from institutional exploitation, exactions of a personal nature were rampant. Curates charged a bewildering number of fees for all sorts of rites, from baptism to burial. The natives paid even if it meant selling their last possessions because they had been taught that such rites were indispensable to the salvation of their souls.

MONASTIC SUPREMACY

Friars made money selling rosaries, scapulars and other religious objects. They required from their flock all kinds of personal services and gifts of food for the convent table.

Priests often administered corporal punishment, usually whippings, on natives who dared disobey their orders or disregard their caprices. Unmarried girls were compelled to report to the convent to pound rice and sweep the church floors.20 The large number of Filipinos today who have a priest somewhere in their family trees attests to the frequency with which the vows of celibacy were transgressed.

Of course, the cruelty, capriciousness and frequency of abuses depended on the character of the individual priest — and there were good and bad. However, it cannot be denied that the virtually unchallenged power of the friar in most communities had a corrupting influence on most.

The people’s mounting resentment led them to commit various acts of defiance, to refuse to pay the unjust taxes imposed by friar estate administrators, and finally to resort to armed rebellion. So serious were the clerics’ abuses that by 1751, the king was moved to issue a royal decree ordering local government authorities
to exercise hereafter the utmost vigilance in order that the Indians of the said villages may not be molested by the religious, and that the latter should be kept in check in the unjust acts which they may in future attempt ...21

But by that time such a directive could hardly be enforced. The friars had become too powerful not only because of their spiritual hold over both the Spanish officials and the natives, but also by virtue of their established economic power. In addition, they had become a ubiquitous presence in the local machinery of administration.

Economic Power

Against the power of his friar landlord, a tenant found it impossible to prosecute his interests or have his complaints heard. A poor tenant could not afford the costs of a lawsuit, granting that he knew the first thing about litigation procedures. Besides, what chance had he against such a powerful figure as a friar? If a friar wanted a tenant evicted, the cleric could easily prevail upon a judge to issue the order, and he could just as easily avail himself of government forces to
execute the decision. Recalcitrant tenants were often evicted en masse; there were so many landless peasants to take their places, anyway.

Exploitation, with its concomitant personal cruelties and abuses, was part and parcel of the imperative of property expansion once the friars’ right to property had been recognized. Economic power enhanced political power, and political power was used time and again to expand economic power and to oppose any attempts by government to frustrate economic expansion.

By the end of the Spanish occupation, the friars were in possession of more than 185,000 hectares or about one-fifteenth of the land under cultivation. Of this total, around 110,000 hectares were in the vicinity of Manila. The Dominicans held the estate of Naic in Cavite; in Laguna, the estates of Calamba, Biñan and Santa Rosa; in Bataan, the estates at Lomboy, Pandi, and Orion. The Agustins held estates in Cagayan, Isabela, and Nueva Vizcaya, and property in Manila, Cavite, and Bulacan. The Recollects owned an estate in Imus, Cavite and another in Mindoro.

The approximate areas of these religious estates were as follows: 49,293 hectares in Manila; 15,961 hectares in Bulacan; 1,999 hectares in Morong (now Rizal); 404 hectares in Bataan; 19,991 hectares in Cagayan; 6,642 hectares in Cebu; 23,656 hectares in Mindoro; and 22,838 hectares in Isabela. The largest of the friar haciendas was Calamba (where Jose Rizal’s parents were inquilinos) with 16,414 hectares, and the next largest was Pandi with 9,803 hectares.

Commercial Activities

Besides being large landowners, the clergy participated prominently in the commercial life of the country. One conduit for this participation was the obras pias, foundations which derived their funds from bequests of wealthy churchmen and lay persons. The earliest charitable foundation was the Hermannad de la Misericordia originally endowed in 1596.

These funds were to be invested in commerce and the income therefrom used for the pius and charitable purposes designated by the donor. With such a capital, which was periodically augmented by new donations, it is easy to see how influential the clergy were in the commercial field. These foundations financed trading ventures to China and India. Alcaldes and governors borrowed money from the obras pias to engage in business within their jurisdictions. Even the government had recourse to these institutions when it found itself short of funds. Shippers on the galleon trade were financed by these foundations. In fact, while the galleon trade existed, this institution invested most of its funds in the venture not only as a financier of others but as an authorized recipient of a definite number of boletas, i.e., licenses for lading space in the galleons. In effect, the obras pias functioned as commercial banks and insurance companies.

Religious corporations and other Church organizations also participated in the galleon trade and in fact did so even before a royal decree gave them this right in 1638. Even the Manila Cathedral had an annual quota of boletas. Clergymen in their individual capacities were stringently prohibited by law and papal ban from trading, but they did so anyway, hiding their participation behind lay proxies. In fact, the trading activities of clergymen, both regular and secular, were so flagrant that in 1787, the Archbishop of Manila was compelled to expel from the country a large number of priests who had been devoting their time as agents for Dutch, Portuguese and French merchants. These clerics, however, were not Spaniards.

The friars were also monopolists in the internal trade of their districts and were often powerful enough to fix the prices at which produce was to be bought and sold.

Political Power

The early ascendency of the Church over the State was made possible by the success with which the friars undertook, almost single-handedly, the pacification of the country.

Since this success was due in large measure to the native’s acceptance of the new religion, Spanish power in most communities rested on the influence of the religious. The prevalent opinion at that time that “in each friar in the Philippines the king had a captain general and a whole army” is a recognition of this fact.

Moreover, in more than half of the villages in the islands there was no other Spaniard, and therefore no other colonial authority, but the friar. This state of affairs obtained almost to the end of Spanish rule.

Union of Church and State

Other factors contributed to friar ascendency. The friar's
knowledge of the land and of the people was invariably superior to that of the government functionary. The Spanish alcaldes mayores were dependent on the religious not only because the latter spoke the native dialects but also because the tenure of these government officials was temporary while that of the parish priest was more or less permanent.

A more fundamental basis of the great political power of the religious was the Spanish concept of the union of Church and State. The friar was entrusted with an ever-growing number of civil duties within the community until there was no aspect of community life in which he did not have a hand.

He was inspector of primary schools, and of taxation; president of the board of health, of charities, of urban taxation, of statistics, of prisons; formerly, president, but lately honorary president of the board of public works. He was a member of the provincial board and the board for partitioning crown lands. He was censor of the municipal budget, of plays, comedies, and dramas in the native language given at the fiestas. He had duties as certifier, supervisor, examiner, or counsellor of matters in regard to the correctness of cédulas, municipal elections, prison food, auditing of accounts, municipal council, the police force, the schools, and the drawing of lots for army service.

"Warehouse of Faith"

Economic power through landholding and through investments in foreign and internal trade, political power through extensive participation in government, and spiritual control over both the native population and fellow Spaniards — all these combined to make the friar the principal figure in each community, and the Church the dominant power in the country. As W.L. Schurz says:

... the colony took on more and more the character of a vast religious establishment. Manila had become a "warehouse of the Faith" — "almacen de la Fé" — from which missionaries issued forth to labor at the conversion of the infidels of the surrounding regions. In 1722 there were said to be over 1500 priests in the islands, or more than the total of the Spanish lay population at that time.

Friar Supremacy

Friction between the two colonial authorities existed almost from the very start. It was naturally exacerbated by the growing importance and consequent arrogance and abuses of the religious authorities.

The friars were always conscious of their indispensability in the perpetuation of Spanish rule. This awareness of their power was aptly summarized in the following boast made by a friar:

If the king sends troops here, the Indians will return to the mountains and forests. But if I shut the church doors, I shall have them all at my feet in twenty-four hours.

Official Complaints

Time and again, governors complained of the abuses of the clergy and appealed to the Spanish monarch to curtail their powers. As early as 1592, Governor Dasmariñas was already railing against friar power. He wrote:

And the friars say the same thing — namely, that they will abandon their doctrinas (i.e., Christian villages) if their power over the Indians is taken away. This power is such that the Indians recognize no other king or superior than the father of the doctrina, and are more attentive to his commands than to those of the governor. Therefore the friars make use of them by the hundreds, as slaves, in their rowing, works, services, and in other ways, without paying them, and whipping them as if they were highwaymen. In whatever pertains to the fathers there is no grief or pity felt for the Indians; but as for some service of your Majesty, or a public work, in which an Indian may be needed, or as for anything ordered from them, the religious are bound to gainsay it, place it on one's conscience, hinder it, or disturb everything.

In 1636, Governor Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera wrote the king objecting to the increase in the number of religious in the islands. According to him, the friars had reduced the natives to virtual slavery by forcing them to sell to the religious all their rice and cloth at prices set by the latter who then monopolized the business in these items. And yet, the governor complained, when assessments of rice, cloth and wine were levied on the people by the government, these same friars objected on the ground that the natives were too poor to pay what was demanded.

As a representative of the government whose concern was the exploitation of the natives, Corcuera was of course merely expressing the resentment of one who had discovered a formidable rival in this colonial appropriation. Like Governor
A PAST REVISITED

Dasmariñas, he complained to the king that the friars were
infinitely more powerful than the Crown’s representatives.

Gubernatorial Casualties

But monastic supremacy was a fact of life that the king’s
representatives had to live with. Those who dared oppose the
religious courted humiliation and even death. Governor Diego
de Salcedo was imprisoned by the Inquisition and died a broken
man while he was being shipped back to Mexico in 1669.

The dispute between Church and State flared up with
particular violence during the term of Governor Juan de Vargas
in the third quarter of the seventeenth century. When Vargas was
no longer governor, his implacable foe, Archbishop Pardo,
forced him to stand each day for four months in Manila’s streets
wearing sackcloth and with a rope around his neck and a candle
in his hand. He, too, died a prisoner on a galleon bound for
Mexico.

Governor Fernando Manuel de Bustamante came into con-
lict with the Church when, after finding out that the friars had
borrowed heavily from the government and from the obras pias,
he ordered them to return the money. The governor’s
assertion of his official authority in this and other matters put
him on a collision course with the clergy. Their mutual hostility
culminated in the arrest and imprisonment of the Archbishop
on charges of having conspired against the government. The
friars, at the head of a mob, forced their way into the
governor’s palace and stabbed Bustamante to death.

Competing Exploiters and Oppressors

Of course, there was no lack of complaints to the king from
the friars against the civil authorities. The latter’s abuses and
corruption were just as blatant. The dispute was between
competing oppressors and exploiters with the king sometimes
inclined to favor one and at other times the other.

The friars, however, were often as impervious to royal
mandates as they were to the rulings of local officials. For
example, the king at one time ordered the clergy to stop
inducing dying men to bequeath their property to the Church.
He also warned them against forcing women to render domestic
service in their convents and instructed the priests not to charge
the people for the sacraments administered to them. These and
other similar orders were issued in response to numerous

MONASTIC SUPREMACY

complaints about their conduct, but the friars paid scant
attention to such royal admonitions.

Conflict over Land Titles

To curb the land-grabbing propensities of the friars, the king
ordered at various times the examination of land titles. Such
investigations had minimal effect, for some religious orders
either forged land titles or simply refused to show evidence of
ownership, claiming ecclesiastical immunity.

As early as 1578, the Crown ordered the governor general
and the president of the Royal Audiencia to examine land titles
in the islands. Nothing however came of this. In 1697, an oidor,
Juan Sierra, came all the way from Mexico, charged with the
task of determining the validity of the titles to all lands in the
colony. The friars vehemently refused to show their titles to
Sierra. Claiming exemption, they presented their case to the
Royal Audiencia which promptly ruled against them. The friars
then appealed to Archbishop Camacho but the latter was
somewhat hostile to the religious orders because of their refusal
to submit to episcopal visitation.

When they saw that they could not expect anything from
Camacho, the friars turned to Bishop Gonzales of Nueva Caceres.
Gonzales took their side but the Audiencia subsequently
ruled against them. However, Sierra was later replaced by
another visitador, Don Juan Ozaeta y Oro, who proved more
tractable.

The conflict between the civil authorities and the friars over
land titles dragged on for many years, with the friars success-
fully parrying every attempt of the government to make them
submit to its authority. In later years, other oidores simply
refused to tangle with the religious orders, saying that the latter
were too firmly entrenched and that anyway the government
would have to give in to them since it could not dispense with
their religious, social, and educational work in the colony.

The religious orders also came into conflict with the pope
over their refusal to submit themselves to the authority of the
bishops. The friars claimed that they were under the exclusive
control of the superiors of their own orders. Inasmuch as this
was merely an intramural between two sectors of the Spanish
clergy, it is of little concern to us until such time as the dispute
began to involve the native priests.
From Individual to Common Grievance

During the early years of Spanish rule, most of the abuses committed by the friars were incidental to their proselytization and their role in resettling their converts in more compact communities. Such abuses were therefore committed by them in their individual capacities (as religious missionaries) and inflicted on natives also as individuals who in some way or another proved recalcitrant or slow to accept the new religion.

The work of conversion, however, required a degree of rapport with the natives. The early missionaries—the more earnest among them at least—applied themselves to learning the language of their flock and even their customs and traditions. They lived among the people, establishing themselves as the fathers and mentors of the community. At times, they took the side of the natives and tried to mitigate the exactions of the State. Moreover, they did not disturb the traditional hierarchy of authority in the village but instead worked through the chiefs and established themselves as an additional authority. Acceptance of the Catholic religion meant acceptance of the friars' authority as well as the development of a measure of personal loyalty to him.

Later, when the communities became more established and the administrative prerogatives of the friars increased, greater power together with the decline in missionary zeal occurring at the time gave rise to greater abuses.

Abuses such as the friar's excessive interference in the natives' daily life, personal insult, corporal punishment such as whipping and lashing of both men and women for the slightest offense, onerous fees for confessions and other religious rites, sexual offenses against native women, and the native's virtual reduction to a slave and servant of the friar—all these were being committed as early as the second or third decade of occupation. But these wrongs were still inflicted and also accepted on an individual basis and they varied in intensity and frequency depending on the personality of each priest. Furthermore, since punishments were meted out on a variety of individual offenses, there was no common grievance strong enough to call forth united action, although there is no doubt that resentments were building up.

Transformation in Consciousness

But when the religious orders began to acquire property, their abuses took on a different complexion. As landlords, they became economic exploiters whose abuses threatened the economic survival of the natives. Such abuses were no longer inflicted by an individual on separate individuals. Neither were they occasional or dependent on a particular friar.

Exploitation was basic and permanent, and enforced by an institution on groups of men constituting practically the entire community. Moreover, this kind of exploitation could not be justified in any way as part of the friar's religious mission. All these factors transformed isolated resentments into common and bitter grievances that erupted in revolts against the friars.

That native disaffection with the religious orders had a profoundly material basis is proved by the fact that discontent exploded in revolts precisely in areas where friars were known to hold large tracts of agricultural land. In the provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Manila, Bulacan and Morong (now Rizal), the religious owned more than one-half of the total agricultural land. It is not mere coincidence that these provinces experienced many agrarian uprisings and became the strongholds of the Philippine Revolution.

As John Foreman succinctly put it:

...it was not the monks' immorality which disturbed the mind of the native, but their Caesarism which raised his ire. The ground of discord was always more infinitely material than sentimental.39

Objective changes in the existing relationship lead to changes in the perception of this relationship. In the case of the friars and the natives, when the supportive relationships actually began to wane as a consequence of blatant economic excesses that could no longer be legitimized by religious sentiments, certain demands, overlooked or justified as return favors in the past, began to be perceived as intolerably abusive impositions.

In other words, in the context of changed circumstances, past actions or behaviors of the friars acquired new meaning for the natives. The economic ascendancy of the friars not only gave rise to a new form of awakening; it also became an additional factor in unifying the people.

From Accessory to Principal Apparatus

To summarize: the attitude of the natives to the Church in the course of its economic and political ascendancy changed from initial obedience due to awe and fear; to loyalty and
subservience arising from acceptance of the Catholic religion and experience with the power of priests within the colonial hierarchy, but accompanied by personal resentments; to generalized or group hostility because of common experience with economic exploitation by the friars; and finally, to the violently anti-friar sentiments of the masses during the Revolution (see Chapters 9 and 10) which resulted in demands for their expulsion and in the rise of an indigenous Church.

It is very clear that this transformation in the realm of consciousness was a response to a material stimulus — the transformation of the Church from a colonial accessory to the principal apparatus of colonial appropriation and exploitation.

PART II

THE CRUCIBLE OF PRACTICE