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The Chinese in Negros Occidental

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Introduction

The Chinese in Negros Occidental had progressed because of the friendly environment which they found from the very beginning of their immigration to the province. The result was friction-free inter-marriages and social inter-relationships between the natives and the Intsik. While the Negrosanon were also influenced by the strong and official biases of the Spanish regime against the Chinese and the spill-over prejudice by the American and the early Philippine governments, the Chinese and their descendants in Negros Occidental did not suffer the same fate as had been experienced by the Chinese in other parts of the Philippines.

The arrival of the Chinese in Negros Occidental was not seen as a threat to the economic enterprises of the natives. While the natives were engaged in subsistence agriculture, the Chinese and the Chinese-mestizos were traders who provided goods that the natives needed or which improved their lives. The Chinese were skilled workers and industrious individuals whose patience and humility contrasted sharply with the manner of the Castilian colonizers.

The Chinese came to Negros at the time of great need for skills in the sugar industry and in the booming new enterprises as well as changing social manners of "sophisticated" living among the emerging prosperous natives of the province. They did not come to conquer, to colonize or to take over the native enterprises. The Chinese thus prospered and inter-married with Filipinas from the upper crust of society.

The cause of this friendly environment can be traced to the fact that Negros Occidental had not been given importance by the Spanish colonial government until the last 50 years of their colonial rule. When it was developed later, anti-Chinese sentiments in the Philippines had died down somewhat; in fact, in some cases official welcome was

extended to attract the Chinese to come to the Philippines. The Chinese and their descendants who came to Negros earlier were not seen as threats to the colonial economic activities and thus were left to mix with and inter-relate with the Filipinos.

This short paper traces the beginnings of the Chinese and Chinese descendants in Negros Occidental and how they influenced the social, political, religious and economic life of the province and its people. A more comprehensive study is contained in my book, *The Chinese in Negros* which was published in 1980. Since that time, the author had taken a continuing keen interest in the Chinese community which has also responded with greater awareness of their own identity and share in the development of the province as evidenced by the inclusion of the study of the local Chinese in the classrooms of two Chinese-founded schools in Bacolod City using the above-mentioned book as the main reference.

It is my hope that this brief paper will contribute to the continuing study and appreciation of one of the most important peoples to mingle with and become part of the Philippine heritage.

Early contacts

Though the earliest contacts between the Chinese and the Philippines cannot be definitely determined, indications of varying relations are believed to have occurred over one millennium and a half years ago. Later Chinese writings of the 13th century show that the Philippines had already become a point of trade and that the larger islands already were identified and commercial relations established with them. Philippine products went to China and Chinese goods were sold in the Philippines. Agricultural and forest products were priced by the Chinese while Chinese crafts and industrial products enriched the lives of the Filipinos.

Prior to the arrival of Spanish colonizers in Negros island in 1565, the Chinese were already well known. The first Spanish expedition to Negros in April 1565, tried to pass themselves off during a dark night as Chinese merchants but the natives told them that their language was not Chinese, their voices were definitely not Chinese and their ships were too big compared to the Chinese junks. The natives warned the Spaniards to leave or they would attack the next morning. Spanish

superior force prevailed and the natives fled when they saw the large cannons at the bow of the ship. This incident tells us clearly that the natives in Negros knew the Chinese well enough to be able to distinguish the Chinese in the dark. There are, of course, artifacts found in Negros to show this, but it can also be said that these artifacts could have been brought from the other islands. The night incident, however, underscores the fact that the Chinese did not only trade but had close personal and commercial relations with the natives.

Fr. Jose Ma. Pavon, parish priest of Himamaylan in 1838, wrote that among the few people who knew how to write, were natives and "descendants of China." Indeed, the presence of Chinese Christians were recorded in the earliest Church records still available in Bacolod. The Chinese Christians were listed since 1755 separately or their national identity specified in the baptismal, marriage and burial records of the parishes. The available records listed the Chinese Christians in Bago, Binalbagan, and Bacolod. Pavon was writing much later than this list.

It should be made clear, however, that these Chinese Christians were mestizos rather than pure Chinese. The 1770 record showed that there were only three Chinese in Negros and that two were expelled from the island as a result of the Spanish decree of 1766 to ship out all Chinese in the Philippines who had not become Christians. In 1762, the Chinese had risen in arms against Spain and the government ordered their expulsion. The later expulsion order of 1768 included all Chinese, whether Christian or not. Only two were expelled from Negros because the other was incapacitated.

The attraction of Negros to the Chinese mestizos was the abundance of arable lands. In nearby provinces or in Manila, lands were already titled or occupied by the Spaniards or the native landlords. Negros, however, was a vast virgin forest land where people still lived in subsistence economy. The Spaniards had encouraged the Chinese to work in agriculture rather than in trading which the Spaniards wanted for themselves. Desiring to stay in the country, the Chinese chose to marry Filipinas and work in land. From here emerged the landed Chinese mestizo class in Negros Occidental.

Although the Spanish government rescinded its expulsion order of 1766 and in 1778 invited again the Chinese to come to the Philippines, no Chinese came to Negros. Of the 1,116 Chinese who arrived in the Philippines in 1778-1779, not one chose to live in Negros, although four

chose Iloilo. There was a large Chinese community in Molo, the *parian* of Iloilo while there was none in Negros. The 1852 Church registry in Negros showed 63 Chinese mestizos but not a single Chinese.

Of the Chinese mestizos in the province were secular priests, Fr. Roman Manuel Locsin of Bacolod, Fr. Eusebio Locsin of Silay (brother of Roman Manuel), and Fr. Simon Gosiaoco of Bago. Fr. Damacio Yanson and Fr. Julian Gonzaga, former parish priests of Bacolod were of Chinese-Filipino stock. The other Chinese mestizos were farmers, *jornaleros* or *comerciantes*, though of the last occupation there were few. The surnames of these Chinese mestizos are still very familiar in Negros Occidental, but instead of being farmers or farm hands, they are hacenderos, politicians, traders and industrialists. Their names grace the social and civic directory of the province. Of the 40 persons who became governors of the province since 1901, 20 are of Filipino-Chinese stock and of the four bishops of Bacolod, two were Chinese mestizos.

The Chinese come to Negros

The vast economic potentials of Negros Occidental was finally recognized by the Spanish colonial government in 1840. The peace and order problem, however, was a negative factor. Native religious leaders had been rising in revolt against Spain and had made development in Negros difficult. The island was merely a *corregimiento* and colonial administration was poor. There were no roads linking the towns except the shoreline paths that were exposed during low tides. The agricultural economy had been declining because the native religious leaders were urging the people to produce only for their own needs and deny the Spaniards a means of living off the products of the land.

The products of the island were mainly hemp, bananas, rice, sweet potatoes, tobacco in small quantity, honey and wax, corn and cacao. In 1842, a small plot of sugarcane was planted in Silay and in Bacolod, mainly for home consumption. This was a spill-over of the emergence of sugar production in Iloilo. In 1850, sugar production in Negros was 1,000 tons and this had increased to 5,000 tons in 1854. At this time, the port of Iloilo was opened to international shipping and trade and an influx of industrial products from England threatened the local textile (*sinamay*) industries which was a mainly traded by the Iloilo Chinese.

The opening of the port also signaled the demand for sugar from Iloilo. Land was limited in that province which was producing a large volume of rice and other grains. Negros beckoned as the virgin land and the Spaniards encouraged the development of Negros. Three important decisions were made by the colonial government along this line. The island administration was raised to the level of a politico-military province, the Augustinian Recollects, sent to Negros in 1848 had been augmented with more priests as parishes were encouraged to be established and the English were allowed to establish a sugar trading company to export the commodity as a back haul of the textile-laden British ships.

The coming of the Chinese to Negros coincided with the development of the sugar industry. A Royal Decree of August 5, 1850 allowed *hacenderos* with annual agricultural production of P2,500 to import as many as 400 Chinese workers and those with less, 200 Chinese farm hands. These Chinese *jornaleros*, however, should devote themselves only in agriculture. There was an added incentive. If a Chinese worked in a province with a population of 30,000 or less, the Chinese would pay an annual tax similar to those paid by the natives. At this time, Negros had just about that number of tribute payers.

The need for extra workers was due to the peculiar method of sugarcane production. Once the canes are mature, they must be harvested immediately. When the canes are over-matured, they begin to lose their sucrose content. This meant that a large number of cane cutters must be employed. At that time, there were few farmers willing to work in the cane fields because they had their own farms and they did not have the skills required for an efficient manner of cutting the cane. The Chinese workers, on the other hand, were skilled in sugar cultivation and processing and had the patience for the back-breaking work. They were thus priced for their skills and industry. By the end of 1850, there were already registered eight Chinese in Negros farms and these were employed to teach farm workers.

The sugar industry continued to expand since then. The process of sugar production depended on the Chinese system known as *de sangre*. This was a set of three rounded, wooden blocks, vertically set side by side and turned on against each other to press the cane that passed through them. The canes were inserted inside the narrow gap between the blocks as these were turned by a wooden gear attached to a pole. The pole was attached to the shoulder of the carabao which walked

around to activate the press.

As a result of this Chinese influence, most of the terminologies of sugar cultivation and processing, including sugar packaging, were Chinese. The Chinese were so valuable in the emerging sugar industry that they were given special treatment. They were industrious and thrifty that soon they were able to buy lands of their own and cultivated their own sugar farms. With their new status as *hacenderos*, it was not difficult for them to marry the landed native ladies. From this breed of Chinese arose the Chinese mestizos who became the landed gentry of Negros Occidental. In due time, there were no longer Chinese *jornaleros* and their descendants became the leading figures in the history of the province.

The influx of the Chinese and Chinese mestizos in Negros was also a result of the fire that gutted the commercial and residential areas of Molo, the Chinatown of nearby Iloilo. The decline in *sinamay* trade had been catastrophic to the Chinese traders in Molo and the fire of 1870 bankrupted many. There were already some of their kind who had bought and developed lands in Negros for sugar production. They shifted their trading skills to Negros and joined in the sugar industry trading.

Others engaged in sugar financing, a vital function in the industry considering that the cost of clearing the forest and cultivating the first crop took at least three years. Since there were no banks, a mortgage system was used. The sugar farmer would secure cash advances which paid in kind to the financier. The financier was also the trader, the transporter of sugar to Iloilo, the warehouse owner and the auctioneer. After deducting all the costs—from interest to auction service fee—the financier turned over the balance to the farmer.

From this system arose the “sugar factor” which the Chinese and the Chinese mestizos monopolized. They had the money, the *lorchas*, the warehouses in Iloilo and the trading connection. They eventually foreclosed thousands of mortgaged farms and became big *hacenderos*. The original landowners moved inland or lost their farms. The system of sugar production was that every *hacendero* must own the sugar mill, or was charged high processing fees in other mills after owners had finished milling their own canes. The Chinese financiers also came into the picture and secured the sugar. The Chinese and their descendants were to remain the major sugar traders to this day.

There is, however, emerging a new kind of Chinese descendants in the sugar industry today which would approximate with the “sugar factor” of the last century. These are the trader-millers who are strong in sugar trading and had bought sugar mills to insure the stability of their sugar stock. This is a phenomenon in Negros Occidental in particular and the sugar industry in general. The traders are themselves landowners, though smaller in comparison to the Chinese and the Chinese mestizos of the past. They now own the processing plants. The traders have also become industrialists, like families of Chan, Lopingco and Gokongwei.

In 1870, after the Molo fire, there were 165 Chinese registered in Negros Occidental compared to only 359 Spaniards out of the total provincial population of 160,000. There were, on the other hand, over 4,000 Chinese mestizos. The movement of the Chinese and the Chinese mestizos from Iloilo to Negros at the outbreak of the sugar industry was such that in 1857, the authorities prohibited their emigration.

The prohibition included the Europeans who were also rushing to Negros with Chinese workers in tow. The intending *emigre* must secure a pass from the Captain-General in Manila and approval took over two months. But the Negros-bound movement continued that the authorities relaxed the prohibition in 1867 for the Europeans. The prohibition for the Chinese remained though they kept on coming, waiting for weeks for their passes to be approved.

On September 26, 1888, the prohibition against the Chinese transferring from one island to another was lifted. The Chinese population in Negros rose to 655 in a year and in 1889, another 156 Chinese were registered for permanent residence. Some came directly from China aboard the vessel Sungking or from Binondo aboard the ship Don Juan. Some were smuggled in. They spread out all over the province, though most stayed in largely populated areas of Bacolod, Silay, Saravia, Valladolid, Talisay, Hinigaran and La Carlota. Surprisingly, the Chinese did not stay in Bago, although it is near Bacolod and prosperous. Even today, the Chinese preferred staying in other towns.

Unlike the Chinese who came from 1850 to 1870, the new arrivals were merchants. These were the people who brought in to the developing Negros economy the tools for farm and sugar cultivation, sugar processing and new skills in construction and food processing. In the field of construction, the Chinese artisans executed the plans for the construction of the imposing San Sebastian Cathedral, the mansions

of the rich and the Spanish colonial officials, the military fort and the churches that rose in Negros Occidental from 1860 to the end of the Spanish regime in 1898.

In 1884, there were 590 Chinese who were registered in Negros Occidental and 20 of them were granted business licenses. Three years later, there were already 627 registered Chinese and 115 were licensed businessmen. The number of Chinese in Negros rose to 800 in 1894 with 523 of them granted licenses to do business. On the other hand, there were 30 Filipinos, Spaniards and Chinese mestizos licensed businessmen in 1884 and in 1894, their combined number rose to only 717. While it appears that the number of Filipinos, Spaniards and Chinese mestizos granted business licenses were bigger in number compared to the Chinese, 681 of the licenses granted to this combine were for sugar milling, while the rest were for operation of gambling and boarding houses and coffee shops, making of native rice cakes, transport, machine shop and sale of *tuba* and native construction materials.

The Chinese by this time (1894) had already controlled the merchandizing enterprises in Negros. In fact, until the end of the Spanish period, not a single business license for bakery was given to a Filipino or a Spaniard, but four were granted to sugar mills to service their large tracts of lands and transport systems for their sugar trading business. The business licenses granted to the Chinese included trading in cacao, tobacco, abaca and copra. They also monopolized the sale of farm implements, sugar processing tools equipments and home appliances.

The Chinese and their descendants had become so well placed in the social and economic life of the province that by the time of the Negros Revolution in November 1898, the leadership of the uprising was under the hands of Chinese and Spanish mestizos, rather than the native leaders. Leandro Locsin raised money for the revolution, Aniceto Lacson led the northern army while Juan Araneta led the southern army. Jose Yanson negotiated for the Spanish surrender. All these leaders were of Chinese stock. When the Negros Revolution won, discriminatory laws and regulations imposed by the Spaniards against the Chinese were lifted and the Chinese were allowed to compete like any citizen and even to bid for government monopolies.

Negros Chinese and Philippine nationalism

The Chinese in Negros began to experience a change of attitude after the Revolution when complaints were raised that they had an unreasonably strong economic control compared to their number. The Revolutionary Government, however, squelched the criticisms by showing that ten percent of the government tax revenues were contributed by the Chinese merchants from their businesses and head tax and another twenty percent from their opium trade. The Chinese were given the freedom to trade opium among themselves and this was raking in a lot of tax revenues for the new government. From their sugar trading, they were contributing another ten percent. The Chinese had a high economic profile and thus invited serious concern among the natives.

The improved lot of the Chinese under the government was bolstered with the adoption of the Negros Constitution in 1899 because the new constitution did not define citizenship in the Negros Republic and thus it was inferred that the people living in Negros at the time of the adoption of the Constitution were citizens. But more specifically, the Negros Constitution provided that:

"All aliens and denizens have the same rights to purchase, acquire, possess, enjoy, sell, transmit, lease, hire, let, convey, hypothecate, mortgage, devise, bequeath, and inherit property as citizens, save and except that public lands open for location can be located and acquired in the first instance only by citizens of the State. Mines and real property necessary for the proper working thereof, may, however, be acquired and disposed of in the same manner by aliens and denizens as by citizens."

This constitution survived only for two years as the Americans took over the colonial administration of the Philippines and in 1901 Negros Occidental was incorporated as one of the civil provinces of the Philippines. This incorporation, however, was opposed by many citizens and with the support of the Panay revolutionaries linked to the Malolos Government, the rebellion against the Americans erupted in Negros Occidental. In this revolt, two Chinese, Za Tan and Chi Tan, extended financial support from the contributions of the other Chinese nationals in the islands. Organized resistance to the Americans ended with the collapse of the Philippine Republic. In Negros, the rebellion continued until the capture of the native leader, Papa Isio in 1907.

The economic downturn during the first decade of American rule had caused some Negrosanon to demand that the Chinese be expelled and that the natives should undertake the economic activities of the Chinese. Governor Antonio Jayme, however reasoned that the Chinese were skilled traders while the Filipinos were afraid to take the risk of competition and thus had always preferred to cultivate the land than to trade.

From 1903, the province experienced a contraction of the sugar industry as prices of sugar went down and workers could not be secured from the nearby provinces as in the past because they had become expensive. It was proposed to import Chinese workers who were willing to receive a lower wage. This was rejected "because the Chinese did not remain workmen, but become competitors in other lines of business." The importation of Japanese workers, however, was acceptable to many. Both proposals were scrapped as the price of sugar rose in 1909 and the immigrant, seasonal workers (*sacadas*) returned.

This debate opened the question of the Chinese presence. The Filipinos were limited to the practice of profession or employment or in agriculture. The Chinese controlled the retail trade. An American visitor in Negros in 1907 described a scene to show the contrast between the Chinese and the Filipino entrepreneurs:

The Chinese merchants are occupying a block or more two-storey buildings, well-built, and for that country, modern. Their stocks of goods were well up to date. The buildings of the large foreign firms . . . are of the single large Spanish type. As these firms do the principal large contract purchases of sugar, they do not carry a stock of goods such as carried by the retail Chinese merchant. These latter are small traders and for that part the most successful traders. Across the street . . . are the native one-storey nipa shacks, comprising the native or Filipino stores. The stocks of goods they carry could be purchased for 100 or 150 pesos, and the trade is practically limited to the sale of vegetables, small articles and chickens.

The Chinese became the main economic ally of the Americans who came in to take their share of the Philippine economy. In 1910, two lumber mills were constructed in Negros, the American-owned Insular Lumber Company which was then considered the largest in the world, and the North Negros Lumber Company owned by Dee C. Chuan.

ILCO catered mainly to the export of Philippine lumber while NNLC supplied the domestic market. When the NNLC was razed to the ground in 1930, a Chinese mestizo, Tranquilino Valderrama became the leading lumberman. The majority of the Chinese remained in the trading business while the Americans became the industrialists and the volume suppliers from their imports and nation-wide distribution. The Chinese, not willing to give the Americans reason to complain, became the major distribution outlets of the Americans.

The economic and political difficulties in China in 1920 led many Chinese to move to the Philippines and dislodged Filipinos from employment by receiving low wages. In Negros, they came as peddlers of goods and buyers of recyclable materials like empty bottles, scrap iron and discarded tin cans. Others came to work with their fellow Chinese, some of whom were their relatives. They were mostly young with a few in their early teens. None of them came to work in the farms but in merchandizing, food processing and crafts.

In 1934, there were registered 300 Chinese. While this number appears less than the number registered during the Spanish time, the reason is that the Chinese in Negros at the inception of American rule were considered Filipinos. This 300 belonged to a new crop of Chinese and had already become politicized by the events in China after the fall of the Manchu dynasty. These newcomers were either members of the Kuomintang or became one to be able to secure the protection of the Philippine Chinese. There appeared Chinese and Chinese mestizos who showed political allegiance to the mainland. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce was organized in Negros in 1925, creating suspicion that the Chinese were a people apart and raising questions about their loyalty.

The establishment of the Tay Tung High School in 1935 by the Chamber reinforced the suspicion, although the purpose was to accommodate the growing number of Chinese children and to inculcate the Chinese culture which was being lost through interaction with the other children in the public schools. Local Chinese leaders emerged and closer coordination of the Chinese population took place. Their meetings were held at night and in closed doors and since they were using a foreign language, the local population suspected their motives and action. Accusations of price fixing, manipulation of goods, adulteration, use of dog and cat's meat in food they sold and even kidnaping were lodged against the local Chinese community.

The truth was the Chinese could not meet during the day as they had business to attend to, they were more comfortable and expressive in their Chinese tongue and that a closed door was a normal procedure for any meeting, unless these were public ones. Accusations of economic conspiracy, however, had not been shown though it was common for merchants having similar products to cooperate. Price fixing could not be discounted, but it could not also be proved.

The Japanese invasion of China galvanized the local Chinese to political action. They had avoided politics, except among a few since their contacts and collaboration were primarily economic. The anti-Japanese feeling was strong. Reinforced by American anti-Japanese propaganda, the Chinese were more open in their opposition to Japanese imperialism. When the Japanese invaded Negros in May 1942 and the guerrillas engaged the Japanese in a continuing fight for the next two years and a half, the local Chinese supported the guerrillas. In the guise of peddling their goods, they sent to the mountains scarce materials as food, ink typewriter ribbons, clothing, medicines and, most importantly, intelligence information of Japanese locations, movements, level of preparedness and intentions.

The Chinese Revolution of 1949 drove many Chinese to Negros when the Philippine Government accepted Chinese refugees from the mainland. In all, Negros received 3,500 Chinese nationals, according to the Immigration Office, but records in 1958, showed that there were only 2,960 Chinese nationals in the province, sixty percent of whom were in Bacolod City. This number dropped to 2,494 in 1970 and since then the number declined by an average of 2.7 percent annually. In 1977-78, the decline registered 14% because of the easy naturalization process mandated by President Ferdinand E. Marcos under Letter of Instruction 270. The continuing decline showed more Chinese in Negros Occidental opting to become Filipino citizens.

The passage of the Retail Trade Nationalization Law on June 19, 1954 was due to the growing resentment of the perceived control of the retail trade by the Chinese, though in truth, at least in Negros Occidental, most of the so-called Chinese in the retail trade were Filipino citizens or mestizos. The impact in Negros was clear. When the law was passed, there were 272 Chinese-owned retail stores. In 1979, there were only 31 left, all of these being still the original retailers who held on to their business since the law allowed the Chinese retailers to continue their operation until death though they

could not convey their business to their heirs who were not Filipinos.

On the other hand, Chinese-owned partnerships and corporations which were given only ten years to remain in business disappeared in Negros in 1965. In 1954, there were 54 of these types of businesses. They were slowly liquidated until 1964 when there were 25 left. But the next year, not one remained in Chinese hands. The shift, however, could be seen from Chinese to Filipino ownership. In the rural areas, the Chinese businesses completely disappeared and only 44 Chinese of all ages remained.

Impact of Chinese presence

In a sense, the Chinese has become part of the Negros population. Many Chinese institutions are being integrated with the indigenous peoples. The active presence of the Chinese mestizos in politics, government, the professions, civic clubs, citizens action programs, schools and the absence of a Chinatown all contributed to the rapid integration of the two racial groups. The Chinese had enriched the social, cultural, political and religious life of the Negrosanon. To this extent the impact of the Chinese presence in the province had been uplifting. Though there remained some instances of racial prejudice, these are now being particularized rather than generalized as in the past.

The Negros scene is incomplete without reference to the contribution of the Chinese in Negros Occidental. It had been shown how the Chinese skilled workers made possible the development of the sugar industry. Though this lasted for only a quarter of a century before the Chinese immigrants left the hard work in the farms to become entrepreneurs and *hacenderos*, nevertheless the Chinese made possible the introduction of techniques and systems that made Negros the sugar bowl of the country.

The language of the Negrosanon is basically Hiligaynon, but it had been enriched by many Chinese words which could run into hundreds. There are terminologies in Hiligaynon which many Negrosanon believe are native words when in truth these are of Chinese origin. Many of these terms are found in food, in processing, in farming, in crafts and industries. Even ordinary conversations are not pure Hiligaynon but are of Chinese origin. Some words are corruptions of the original

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Chinese but the meanings are there.

The presence of Chinese words in many farm products indicate that the Chinese had either brought them to the island or that the Chinese had influenced their cultivation. This included farm animals and methods of work or implements of work in the farm or at home. The wide range of household implements are of Chinese origin indicating that these could have been introduced by the Chinese themselves, before or during the Spanish times. Even terminologies about personal relations between husband and wife or man and woman have Chinese sources.

Two major efforts of the Chinese community in Negros that removed many of the previous irritants and misunderstanding are the opening of the Chinese schools to Filipino students and the active participation of the Chinese mestizos in civic action work. The two schools, Tay Tung High School and the St. John's Institute are two leading educational institutions in the province. The schools now have more Filipino students than Chinese mestizos and hardly a Chinese. Noteworthy is the desire of many Filipino parents to have their children in these schools, not only because of their high standard but because Filipino parents want their children to learn the Chinese language.

The Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce—reputedly supportive of the Republic of China, and the Amity Club believed close to the People's Republic of China, are engaged in active civic action. Both have fire brigades whose excellent performance in times of fires and natural disasters are well known. There are many Chinese mestizos in the civic clubs, making their presence felt in fund-raising activities for social programs. There is no civic club in Bacolod City or in any of the major cities of the province where there are no Chinese origin members. There are also family associations for Chinese with similar family names, though most of these are already Filipinos.

The arrival here in 1949 of Chinese priests helped bring the Chinese closer to the Filipinos. In 1952, the second bishop of Bacolod, Msgr. Manuel Yap, a Chinese descendant, took within the wings of the Bacolod diocese, the priests who fled China. A school was soon established, Hua Ming High School. This opened its doors to Chinese, Chinese mestizos and Filipino students. Because it is a Catholic school, it took active part in inter-school activities. Its name was later changed to St. John's Institute. It opened a big church and a large auditorium

in its campus. Msgr. Antonio Yapsuco Fortich, another prelate of Chinese ancestry who succeeded Msgr. Yap, gave the school more impetus in its intermingling with the Filipino community. The church two years ago was converted into a parish church under Msgr. John Liu as parish priest, the first Chinese to hold such a position. Close to 40 years ago, he and some seminarians fled China and is now one of the most distinguished priests in the diocese with his active assistance in the development of the community.

The integration of the Chinese community is obvious. There is no area of Negros life which had escaped enrichment by the Chinese heritage of the Negrosanon. The awareness of the Negrosanon whose racial inheritance is Chinese is taken as a matter of course that many of these early Chinese descendants consider themselves Filipinos rather than Chinese mestizos. Some Chinese took the name of their baptismal godfathers during the Spanish times and their patrons during the Republic to hide, as it were, their Chinese ancestry and yet their features remain. Some even use two names, one Chinese and one Christian to retain their sense of identity.

With the full acceptance of the Chinese in Negros, such practices would soon disappear and the Chinese, as his descendants, will be as proud as the native in his homeland. The history of the Chinese sojourn in Negros tells us that in time the integration will be complete for those who came and found a new life in Negros Occidental. As one old Chinese who wished to die and be buried in Negros said, "the fruit will fall from the tree to find new roots."