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THE CHINESE IN PAMPANGA

I am not a Chinese from Pampanga and neither am I doing any research on the Chinese in Pampanga. What made me present a paper on the Chinese in Pampanga is because in the process of gathering materials on the Chinese in Philippine local history, I came across very interesting materials about the Chinese in Pampanga, which I feel must be shared with a wider audience, especially those interested in ethnic Chinese studies.

Basically, my presentation is based on one book entitled *The Pampangans — Colonial Society in a Philippine Province* by John A. Larkin (Quezon City: New Day Publisher, 1993). I find the materials about the history of Chinese in Pampanga in the book covering the period from 1603 up to the mid-19th century quite substantive. But what makes it more significant and worth studying are the parallelisms in the typical experiences of the Chinese in the Philippines as a whole and the observant conclusions about them. My presentation, in general, covers my personal observations and conclusions from the facts and materials presented by the author in this book on *The Pampangans*. From these observations, which I am trying to present, it is my belief and hope that one may get more ideas and enlightenment in studying and doing research about the Chinese in the Philippines, as well as in other localities.

It is worth pointing out at the outset that the history of the Chinese in Pampanga incidentally is closely related to two of the six massacres against the Chinese during the Spanish period. It is said that:

In 1603, a group of Chinese fled to Pampanga to escape a Spanish massacre in Manila, and after the danger had subsided, many stayed on to form a small but thriving community in the pueblo of Guagua (p.48).

Apparently, this was the beginning of the Chinese history in Pampanga. In 1762, another massacre against the Chinese occurred. This time, it was particularly against the Chinese in Guagua and 6,000 Chinese were massacred.

These two events themselves clearly showed the significance of the history of the Chinese in Pampanga. The first massacre is the objective reason that forced this group of Chinese in Manila to escape to Pampanga. If not for that sad event, the Chinese in Manila might not have gone to Pampanga — at least, not that early. The second massacre shows that although this group of Chinese had escaped to Pampanga in 1603 to avoid being massacred by the Spaniards, 159 years later, their descendants were still the victims of yet another massacre. This illustrates well the suffering and oppression of the Chinese in the Philippines during the colonial regime of the Spaniards — one cannot simply escape.

On the other hand, the reason the first Chinese who went to Pampanga chose and settled in Guagua is because:

This port (Guagua) on the Guagua River near Manila Bay offered a unique opportunity. Almost all of the goods entering and leaving the province (Pampanga) passed through its wharves and warehouses, creating for the Chinese many possibilities for middlemen operations (p.48).

In other words, it is the strategic location and geographic convenience of Guagua that attracted the Chinese to settle there on one hand, and facilitated the Chinese there to become middlemen on the other hand. In turn, it made Guagua become a commercial center of Pampanga, a fact the book illustrated as it recounted about:

...the early penetration of a few Chinese into the countryside; but for the most part, they remained near the center of commercial activity, establishing some of the longest family lines in Guagua.

Because of the dire shortage of Chinese women, the Chinese of Pampanga formed many alliances with native women, and over the course of the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries, a Chinese mestizo community sprang up which initially identified with the culture of its male forebears. By 1738 the mestizos, numbering between four and five thousand, had settled in Bacolor, the pueblo neighboring Guagua, and by 1746 had formed their own gremio... (p.49).

Although we do not have the exact number of Chinese who moved to Guagua in 1603, the number of Chinese mestizos who settled in Bacolor, the neighboring town of Guagua, 135 years after, reached between 4,000 to 5,000.

This shows the magnitude of the social impact of this "migration" — not only the intermarriage that produced this particular sector in Philippine society, but the role which they played in Philippine society — economic, cultural, as well as political. Nobody would have known before hand that "because of the dire shortage of Chinese women," such social phenomenon would have resulted. On one hand, this social change can be said to be the "contribution" of these pioneer Chinese; on the other hand, it can also be said that this is the "contribution" of the Filipino women. In this context, we probably can say that it is the natural consequence of the migration only of the male gender in early days. If they brought with

them their wives then, history may have been changed somewhat.

As the number of mestizos grew, the Chinese community proportionately also became gradually desinized. As Larkin observed:

The small Chinese settlement in Guagua maintained its cultural Chineseness through communication with the Chinese settlement in Manila and a small trickle of new immigrants. After one generation of intermarriage, however, most of the Chinese appeared on the mestizo padron even though many of them still considered themselves Chinese...

As the community grew, many young mestizos were forced to seek new opportunities since those in Guagua were limited by the slow growth of the port. Bacolor, a subsidiary market town to Guagua, drew most of these immigrants, who established themselves in various commercial activities and eventually formed their own gremio with their own gobernadorcillo. Their business ties assured contact with their Chinese relations in Guagua, but, living away from the heart of the Chinese community at Guagua, the mestizos began to shed their Sinitic culture and become more "indianized" (p.50).

Several observations can be drawn from the above quotes:

- ↳ That the small Chinese settlement in Guagua was able to maintain its cultural Chineseness through communication with the Chinese settlement in Manila and the trickle of new Chinese immigrants, without which this small Chinese settlement may have been totally assimilated into the larger society or "indianized" more easily. This, similarly, is also the case with the Chinese settlement in Manila — though it is much bigger in size of course — their continuous communication with fellow Chinese and the new Chinese immigrants were also crucial in maintaining their Chineseness. Without this kind of communication or contact and without the new immigrants, which we cite here as objective conditions, it will be very hard for the Chinese community to maintain its Chineseness.
- ↳ On the other hand, in the case of many Chinese mestizos, because they were "living away from the heart of the Chinese community — 'Chinatown' — at Guagua, they began to shed their Sinitic culture and became more 'indianized.'" This shows the important role played by the heart of a Chinese community in maintaining the Chineseness of the Chinese and the Chinese mestizos as well. And the reason for them to live away from the heart of the Chinese community at Guagua was because they were "forced to seek new opportunities since those in Guagua were limited by the slow growth of the port."
- ↳ The role of the new immigrants in the cultural aspect should also be considered. The number of Chinese or its population in a certain locality is also significant. The bigger the number, the easier for them to maintain their Chineseness and vice versa. It is in this context that the new immigrants play a role. Take the case of the new immigrants in the late 70s, 80s, and 90s; it is

because of their arrival that the traditional Chinese community — the Chinatown in Manila — was able to maintain their traditions and Chineseness. This is reflected in the Chinese newspaper, the Chinese school or Chinese language education and even in a lot of Chinese organizations.

The mestizos enjoyed a relatively open field for their business operations in Pampanga. A well-established Chinese in Guagua whose lucrative place in port activities could only benefit from the increase in trade had little incentive and less inclination to move out to pueblos isolated from Chinese culture. By contrast, the mestizos, who had already lost some of their Chinese cultural orientation, did not find it difficult to settle in the native pueblos (p.52).

This illustrates the difference between mestizos and Chinese in the business operation in Pampanga and the impact of the Chinese cultural factor in Chinese businesses. The Chinese in Guagua seemed too dependent on their lucrative place in port activities that they hesitated to move out to other places, especially places isolated from Chinese culture. On one hand, for a certain period, those Chinese may have benefited from the lucrative location and the Chinese culture in Guagua, but on the other hand, it also limited their development and expansion to other places, unlike the mestizos who did not find it difficult to settle in native *pueblos*, which must be an advantage for their business expansion.

...The mestizos, indeed, were a fast growing group, their number jumping from around 4,500 in 1738 to more than 13,000 by 1799 (p.52).

These figures not only show the fast growth of the mestizo class but also indicate the magnitude of the impact of Chinese in Pampanga in general, and Guagua and Bacolor in particular, as far as population is concerned. Today, although it is very hard to verify and compute the exact number of mestizos in Pampanga, based on the number of mestizos in 1799 and the growth rate based on the above figures, after almost 200 years the number of mestizos or people of Chinese descent in Pampanga must number up to hundreds of thousand.

Another potential source of business competition, new Chinese coming up from Manila, was stemmed by Spanish law. Because of their collaboration with the enemy during the British occupation of Manila from 1762 to 1764, the Chinese population in the Philippines was severely reduced in number and prohibited from living in the provinces. For eighty-three years, from 1766 to 1849, the Chinese in Manila could not offer any competition to the Pampanga mestizos (p. 53).

Although the above quote cites the competition to the mestizos, what is important here is to take note that the restriction imposed upon other Chinese by the Spanish authorities resulted in the severe reduction of the number of the Chinese in the Philippines but also retarded their development and expansion to the prov-

inces. With this kind of restriction, one just cannot imagine how the Chinese can develop their businesses. Such policies were a big blow or stumbling block to Chinese businesses that they were not able to stop.

The new members of the provincial elite came mainly from the Chinese mestizo group but, in a more limited fashion, the Chinese after 1850 also formed a specialized economic elite (p.84).

Take note of the difference between the Chinese mestizo elite in the province and the Chinese economic elite. The mestizo provincial elite were elites with political power and influence, while the Chinese elite remained only in business and in a "more limited fashion." Thus the limitation of the influence of Chinese businessmen and their indirect influence or contribution through mestizo heirs.

Following a trend begun in the late eighteenth century, enterprising Chinese mestizos continued to forge their way into the provincial upper class to such an extent that it became difficult to differentiate and separate native and mestizo elite groups (p. 85).

...Many so-called "natives" were in actuality Chinese mestizos who had become the province's most active entrepreneurs since the late eighteenth century (p. 77).

Historically, the Chinese mestizos were politically and culturally Filipino; as evidenced by the Chinese-mestizo elite who became difficult to differentiate from the native elite. This fast assimilative process of the Chinese mestizos was indeed a great contribution of the Chinese to Philippine society, although in an indirect sense and not as a conscious act.

Land ownership did not have the same attraction for the Chinese... (p. 77)

This was due to the sojourner mentality among the Chinese and their lack of political and cultural identity with the Philippines. This also explains why the policy of the Spanish colonials to attract the Chinese into agriculture failed. Unlike today, when most of the Chinese already got their citizenship, settled permanently, and identified themselves with the country, many are now so eager to own land.

...association with Pampangans and the absence of a large Chinese community from 1765 to 1850 encouraged closer mestizo identification with native society and occupations. Finally, when the more competitive Chinese returned after 1850, the mestizos were forced out of commercial activities and almost completely into farming (pp. 87-88).

The absence of a large (enough to have its influence) Chinese community indeed facilitates the identification of Chinese mestizos with native society and its commercial activities. Thus, the massacre of Chinese in Guagua in 1762, which caused the absence of a large Chinese community in Pampanga from 1765 to

1850, really affected the historical development of Pampanga in general and the Chinese mestizos in particular.

The Chinese, freed from restrictions against residence in the provinces, increased their number in Pampanga from 153 in 1848 to almost 1,100 in 1893. Prohibited by law from agricultural activities, they came to dominate various economic pursuits in Pampanga (p. 88).

The abolition of the restriction of residence in the province against the Chinese in Manila was indeed very significant as far as Chinese history and its development in the Philippines is concerned. Without this policy, the economic development of the Chinese in the province, as well as the development of the Chinese mestizos and the province where Chinese had moved into, would be quite different. On the other hand, it also highlighted how political decisions and policies of the colonizer can affect the development of the Chinese.

The Chinese ran distilleries using molasses from pilones and took over the functions of middlemen in the sugar trade between Pampanga and Manila. They served as buyers and transporters of sugar and even established the refineries in the City for the processing of the Pampanga crop... Chinese laborers ran some of the steam mills in Pampanga. There were few non-agricultural operations that the Chinese left untouched. Even in peddling, the Chinese made their presence felt by successfully competing against the indio and mestizo itinerant traders, forcing many of the latter to turn to agriculture (p.88).

Aside from Negros, Pampanga was another province wherein the Chinese contributed much in the sugar industry. What is worth mentioning here is that there were Chinese laborers. In the development of a sugar industry in Pampanga, the Chinese not only introduced the traditional Chinese technique of extracting molasses from sugarcane and distilling sugar from *pilons*, acted as middlemen in the sugar trade, but also contributed manual labor as laborers. Likewise, although the competition they rendered against the natives and Chinese mestizos also affected their commercial or trading activities, it also indirectly forced the Filipino natives and Chinese mestizos to develop and expand into agriculture, which was also needed in the country's economic development as a whole. This was also a social consequence of the movement and expansion of the Chinese into the province.

The Chinese community only interacted with indio-mestizo society in the economic field. Socially and politically they remained apart. In the three municipalities with the highest concentration of Chinese — Guagua, San Fernando, and Angeles — the Chinese formed their own gremios and elected their own gobernadorcillos, never reestablishing the ties of kinship that had united them to the mestizos in the eighteenth century (p. 88).

This conclusion is correct and typical. This is precisely the situation of the Chinese in the Philippines since colonial times until quite recently. What is informative and of historical significance here is the revelation about the Chinese *gremios* and Chinese *gobernadorcillos* elected by the Chinese in Guagua, San Fernando, and Angeles about which we should do further research to dig out the necessary historical documents and materials.

Before I wind up my presentation, I want to cite two more excerpts from the book *The Pampangans*. The first one is:

In 1603 they not only took a major part in what amounted to a Spanish-led massacre of the Chinese population around Manila but also joined the looting of Chinese quarters afterward... and participated in another massacre of the Chinese in 1640 (p.27).

It is sad to disclose that the Pampangans had participated in the massacre of Chinese in 1603 and 1639. But that is history. The sad lesson of colonial divide and rule against the natives and the Chinese must never be forgotten and allowed to happen again. We should unite and fight our common enemy instead.

The second is:

...the discovery of burial sites in Porac containing Chinese pottery from the late T'ang, Sung, Yuan, and Ming periods would indicate only that Pampanga harbored Chinese settlements from the late ninth or early tenth century (p.17).

Note that based on the Chinese potteries discovered in Porac, the history of the Chinese in Pampanga had begun much earlier — as early as late ninth or early 10th century, not just in 1603 after the first massacre of the Chinese. It is also five to six hundred years earlier than when Magellan supposedly “discovered” the Philippines. This fact itself is also of great significance.

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THE ETHNIC CHINESE IN CAMARINES NORTE

Geography and Pre-Spanish History

Camarines Norte is one of six provinces comprising the Bicol Region, the others being Camarines Sur, Albay, Sorsogon, Masbate, and Catanduanes. Except for the last two island provinces, the Bicol Region is a peninsula. However, as late as the first decade of this century, it is physically more of an island because the dense, tropical virgin forest between the region and the Tagalog region made access and egress into the peninsula difficult by water.

Camarines Norte is rich in natural resources: fishing grounds, coral reefs, mangrove swamps, lakes, rivers, alluvial plains for agriculture, forests, and minerals. The Paracale district is rich in gold which Chinese mined before the coming of Spain. This fact is confirmed by ancient mine workings of unmistakable Chinese imprints and excavated Chinese ceramics. Just three years ago, small miners dug by chance an ancient Chinese burial ground that yielded celadon wares.

The Advent of Spain

1571-1800

Camarines Norte first entered recorded history in 1571, when intrepid *conquistador* Juan de Salcedo came to Paracale to verify its gold mines which he heard about when pacifying the Laguna lake settlements. Salcedo returned a few years later, conquered the whole province and left Captain Pedro de Chaves with 80 soldiers to administer the place. Captain Chaves founded Nueva Caceres or Naga City as the capital of Camarines province, which included what is now Camarines Norte and Camarines Sur.

Successful evangelization of Camarines and the whole region by Franciscan missionaries completed the initial conquest of the Spanish soldiers. The Spaniards established permanent settlements with churches and a functioning local government system. They improved traditional agriculture by introducing many