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Working Women of Manila, by Camagay

Review Author: Joseph Lester C. Maramara, S.J.

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positive action, the latter would not have succeeded in setting foot on Philippine soil. Of course, despite the proven loyalty of the Filipinos, local spears and arrows were no match for the stronger war *materiel* the British had brought along.

Though harshly criticized, Manila officials had one redeeming virtue in sending off Anda to head a resistance movement, and keep the millions of Mexican silver from falling into British hands. Considering their mutual mistrust, one wonders what would have happened had the British captured that precious shipment.

As in similar historical episodes, documents are abundant, but they give only partial information. *Manila Ransomed* is perhaps the first book that puts the story as neatly as its author has done. Thus, it is a book I recommend without reservations.

Jose S. Arcilla, S.J.
History Department
Ateneo de Manila University

Working Women of Manila in the Nineteenth Century. By Ma. Luisa Camagay. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995. 197 pages.

This book was published in 1995 but it is still a very relevant summary of Philippine feminism. Traditionally, a woman is considered inferior to men. Her purpose in life is to take care of the home, to be a good and devoted wife to her man, and to be a loving mother to his children. She is considered to be gentle, soft, loving, shy, and coy. But in our present generation, she already has a different and a more radical role in society. Today, all over the world, the rights of the woman have been constantly upheld and fought for by many social groups, especially feminists groups. And in the Philippines, where patriarchy is still being practiced and where man is still the center and the head of the family and society, the struggle to uphold the rights of women is more pronounced. Ma. Luisa Camagay's book is beneficial for this cause, for it presents facts, data, and stories of women in Manila in the nineteenth century who were strong and secured, who had a mind of their own, and who were not dependent on men as opposed to the stereotypical Filipino women who are shy, timid, and subservient. Thelma Kintanar in the foreword comments about this book:

The book contributes to women's studies, not only for the facts it brings to light, but, for the gender perspective it brings to bear on these facts. The author shows how the lives of working women refute the stereotype of the nineteenth century Filipinas as shy, timid, and subservient. According to the author, this was not true of women of the working class who represented the emancipated group of women during the Spanish period.

The book focuses on seven different occupations of women in Manila in the nineteenth century. The *cigarreras* were the women who worked in tobacco factories as cigar makers. The *vendadoras* and *tinderas* sold different things: the *sinamayeras* sold cloths in small stalls, the *buyeras* sold betel nut in the sidewalks, and the *lecheras* and the *mangueras* were the ambulant vendors who sold milk and mangoes respectively. The *bordaderas* did artistic embroideries for richer businessmen and women, and the services of the *costureras* (seamstresses) were considered indispensable for everything handsewn. The *criadas* work as servants to rich people. Most professional women worked as *maestras* (teachers). The *madronas* (unschooled midwives) were competing with the *madronas titulares* (schooled midwives). And the *mujeres publicas* (prostitutes) sold their bodies because of poverty.

The author then presents 10 reasonable conclusions derived from her studies which give the reader a view on the work of these women and on how were they treated as workers:

There was evidence of working women coming together to stage a strike in order to demand better wages and improved working conditions because there was discrimination based on gender. The presence, influence, and recommendation of the friar was important for the Filipino working woman to be able to get a working permit. The Filipino working woman was economically exploited by her receiving a very low wage. But Filipino working women were even oppressed and exploited by other Filipino women. Because of their skills in business, the working women played an active role in the economic life of the Philippines and the Filipino working woman already had a political consciousness. The Filipino working woman was given a chance to acquire a professional education. The Filipina servant (*criada*) gained importance in the nineteenth century. Filipino working women were already migrating from the provinces to Manila where opportunities to earn a living were many.

Finally, the conclusion of Camagay's book cites, among others, recommendations for further studies on the history of women. What makes this book historically realistic and interesting is that the cases presented are supported by clear facts, valid data, and real names. The appendices of the book, for example, present lists of names of registered *maestras*, *criadas*, *matronas titulares*, and *mujeres publicas* in the nineteenth century. Thus, the author has been successful in her goal in presenting the book as a historical basis and in concluding that Filipino women in the nineteenth century were not the stereotypical Filipinas who were shy, timid, and subservient. They were, in fact, Filipinas "who had a mind of their own, assertive, active and enterprising."

Joseph Lester C. Maramara, S.J.