

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

---

## Primary Education in the Philippines, 1565 - 1863

Henry Frederick Fox

*Philippine Studies* vol. 13, no. 2 (1965): 207–231

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

# Primary Education in the Philippines, 1565-1863

---

HENRY FREDERICK FOX

**A**N adequate account of any nation's formal educational development includes treatment of both its major aspects, that is to say, its legislative as well as its executive characteristics. School law reflects the values a nation holds relative to the upbringing of its young. Actual school operation, on the other hand, stands as a kind of visible proof of its sincerity towards the task of transforming those proclaimed values into living reality. It is obvious, of course, that the degree of success a nation achieves in the transformation process depends upon numerous factors, many of which lie quite beyond any single individual's control. Indeed, history clearly attests that effort and success often correlate very imperfectly in human affairs. At the same time it is equally obvious that failure in an educational enterprise, where avoidable, may be as much due to the negligence of the citizens, the parents, and the pupils as to that of the administrators.

The present work attempts to trace with documentation the course that seems to have been followed by Philippine primary education outside Manila between 1565 and 1863. That course is far from clear. The data are sparse and sometimes open to question with respect to their meaning or their credibility. What is here presented, therefore, is a tentative sketch which although supported by cogent evidence may very well need future revision in the light of data yet to be discovered.

## SCHOOL POLICY: CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL

Whatever may be said about their practicability or the extent to which they were executed, the simple historical fact is that collections of Spanish law contain a rather large body of enactments which favored education in the colonies. Some of this legislation dealt with the foundation of individual centers such as Santa Isabel or Letran; others with the establishment of groups of schools. Samples of the former type receive due notice elsewhere. Here, our concern is with representative specimens of the second type, that is, with those that treat of formal primary instruction as an institutional problem common to every community.

The sequence of such civil policy documents opens with a royal order dated June 7, 1550. It was the era of Spain's "Golden Century" when she moved in the intellectual as well as in the commercial and military vanguard of Europe.<sup>1</sup> King Charles V's directive read:

Having come to the conclusion that the Spanish language would benefit them [the inhabitants of the Indies] we ordain that instructors be assigned those...who desire to learn it. This teaching will be *gratis* and conducted in such manner as to be as little troublesome to the learners as possible. It seems that the task described could well be done by the parish church sacristans in just the same way as in our realm here they teach reading, writing, and christian doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

Mandates issued later by Philip IV on March 2, 1634 and on November 4, 1636 dropped the option allowed by Charles and directed all the residents of the Indies to learn Spanish.<sup>2</sup> Philip believed, these two documents said, that some command of this language would help the colonial peoples improve their

<sup>1</sup> Spain's Golden Century ran roughly from 1501 to 1621. Although the population totalled only about 7 million at the mid-sixteenth century, ten new universities were founded between 1520 and 1572. The number functioning in 1619 is estimated to have been thirty-two. R. Trevor Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain* (London: Macmillan, 1952), pp. 17 and 280.

<sup>2</sup> *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias*, (edición oficial; Madrid: Julian de Paredes, 1861), Bk. VI, tit. 1, law 18. The Recopilacion is a code of Spanish colonial law.

manner of living in civic and other activities as well as increase their knowledge of religion.<sup>3</sup>

Similar official regulations urging the establishment of local instructional centers appeared at intervals from 1686 to 1817. The *Diccionario de la administración de Filipinas* compiled by Miguel Rodriguez Berriz in 1887 cites the texts of nine such enactments. They are the royal cédulas of March 20, 1686; April 16, 1770; November 9, 1774; December 22, 1776; November 5, 1782; March 22, 1816; and October 20, 1817; a *bando* or proclamation of October 22, 1789; and finally a *decreto* of the Philippine Governor, General Rafael Maria de Aguilar, dated September 26, 1800.<sup>4</sup>

The most explicit and informative piece of legislation in the foregoing series is the last. This ordinance may be paraphrased thus: The town teacher's salary is normally to be paid out of the public fund known as the *caja de comunidad*.<sup>5</sup> If, however, no money is available from this account and if there is no alternative public source from which his pay can be drawn, let the provincial governor persuade the people of the district to contribute voluntarily to his support. Teachers who have no appointments for lack of money wherewith to recompense them shall be exempt from the tribute tax. Before anyone is allowed to preside over a town school he should be examined by the provincial governor and the pastor of the provincial capital parish. One who has taught satisfac-

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. I, tit. 13, law 5.

<sup>4</sup> "Escuelas de instrucción primaria," *Diccionario de la administración de Filipinas* (Manila: M. Perez (Vols. I-II incl.) 1st ed., J. Marty, and Amigos del Pais (Vols. 12-15 incl.), 1887. This is an unofficial compilation of administrative law. It contains legislation of various types from both Madrid and Manila. The enactments cited may be found in the supplementary *Anuario: 1888*, Tome I, pp. 1295 ff.

<sup>5</sup> The *caja de comunidad* (Community Chest) was a special local fund formed from an annual contribution of 1 *real* (8 reales = 1 peso) from each whole tribute payer in the pueblo. It was used ordinarily to help build and repair the community's own roads, bridges, and public housing. See the *Recopilación*, Bk. VI, tit. 4, law 1; also Sir John Bowring, *A Visit to the Philippine Islands* (London: Smith-Elder, 1859), p. 197. ✓

torily for three years shall be included in the town *principalia*. It is the function of the provincial governor to designate the school time schedule in his territory. Simultaneously it is his duty to urge parents, through the mayors and the clergy, to insist upon their children's attendance. As incentives to promote the learning of Spanish, let teachers be fined for allowing the use of other languages at school; secondly, let the provincial governor test the children's skill in it whenever he visits a town; and finally, let no one unversed in Castilian be approved for the offices of mayor or justice of the peace.

Jose Felipe del Pan in his codification of Spanish Philippine administrative law entitled *Las Ordenanzas de buen gobierno de Corcuera, Cruzat y Raon* adds 4 enactments to Rodriguez Berriz's list of 9. These are *ordenanzas* Nos. 20, 25, and 93 of Governor General Jose de Raon (1765-1770) and No. 52 of Governor General Jose Francisco de Obando (1750-1754).<sup>6</sup> They reiterate educational policy already expressed in previous legislation, stressing in particular the need to instruct the local Filipino population in Spanish. Concern for teaching quality also receives some attention.

For Spain the period 1800-1863 brought a chain of truly devastating misfortune both internal and external. First came the invasions of the French begun by the revolutionary government in 1793 and reopened by Napoleon in 1808. Then followed the successful revolts of seven of the major colonies in Central and South America. Finally, to some extent as a result of these two movements, intransigent factionalism took hold of the country and kept it in a state of almost continual turmoil.<sup>7</sup> To the ancient regional differences in language and custom were now added deep cleavages of opinion between monarchist conservatives and constitutional liberals concerning

<sup>6</sup> Jose Felipe del Pan (comp.), *Documentos para la historia de la administración de Filipinas. Ordenanzas de buen gobierno de Corcuera, Cruzat y Raon* (Manila: Oceania Española, 1891). A considerable number of these *ordenanzas* are translated in E. Blair and J. Robertson, *Philippine Islands* (Cleveland: Clark, 1903-1909), Vol. I. Hereafter cited as BR.

<sup>7</sup> Between 1812 and 1876, a span of 64 years, Spain had five constitutions. The civil war lasted from 1833 to 1839.

every major aspect of national life from politics to religion.<sup>8</sup> This state of affairs naturally had its repercussions in the Philippines particularly after 1822, when upon Mexico's achievement of independence Madrid began to administer the Archipelago directly.

Beginning with the royal cédulas of March 22, 1816 and October 20, 1817 which requested religious order houses to operate a primary school on their premises, we have what may be called a series of colony-conciliating legislation. The second move in the series was the Cortes law of December 31, 1820 which besides insisting upon the responsibility of civil government toward education made the school provisions of the 1812 Constitution applicable to the overseas dominions. This latter goodwill arrangement, however, proved unworkable because of the distance and the diversity of the colonies. A royal cédula of November 3, 1839 accordingly directed each of the remaining units of the empire to create a board whose function was to construct an educational plan patterned indeed upon the Spanish School Law of 1838 but modified to suit its own country's peculiar needs and resources. On February 7, 1855 Governor General Manuel Crespo appointed the Philippine body thus called for.<sup>9</sup> The plan which it produced, along with two others submitted at the same time, formed the basis for the school law of December 20, 1863, the legislation which inaugurates the modern era in Philippine educational history.

\* \* \* \*

Such, in brief, is a sketch of the official view held by the Spanish civil authorities relative to local elementary instruction in the Philippines between 1550 and 1863. That it

---

<sup>8</sup> Very many of the nineteenth century continental liberals were violently anti-clerical. In the century running from 1767 to 1868 Spain alone banished the Jesuits five times. In 1835-1836 a Spanish liberal government confiscated and sold large amounts of Church property after having closed 2,000 religious houses. Not a little of the ill-feeling that prevailed between Church officials and liberals in the Philippines from 1835 to 1898 was a direct reflection of the struggle taking place in the peninsula.

<sup>9</sup> Vicente Barrantes, *Instrucción primaria en Filipinas* (Madrid: Iberia, 1868), pp. 86 ff.

consistently favored such instruction, although often in a way that strikes one as quixotic, seems indisputable. Let us see now whether the ecclesiastical powers showed similar solicitude. Our first encounter with the Church's official position on the subject of Hispanic-Portuguese colonial education occurs in the late fifteenth century when Madrid and Lisbon were just beginning to build their overseas empires. The bull "Inter cetera" of Alexander VI dated May 3, 1493 reminds their Catholic monarchs that political jurisdiction over the newly discovered territories in Africa, America, and the Far East could be lawful only under the condition that the inhabitants were treated justly and provided with instruction. The document concludes with these powerful words:

...we command you in virtue of holy obedience that...you send to the aforesaid countries and islands worthy, God-fearing, learned, skilled, and experienced men in order to instruct the aforesaid inhabitants.<sup>10</sup>

The teaching which the pope most wanted to be given was, of course, that which directly promoted the religious welfare of the colonial peoples. It was by no means intended by him, however, to be confined to this particular aspect of life.

Besides thus urging the political authorities to fulfill their moral obligation to instruct their overseas subjects, the Church had her own educational traditions to carry on. These traditions reached as far back as the late Roman empire when catechetical schools were founded. They included the monastery and cathedral schools of Cassiodorus, Venerable Bede, Vincent of Beauvais, and dozens of other similar institutions of the early middle ages.<sup>11</sup> They included parish singing and writing

<sup>10</sup> Archivo general de Indias Seville. Patronato: Simancas: Bulas, estante 1, cajon 1, legajo 1. BR. I, 101.

<sup>11</sup> Canon No. 18 of the Third Lateran Council (1179), for example, reads: The Church of God as a devoted mother is bound to provide for those in need, not only in the things that pertain to the body but also to those that pertain to the good of souls. Wherefore, that the opportunity of acquiring an education may not be denied to the poor..., let some suitable benefice be assigned in every cathedral church to a master who shall teach *gratis* the clerics of that church and the poor students... For permission to teach no one shall exact a fee...; nor shall anyone who is qualified and

schools, secondary grammar schools, and universities in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Moreover, within the then active contemporary academic world of Spain Church participation was extensive.<sup>12</sup> Finally, lest the value of schools whether of the past or present be forgotten, there was the just completed Council of Trent (1545-1563) to remind ecclesiastical officials of this fact and to call upon them for a renewal of effort in their behalf.<sup>13</sup>

When therefore the Church entered the Philippines with Legazpi in 1565 she brought with her a long record of practical concern for education at every level. That record was not interrupted here. This is not to deny, of course, that there were shortcomings. As early as the ninth decade of the same century the First Manila Synod (1582-1586) insisted that encomienda holders in accordance with their contract with the Madrid central government must provide instruction for the people within their respective districts.<sup>14</sup> Continued concern for the spread of local primary schooling up to 1863 may be found expressed in five representative policy declarations issued at various dates within that period by official Church organizations or by members of the hierarchy.

The first of these five statements is a resolution passed by the First Provincial chapter of the Franciscans held at Manila in 1580. The resolution read:

[Franciscan] religious doing mission work in the Magellan Archipelago should establish primary schools where the inhabitants of the country

seek a license be denied the right to teach. H. J. Schroeder, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils*. Text, Translation, and Commentary (St. Louis: Herder, 1937), p. 229.

<sup>12</sup> The Church was closely involved with the operation of schools at all levels. Concerning the education of churchmen themselves at this period Trevor Davies writes: "It is probable that no other part of Christendom, Papal or Protestant, had such a high proportion of its clergy notable for learning and sanctity of life." *op. cit.*, p. 289.

<sup>13</sup> Schroeder, *op. cit.* See especially the reform decrees of Sessions V and XXIII.

<sup>14</sup> Valentin Marin, *Ensayo de una sintesis de los trabajos realizados por las corporaciones religiosas Españolas de Filipinas* (Manila: Sto. Tomas, 1901) I, 320 ff. See also Horacio de la Costa, *Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1961), pp. 15-37.



may be taught not only Christian Doctrine and how to read and write, but also some skills useful to them as citizens.<sup>15</sup>

The second is a decree approved by the Tenth Provincial Chapter of the Philippine Augustinians on May 5, 1596. This decree required members of that religious order who were then serving as pastors of parishes "to teach the school boys how to speak as well as how to read and write Spanish."<sup>16</sup> The third is a directive contained in an official Dominican parish priest's handbook called the *Práctica del párroco dominicano* which was formally endorsed by the Philippine superior of that order on August 31, 1739. The directive read:

The king our sovereign commands that there be schools in every town... In behalf of these establishments the parish priests should labor earnestly... Schools should also be opened in the outlying barrios... All the boys whether of the chief or tao class must be present for instruction... Those pupils who cannot provide themselves with primers, pens, and paper are to be supplied these by the pastor... Girls' schools should likewise be started.<sup>17</sup>

The three above-cited statements come from the three religious associations which cared for most of the parochial work of the Archipelago during the period under discussion. The remaining two are to be attributed to the episcopacy. Thus we have Decree V of the Provincial Council of Manila convened in 1771. The decree contains eight articles on local primary education the most significant of which may be paraphrased as follows:

<sup>15</sup> Marin, *op. cit.*, II, 573-582.

<sup>16</sup> Eduardo Navarro, *Filipinas. Estudio de algunas asuntos de actualidad* (Madrid: Minuesa de los Rios, 1897), pp. 123-167. A later Augustinian parish priest's handbook, the *Practica del ministerio* revised by Fray Tomas Ortiz and printed in Manila in 1731, states in No. 158 that "the parish pastors are obliged as a matter of duty to procure by all means and methods possible, and, if necessary, by means of royal justices, that all the villages, both capitals and visitas shall have schools, and that all the boys attend them daily." *Practica del ministerio que siguen los religiosos del orden de N.P.S. Agustin en Filipinas* ([Sampaloc]: Convento de Nuestra Señora de los Angeles, 1731).

<sup>17</sup> Navarro, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-167.

Art. 1. Mindful that some negligence has crept into the country's elementary level instruction the Council requests the civil authorities to provide schooling for boys and girls in every parish where this is not already done.

Art.2. The teacher should be mature, of unblemished morals, and skilled in Spanish. The vernacular should be prohibited in studies other than religion.

Art. 3. Religion is to be taught in both the vernacular and in Spanish.

Art. 5. The pastor should visit the school twice weekly.

Art. 6. In their deanery conferences let the pastors often discuss how the school curriculum, the teachers, and the equipment can best advance the spiritual and civic development of the pupils.

Art. 8. A class day should have two sessions, — the morning one beginning with attendance at the seven o'clock parish Mass and ending at half past ten, and the afternoon one commencing at three o'clock and lasting to five.<sup>18</sup>

The fifth and final statement which this study considers representative of the Church's policy relative to local primary education appears in a pastoral letter authored by Bishop Santos Gomez Marañon of Cebu on July 23, 1835.

He writes:

Our pastors...must bend every effort seeing to it that all [the school-age children of each town] attend school daily and that the men and women teachers perform competently their work of instructing the young in reading, writing, and Christian Doctrine...We are well aware that the youngsters of the distant barrios find it impossible to come to the *poblacion* schools. Nevertheless, if the pastor is zealous, and desires the good of his entire flock as sincerely as he should, he will cause schools to be established in those barrios and make sure that the teachers are paid and the children attend.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Pedro Bantigue, *Provincial Council of Manila, 1771* (Washington: Catholic University, 1957), pp. 96-98. The Spanish king's interference with this assembly was arrogant and unremitting. Rome refused approval of its decrees.

<sup>19</sup> Obisnado de Cebu, *Pastorales y demas disposiciones circuladas a los parrocos de esta Diocesis de Cebu por los obispos o sus vicarios generales* (Manila: Sto. Tomas, 1885), I, 20.

The bishop asks his clergy to work for the regular school attendance of all the children in their parish towns as well as for the careful preparation of teaching. He also requests of them some effort at organizing instructional centers in the barrios.

#### KNOWN SCHOOL FOUNDATIONS, 1565-1863

So much for policy. We turn at this point to recount what success seems to have been achieved in turning the declared intentions of the preceding section into actually operative educational institutions.

As we do this, however, we must take care that Philippine educational developments are kept firmly in their proper historical perspective. The material and ideological environment of the present must not be projected back upon the past. The past must be judged in terms of its own needs and resources. Thus, one must recall that between 1565 and 1863 the Philippine economy, while growing modestly in volume and in a commercial-crop orientation, remained throughout the period predominantly rural and subsistent in character. Money tended to be scarce and transportation slow. The population was widely dispersed in location and extremely limited in size, the total running from an estimated one-half million at the opening of the three-century span, to less than five millions at its close.<sup>20</sup> This type of environment, which of course prevailed in a greater or less developed form in most of the world at the time, made few demands upon formal education anywhere.

One must further recall that outside the Archipelago during this period, except for a few provinces in West Europe and on the east coast of the United States, systematic school instruction tended either not to be given at all or at best was the possession of a relatively small minority. Historian Carlton Hayes sums up the era in Europe thus:

---

<sup>20</sup> *Census of the Philippine Islands: 1903* (Washington: GPO, 1904), I, 411 ff. The *Guia: 1863* (p. 450) put the total at 4.6 millions.

...from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century the ordinary populace of town and country had been generally submerged under the weight of the centralizing despotism of princes, the extending privileges of the landed nobility, and the rising ambition and achievement of the middle classes. Guilds fell into decay, jacqueries [peasant revolts] all but ceased, the condition of women was worsened, and in certain regions, the large percentage of popular illiteracy grew still larger.<sup>21</sup>

Cubberly confirms this depressing picture with specific reference to the state of local primary education:

...during more than a thousand years the Church had established the tradition of providing free education, and when the governing authorities of the States which turned to Protestantism had taken from the Church both the opportunity to continue the schools and the wealth with which to maintain them, they were seldom willing to tax themselves to set up institutions to continue the work formerly done *gratis* by the Church. In consequence, regardless of Protestant educational theory as to the need for general education, but little progress in providing vernacular schools was made during the whole seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>22</sup>

Conditions in Asia were similarly unsatisfactory. India, China, and Japan provided a modest number of schools for boys of the better-off families but few, if any, for girls or for the poor.<sup>23</sup>

It is against the above-described foreign and domestic background that the Philippine education of the period must be assessed. Thus, for instance, if between 1565 and 1863 the Archipelago's primary schools inclined to be small and found only in towns;—if their curriculum seemed narrow and brief and excessively concerned with religious and moral training, they were so to a marked extent simply because this was the pattern of practice common to the era.

Much obscurity still invests the precise state of formal primary instruction in the Philippines during the three century span under discussion. Particularly is this true of the schooling offered outside Manila. Nevertheless, some of the mist has

<sup>21</sup> C. J. H. Hayes, *Generation of Materialism* (New York: Harper, 1941), p. 165.

<sup>22</sup> E. Cubberley, *History of Education* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), p. 417.

begun to lift. On the basis of data now increasingly available one can discern dimly what appear to be three fairly distinct phases of development. The first of these ran from 1565, the year of Legazpi's occupation of Cebu, until about 1650. This period of enthusiasm and hope characteristic of new enterprises was followed by a century or so of quiet routine organization. The third stage tended to be an era of intermittently renewed activity commencing about 1752 when, it appears, the government first authorized the use of public money for local primary education. After the temporary setbacks suffered in the British sack of Manila in 1762 and the banishment of the Jesuits six years later, the number of town centers offering this type of instruction seems to have resumed growth, particularly after the start of the nineteenth century. Thus, by 1855, according to Vicente Barrantes, the Archipelago possessed some 800 such establishments.<sup>24</sup>

During the earliest of the three developmental stages mentioned above, the most energetic promoters of primary schools were apparently the Franciscans and the Jesuits, both of whom already conducted educational enterprises in Mexico prior to

---

<sup>23</sup> S. Nurullat and J. P. Naik, *History of Education in India* (Bombay: Macmillan, 1951), pp. 39-42. The pre-1850 Indian indigenous school, write the authors, had no building of its own but was held in the house of the teacher, in a temple, or under a tree. There were no printed books. The hours of instruction, usually confined to the three R's, and the days of working were adjusted to local requirements. Pupils numbered at most fifteen. Excluded as a rule from admission were girls and the parish caste. Discipline was severe. The tuition fee could be paid in cash or kind. The teachers often knew no more than the little they taught. For brief statements concerning conditions in China and Japan, see: Chai Chuang, "Movement for Educating Illiterates in China", *Bulletins on Chinese Education*, (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1923), p. 1. K. N. Latourette, *The Chinese: Their History and Culture* (3d. ed. rev., New York: Macmillan, 1951, p. 679. Chitoshi Yanaga, *Japan Since Perry* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1949), pp. 100-106.

<sup>24</sup> Barrantes *op. cit.*, p. 123. The precise figure given is 817, but this probably includes the colegios of Manila. The general accuracy of the count seems borne out by the testimony of other observers which shall be cited presently.

their coming to the Philippines.<sup>25</sup> The Franciscans, whose first members reached the Islands in 1577, launched their school organization program three years later with the Chapter resolution cited in the foregoing section of this article. Notable for the pains he took to execute this resolution was Juan Plasencia, first as a missionary founding towns and parishes around the Lake of Bay (1580-1583) and then as Provincial Superior (1583-1586).<sup>26</sup> By the close of his term of office the sons of Saint Francis were administering about thirty embryonic parishes situated mostly in the provinces of Morong, Laguna, Tayabas (Quezon) and Camarines.<sup>27</sup> Some success in establishing instructional centers in them, moreover, seems to have been achieved, although there is no indication as to how many or precisely where, such centers functioned. Marcela Rivadeneira who visited the order's Philippine houses during the years 1596-1598 remarks:

The Friars teach the children to read, write, and sing... Some of the boys have so progressed in language that they read for us in our dining rooms in both Spanish and Latin...<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Mariano Cuevas, *Historia de la Iglesia en Mexico* (4th ed.; Mexico: Ediciones Cervantes, 1942) I, 382-404. Particularly celebrated among Franciscan schools was the institution for Mexican children founded and directed for some 50 years (1522-1572) by the well-known Fray Pedro de Gante. This establishment, enrolling at times 1,000 pupils, afforded instruction in arts and trades as well as in reading, writing, and religion. For an account of early Jesuit pedagogical efforts in Mexico, see Jerome Jacobsen, *Educational Foundations of the Jesuits in Sixteenth Century New Spain* (Berkeley: U. of California, 1938).

<sup>26</sup> Felix Huerta, *Estado geográfico, topográfico, estadístico, histórico-religioso de la Santa y apostólica Provincia de S. Gregorio Magno* etc. (Manila: M. Sanchez, 1865), pp. 443-444. See also Francisco Santa Ines, *Cronica de la Provincia de S. Antonio de religiosos discalzos de N.S.P. San Francisco en las Islas Filiipnas*, etc. (Manila: Chofre, 1892) pp. 352-357. According to Santa Ines, Plasencia ordered the schools to be conducted in Spanish. J. P. Pozo, modern writer, implies that the vernacular was more commonly used in Franciscan parish classrooms. "Los Franciscanos y las escuelas primarias," *Misiones Católicas del Extremo Oriente* (Manila. Cacho, 1937), pp. 257-264. Nevertheless, as shall be seen later, some Spanish was certainly being taught in the Franciscan area schools of Camarines in 1859-1860.

When the first Jesuits, of whom there were three, reached Manila in 1581 four years after the Franciscan vanguard, their then youthful order (founded 1540) had already been extensively engaged in school work for three decades. Dozens of their establishments, usually offering instruction at the secondary or higher level, already operated in the New World as well as in Europe.<sup>29</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that negotiations for the foundation of an institution in Manila similar to these, started as early as 1585. Actually, however, as events turned out, the first Jesuit school to open in the Philippines was a catechetical center on the encomienda of Esteban Rodriguez de Figueroa at Tigbauan, Iloilo. The year was 1592 and the founder, the celebrated Pedro Chirino. Crowds of children, writes the Jesuit historian Antonio Astrain, gathered at this plain little establishment to learn how to read, write, sing, and play musical instruments.<sup>30</sup>

Tigbauan was followed three years later (1595) by the foundation in Cebu City of a similar primary level institution. This school which was presently to become the Colegio de San Ildefonso taught reading, writing, counting, and religion. A mixed group of Filipino, Chinese, and Spanish boys formed the pupil population.<sup>31</sup>

With the arrival of reinforcements from Europe via Mexico on the 1595 Acapulco galleon, the Jesuits (now numbering 18)

<sup>27</sup> "Pueblos fundados o administrados por los padres Franciscanos en Filipinas," *Misiones Católicas*, pp. 162-169. They were: Santa Ana, Paco, Morong, Antipolo, Meycauayan, Pila, Lumbang, Majayjay, Pañgil, Tayabas, Sariaya, Gumaca, Mauban, Calilaya, Bondoc, Nabua, Nabailag, Daet, Paracale, Indan, Naga, Bula, Quipayo, Lagonoy, Minalabag, Montserrat, Baco, Calavite, and Nauhan.

<sup>28</sup> *Historia de las Islas del archipiélago*, etc. (Barcelona; Graells, 1601), lib. I, p. 54. Cited by Pozo, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

<sup>29</sup> In 1615 the number of such Jesuit-administered institutions stood at 372. M. P. Harney, *Jesuits in History* (New York: America, 1941) pp. 192-219.

<sup>30</sup> Antonio Astrain, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesus de la Asistencia de España* (Madrid: Razon y Fe, 1913), IV, 485.

<sup>31</sup> Francisco Colin and Pablo Pastells, *Labor evangélica de los obreros de la Compañía de Jesus en las Islas Filipinas*. A new edition of Colin with notes by Pastells (Barcelona: Henrich, 1900-1903) II, 8-12; 166-167; 172 and 188.

were able to accelerate somewhat the pace, and enlarge the scale, of their work. From Cebu as a base they moved east across the Camotes Sea into Leyte and Samar. Here within the next half decade they founded four parishes each with a rudimentary instructional center for children. These four were located at Carigara, Ormoc, Dulag, and Alangalang.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile up north in Luzon prior to 1611 three additional primary schools were inaugurated, one at Antipolo,<sup>33</sup> another at Silang (Cavite),<sup>34</sup> and the third on the compound of the College of Manila.<sup>35</sup> Thus by the close of the first decade of the seventeenth century the Jesuit order alone had opened nine explicitly reported free local primary schools, all except one of which served communities outside the national capital.

To what extent the other two major religious orders serving the Church in the Philippines,—the Augustinians and the Dominicans, operated similar parochial institutions between 1565 and 1850, little can presently be said. Very few specific references to such have so far been brought to light. About all that can now be affirmed with some certainty is that by the middle of the nineteenth century a substantial number of the towns where these religious orders worked, had schools. Thus, for example, Buzeta and Bravo report in 1850 that the province of Pangasinan, a Dominican area, possessed 43 primary schools in 32 towns and that Pampanga, an Augustinian district, possessed 20 schools in 23 towns. Of the 55 towns in the two provinces only 5 seem not to have operated schools.<sup>35</sup>

While a certain lethargy or even decline marked the last

---

<sup>32</sup> W. C. Repetti, *Philippine Vice Province: 1595-1906* (Manila: Private Printing 1935) pp. 66-69; 94. How few the available men were may be seen from the personnel lists in appendix B.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>34</sup> De la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 203. The Jesuits developed the school already established there by the Franciscans.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 360-361; and 506. As early as 1609 this school enrolled 600 little boys. By 1701 there were still 200 attending despite the fact that Manila then had a number of individual teachers ready to give private instruction.

<sup>36</sup> *Diccionario geográfico estadístico, histórico de las Islas Filipinas* (Madrid: S. C. de la Peña, 1850-1851). See "Pampanga" and "Pangasinan". Some of these schools were for one sex only.



half of the seventeenth century, quiet growth ran through the following four or five decades. From the early years of the eighteenth century Filipino writing in Spanish and the vernaculars can probably be dated.<sup>37</sup> During the same span of time the Archipelago's Pacific trade reached one of its peaks in volume<sup>38</sup> and a considerable number of substantial church buildings were either begun or completed.<sup>39</sup> Town primary schools were active at least in Jesuit districts. Two documents dated respectively 1682 and 1749 attest to this fact. The first of these is a letter addressed to a European friend by an Austrian named Andreas Mancker who was a member of the Jesuit Philippine Province.<sup>40</sup> Besides relating to him other very interesting items of information about contemporary Visayan life, Mancker informs his correspondent that a school for boys and another for girls were customary units in the Jesuits' parish organizations in that region. The second document which is a general account of Jesuit activity in the Philippines from 1616 to 1716 written by Pedro Murillo Velarde, a professor of canon law, at the University of San Ignacio in Manila, confirms Mancker's school statement. Describing a typical Jesuit parish of the period, Murillo writes:

Every day the boys and girls up to the age of fourteen ..attend Mass... Having sung the prayers of the Mass they go to their school ... When the bell sounds at 10 o'clock they depart... In the afternoon at 2 o'clock they return to school and remain until 4 or 5 o'clock...<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> De la Costa, *op. cit.* p. 532.

<sup>38</sup> Pierre Chaunu places the high points of Philippine Pacific trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at 1620, 1720, and 1790. *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Iberiques: XVI<sup>e</sup>, XVII<sup>e</sup>, et XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siecles* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N. Ecole des Hautes Etudes, section VI<sup>e</sup>, Centre de Recherches Historiques. Collection "Ports-Routes-Traffic" No. 11 1960), p. 301. Cited by Benito Legarda in his review of the study, *Philippine Economic Journal* (Sem II, 1962) 2, 198-203.

<sup>39</sup> Between 1700 and 1760 the parishioners of the Jesuits alone erected 13 substantial structures. De la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 537.

<sup>40</sup> Letter to Constantin Schiel, Manila, 1682. Cited by de la Costa, *op. cit.*, pp. 467-468.

<sup>41</sup> Pedro Murillo Velarde, *Historia de la Provincia de Philipinas de la Compañia de Jesus. 2<sup>a</sup> parte. 1616-1716* (Manila: Imp. de la Compañia, 1749), Fol. 346. BR, XLIV, 106.

In 1743, Jesuits were serving 134 towns, most of them located in the provinces of the Visayas.<sup>42</sup>

The final phase of pre-1863 town primary school development, as has been previously noted, may be said to have opened on October 19, 1752. On that day an official communication signed by Governor General Jose de Obando directed that the salaries of town teachers should be paid from the public treasury.<sup>43</sup> The importance of the event lies in the fact that, so far as we are now aware, this was the earliest date at which a fixed and specific public fund, the *caja de comunidad*, was designated to subsidize local instruction. Hitherto, except for perhaps an occasional government grant, town schooling appears to have been financed by the Church. Thus it came about that between 1752 and 1863 the most common type of Philippine town primary school was one whose teacher was paid by the government but which was supervised and provided with housing and equipment by the local parish.

Neither the pace nor the geographical spread of this change in the town school's character, however, should be exaggerated. For decades after 1752 the financial resources available in the community chests were often quite inadequate for the purpose stipulated by the Obando directive, small as this sum was in each single case. A tax of roughly one *real* (12.5 centavos) from each family in a district was soon exhausted upon the repair of local roads, bridges, and public buildings, not to speak of sacristan's salaries and the usual fee charged for the political management of the fund. And so, actually, up to, and even after 1863, the Church continued with considerable frequency to carry the entire burden of operating the town schools.<sup>44</sup> How common this situation was may be learned

---

<sup>42</sup> De la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 581. By 1768 the number of Jesuit parishes seems to have declined to about 75. See appendix B.

<sup>43</sup> *Ordenanzas de buen gobierno*, ordenanza No. 52 de Obando (October 19, 1752). It is to be noted that ordenanza No. 93 de Raon repeats the foregoing Obando directive.

<sup>44</sup> "Before the above-mentioned epoch [1863-1898] it was the reverend and devoted parish priest who performed in great part, and this voluntarily, the noble function of promoting primary instruction in these remote regions..." Daniel Grifol, *Instruccion primaria en*

from a letter of September 17, 1775, addressed to the government by an official of the Recollect order. "In a majority of the towns confided to their [Recollect] care," said the communication, "the parish pastors pay the school teachers without receiving anything from the *caja de comunidad*."<sup>45</sup> The incidence of such defaulting seems to have declined during the succeeding century, although the remarks of various observers suggest that the Church still maintained any second or third school which a locality may have needed.<sup>46</sup>

One of the more notable educational events of the late eighteenth century was the establishment of small trade schools by the Augustinian Fathers in lower Pampanga, Bulacan, Rizal, and Manila. These centers called *escuelas patrióticas* aimed to help implement the economic development plans of Governor General Jose Basco (1776-1787) and of the Royal Philippine Company (1785-1810) which invested considerable sums of money in the Archipelago towards the production of cotton, silk, indigo, and coffee, as well as towards textile manufacturing.<sup>47</sup> A *Boletín* of the Real Sociedad Economica Filipina published in January 1793 listed eight such schools. They were located in the Pampanga towns of Bacolor, Betis, and Guagua; in the Bulacan towns of Malolos and Paombong; and in the metropolitan Manila suburbs of San Mateo, Tondo, and Quiapo. The Malolos center, the *Boletín* went on to state, taught spinning and weaving. Fifty of the pupils were then undergoing preparatory training while thirty others were already actually

---

*Filipinas* (Manila: Chofre, 1894), Preface. Grifol was an official in the *Fomento* division of the Direccion General de Administracion Civil in Manila.

<sup>45</sup> The communication is addressed from the monastery-church of San Nicolas Manila. Archivo [Recolecto]. Carpeta de 1773-1784, fol. 39 vto. y sig. 64. Cited by Marin, *op. cit.*, II, 268.

<sup>46</sup> "Some priests do not permit boys and girls to attend the same school; in this case they pay a second teacher, a woman..." Jagor, *op. cit.*, p. 157. Barrantes confirms this observation of Jagor. *Apuntes interesantes sobre las Islas Filipinas* (Madrid: El Pueblo, 1870), p. 152.

<sup>47</sup> Tomas Comyn, *State of the Philippine Islands in 1810*, trans. William Walton (London: T & J. Allman, 1821), pp. 83-97. See also W. L. Schurz, "The Royal Philippine Company" *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 3 (1920), 491-508.

operating the school's twenty spinning wheels and six looms.<sup>48</sup> In the light of this movement, vague as our knowledge of it still is, J. F. Furnivall's remarks can be apropos:

During the eighteenth century, learning seems to have had an increasing economic value under Spanish rule, but the chief function of the Spanish school in the Philippines was still to train the children as members of a Christian society and not merely to help them forward in the material world. As under native rule the more [who] went to school the better.<sup>49</sup>

The nineteenth century ushered in for the Philippines as for most of the world the era of the machine and of the common man. Under the impulse of these two dynamic forces originating in West Europe a general quickening of life moved out over the earth in every direction. Beginning socially with the Constitution of 1812 and economically with the opening of Manila to non-Spanish trade in 1834 the wave washed onto the Archipelago with growing strength as the decades passed. Education felt the pressure as well as politics, religion, commerce, and agriculture.

As early as 1810 a sober report covering various major aspects of contemporary Philippine life remarked that all of the country's towns as a rule had primary schools of rudimentary character.<sup>50</sup> The author of this document was a first-hand witness named Tomas Comyn who spent eight years in the Islands as a high official of the above-mentioned Royal Philippine Company. A similar though not quite so sweeping an assertion comes from the pen of Eduardo Navarro, an Augustinian, who served the Church in the Archipelago from 1873 until 1899. He affirms simply that prior to 1817 a majority of the religious-order parishes conducted two schools each, one for boys usually housed in the ground-floor rooms of the rectory, and one for girls located either at the home of the teacher or elsewhere in the neighborhood.<sup>51</sup> Such parishes comprised a varying proportion of the total number in the country

<sup>48</sup> Cited by *El Colegio de San Agustin en Iloilo* (Manila: Santos y Bernal, 1913), p. 23.

<sup>49</sup> J. S. Furnivall, *Educational Progress in Southeast Asia* (New York: I.P.R., 1943), p. 18.

<sup>50</sup> *Op cit.*, p. 216.

<sup>51</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 143.

depending upon the date. In 1600 they would have been practically the only type. In 1780, however, their percentage came to about 72, and in 1842 to about 60.<sup>52</sup> With respect to school practices in parishes administered by the diocesan clergy, it is perhaps significant to point out that Bishop Santos Gomez Marañon, presently to be quoted, made no distinction between types of parish. His territory included both.

Observers of Philippine affairs from the third to the sixth decade of the century tend to corroborate Comyn's declaration, although most limit their generalizations to individual regions. Thus, under date of July 15, 1827 a Spanish businessman of long experience in the Islands opines to a Madrid cabinet minister that "the same cruel disposition [as that shown by Tagalog fathers towards their children] is seen among the schoolmasters who are paid by the government to teach the youth in the villages".<sup>53</sup> For the 1830's we have Bishop Santos Gomez Marañon commenting upon educational conditions in the Visayas. Gomez occupied the See of Cebu from 1829 to 1847. Having just returned to his cathedral city from an official visitation of two of the dozen or so provinces comprising his diocese, he addressed on July 23, 1835 a formal pastoral letter to their clergy. Apropos of his observations concerning the town-parish schools he wrote:

We noticed that in some (*varios*) towns only a few boys and girls were present at school... Our pastors therefore, must bend every effort seeing to it that all the children attend class daily and that the men and women teachers perform competently their task of instructing the young in reading, writing, and Christian Doctrine...<sup>54</sup>

The bishop's comments obviously imply that although schools were available in all or in most of the towns, only a limited

---

<sup>52</sup> Archivo de Santo Domingo Sec. "Historia eclesiástica de Filipinas" (1780). Cited by P. V. Salgado, "Contributions of the Secular Clergy" *Boletín Eclesiástico*, 34 (Jan.-Feb. 1965), 254-259. The *Guía: 1824* (pp. 140 ff.) places the number of diocesan parishes at 195, and that of the regulars at 304.

<sup>53</sup> Newberry Library, Ayer MSS, Memorandum. Madrid, July 15, 1827. Signed P. de S. M.

<sup>54</sup> Obispado de Cebu. *Pastorales y demas disposiciones circuladas a los párrocos de esta Diócesis de Cebu por los señores obispos o sus vicarios generales* (Manila: Sto. Tomas, 1885), I, 20.

number of children actually attended some of them. They further imply that the parish pastors whether religious or secular carried a serious responsibility relative to the promotion of local primary instruction. At the same time it should be pointed out here that this solicitude of the Church in nowise lessened the even more serious obligation of parents to provide education for their sons and daughters.

For the succeeding decade of the 1840's there are three eye-witness accounts. The earliest of these is that published by Sinibaldo de Más, a Spanish writer, quasi-diplomat, and student of national cultures, who during the course of a lengthy tour of the world lasting from 1834 to 1842 spent an undisclosed number of months in the Philippines. Recounting his experiences here during this sojourn he notes that "in each town there is a suitable building used for the school to which all of the children must go except during the planting and harvest seasons."<sup>55</sup> The second account is one written by a Frenchman named Jean Baptiste Mallat who made three voyages to the Philippines, the first in 1838. This report states that "... everywhere one finds primary schools which are supported by the people" and that "nearly all of the Tagalogs know how to read and write."<sup>56</sup> The third account comes from the pen of a Scotchman named Robert MacMicking who resided in the Archipelago for three years (1848-1850) as the Manila agent for a Singapore business firm. MacMicking found that "there are few Indians who are unable to read; ..." <sup>57</sup> In making this statement the Filipinos he had primarily in mind were sailors, not landowners, or merchants, or professionals.

---

<sup>55</sup> Sinibaldo de Mas, *Informe sobre el estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1842* (Madrid: No publisher named, 1843), II, ch. 12, p. 5-6. (Pagination only within chapters.)

<sup>56</sup> Jean Baptiste Mallat, *Les Philippines* (Paris: A. Bertrand, 1846), II, 239-253. Mallat appears to have made rather liberal use of Mas' report of 1842.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Macmicking, *Recollections of Manila and the Philippines during 1848-1849, and 1850* (London: R. Bentley, 1851), p. 46. In a similar vein, Buzeta and Bravo in their *Diccionario* of 1850 (I, 158-163) declare that while the teachers tended to be ignorant and slaves of routine, pupil attendance at the country's primary schools was excellent.

The clearest description of local elementary education as it operated just prior to the reform of 1863 occurs in a work called *Travels in the Philippines* authored by a German ethnologist named Feodor Jagor. This trained scientist spent some two years 1859-1860 in the Islands systematically observing Philippine culture. Of schooling in the Bicol region, the area which seems to have formed the principal focus of his attention, he writes:

There is a school in every town. The teacher, paid by the government, generally receives two dollars a month without board or lodging. In large towns the salary mounts to three and one-half dollars, but out of this sum an assistant must be recompensed. The clergy supervise the schools. Reading and writing are taught, the writing copies being Spanish... a kind of religious hornbook serves as a primer. After that comes Christian Doctrine and a reader called Casayayan. On the average, half of the children go to school, usually from the seventh to their tenth year. They learn to read a little, a few even write a little. But they soon forget it again.<sup>58</sup>

And again:

The Filipinos learn arithmetic very quickly, normally aiding themselves by the use of seashells or stones which they pile up in small heaps before them and then count through.<sup>59</sup>

Conditions similar to these prevailed elsewhere in the Archipelago at the time. Areas receiving special mention were the provinces of Samar and Leyte, and the towns of Iloilo, Capiz, and Manila. Of Samar and Leyte Jagor remarks: "There are schools in the towns here which accomplish quite as much as they do in Camarines."<sup>60</sup> Of Iloilo and Capiz an MS report of a three-week inspection tour made by Governor General Ramon Solano in 1860 through certain sections of the Visayas has this to say: About January 30 the party visited churches and

---

<sup>58</sup> *Travels in the Philippines* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1875), pp. 156 ff. Jagor (1816-1900) supplemented his face to face impressions with extensive library work in Europe. Doris Welsh (comp.), *Catalogue of Printed Materials relating to the Philippine Islands, 1519-1900 in the Newberry Library* (Chicago: Newberry Library, 1959), p. 124. There are some obscurities in the translation from the original German version

<sup>59</sup> Jagor, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

schools in Iloilo. Prizes worth 16 pesos were distributed to four boys and five girls for academic excellence. The town school at Capiz City (Roxas) received a similar visit. Here also the outstanding pupils were rewarded and the deficiencies of the building noted.<sup>61</sup> At Manila in 1859-1860 at least six known institutions furnished elementary instruction. Four of these (Santa Potenciana, Santa Isabel, Santa Catalina, and Santa Rosa) were for girls and had a combined enrollment of 231.<sup>62</sup> Two, on the other hand, (Letran and the Escuela Municipal) were for boys and had a combined enrollment of 381.<sup>63</sup>

Such is the long, though fragmentary and obscure, story of local primary education in the pre-1863 Philippines. The narrative definitely asserts that rudimentary centers of instruction arose under the sponsorship of Catholic parishes very soon after the advent of the Spanish to the Archipelago. It suggests with caution that by the mid-nineteenth century a large proportion of the then organized towns totaling roughly from 500 to 600 enjoyed the services of a primary school. Most, if not all, of these establishments were quite tuition-free. Probably the great majority of them taught only reading, writing, and religion, along with a little counting and singing.<sup>64</sup> Some, as in the Bicol region, used Spanish.<sup>65</sup> Others employed

<sup>61</sup> Paul Lietz (ed.), *Calendar of Philippine Documents in the Ayer Collection of the Newberry Library* (Chicago: Newberry Library, 1956), Doc. No. 304.

<sup>62</sup> *Guía: 1860*, pp. 99-104. Santa Rosa had 123. "Breve Reseña del Colegio de Santa Rosa," *Misiones Católicas*, p. 60.

<sup>63</sup> Letran had 181. *Guía: 1860*, pp. 101-102. The Escuela Municipal had 210 in June of 1860. Pablo Pastells, *Misión de la Compañía de Jesús de Filipinas en el siglo XIX* (Barcelona: Barcelonesa, 1916) I, 14.

<sup>64</sup> Jesuit Philippine Province Archives. Escuela Normal de Maestros de Manila MSS. *Libro copiator de los oficios y demas escritos por el director*, pp. 245-246. This is a large 8 by 12 inch record book containing some 500 pages of handwritten copies of official correspondence and other documents.

<sup>65</sup> One very strong reason why Filipinos did not achieve wide literacy in Spanish prior to 1863 was because they did not wish it. They preferred their own regional tongues. School learning that is not used, as everyone knows, fades quickly.



the vernacular just as all Philippine schools do today in the first two grades. Relative to attendance, which is always primarily the responsibility of parents, we have at present only one known numerical index. This is Jagor's statement that about one-half of the Camarines [town] children presented themselves at class more or less regularly for three years. Whether this 1859-1860 Bicol pattern accurately reflected the school-going practices elsewhere in the country cannot now be determined.

This sketch of mid-nineteenth century Philippine primary education will perhaps be more correctly interpreted if it is compared with an account of contemporary conditions in the American rural Middle West. This teacher memoir very candidly writes:

There were few or no attempts at organizing classes. In some studies the whole school recited *en masse*, in others, individually. Every teacher created his own curriculum, if you could call it that, which might vary from year to year, according to circumstances. In many schools in the early days, it was given over almost entirely to spelling, reading, and writing, arithmetic being optional and often neglected because the teacher knew little about it himself.

The school books—when there were any—were the same haphazard lot that had been used in Kentucky—just what happened to be around the individual pupil's home;...

The teachers of those early years in the Midwest were a motley crew, and there probably wasn't a diploma in the whole outfit. In fact I am safe in saying that a majority of the rural teachers had never done anything of the sort before. They included Yankees, Englishmen, Scotchmen, Irishmen, all drifting westward, vaguely looking for something to turn up in a business way, and meanwhile following the line of least resistance by teaching school...<sup>66</sup>

Even nations which led the world in the development and spread of education encountered grave trouble in the effort. They met problems, as is here evident, in both curricular content and quality of teaching. Furthermore, pupil coverage remained far from satisfactory. Of relatively advanced

---

<sup>66</sup> M. F. Kennedy, *Schoolmaster of Yesterday. A Three Generation Story, 1820-1919* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1940), pp. 71-75. and 217.

Europe, Carlton Hayes remarks: "...the vast majority of Europeans were still illiterate in the early [18]60's."<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> *A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900* (New York: Harper, 1941), p. 171.