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Amigos Del Pais: The Economic Societies in the Spanish World

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interests. History, canon law and the impact of modern urban society demonstrate that the parochial foundation must be supplemented by other principles and movements both supra-parochial and supra-dio-cesan, if the modern world is to be fully won back to Christ.

SAMUEL R. WILEY

AMIGOS DEL PAIS

THE ECONOMIC SOCIETIES IN THE SPANISH WORLD (1763-1821). By Robert Jones Shafer. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1958. xiii, 416 p. \$5.00.

By the end of the eighteenth century Spain had slipped into the position of a second-rate power whose economic life was gradually ebbing away. Some of the causes for the collapse were primogeniture, mortmain, vagabondage, deforestation, redundancy of ecclesiastics, contempt for manual labor and the arts, monetary confusion and oppressive taxation. One of the suggested remedies in the economic sphere was a broad technological education in order to make the masses aware of the vast changes in technique taking place throughout the rest of Europe. To a great extent this education in its primary stages, was attempted by the Economic Societies. Professor Shafer's book is a minute analysis of the history, aims and accomplishments of the Societies, both in Spain and her colonies.

The *Sociedades Económicas de los Amigos del País* had their origin in the Basque provinces of northern Spain whose proximity to France encouraged an influx of ideas. A group was organized to discuss means of improving agriculture, rural economy, the sciences, arts, industry and commerce. In 1765 a royal license was issued for the Basque Society; in 1766 statutes were printed, a revised version being approved by the crown in 1773 and published in 1776. The idea caught on and similar groups mushroomed. In general, the methods were discussion, preparation of papers, public meetings, publications, establishment of schools and advice to the government. There was little contact between groups which were in Spain composed of enlightened nobles, reformist ecclesiastics and persons of the middle class imbued with the current philanthropism. Many joined merely because it was the liberal fashion to do so. The core of the groups however was composed of serious-minded, determined individuals. By 1803 there were sixty-odd Societies in Spain, and between 1764 and 1821, 5,000 to 10,000 men belonged to the movement, financed chiefly by dues and gifts from the crown and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The Societies spread to the colonies, the first being founded in New Spain and New Granada in 1780, Manila in 1781, followed by

Lima and Quito in the early 1790's. Others followed. The American Societies were founded on the same general plan as those in Spain, but their specific aims differed. They attempted to raise the material prosperity of the area by expanding overseas traffic and by increasing and improving mining as well as agricultural and industrial production. The Societies in America likewise differed in other respects since they could not indiscriminately adapt European methods and suggestions to tropical America. The social and natural environment differed.

"The American Societies were not, however, precise duplicates of the Spanish prototype. Different natural and social circumstances caused members of American Societies to act and think somewhat differently from members of Spanish Societies, just as the Enlightenment itself was used in the colonies for ends not always identical with those which intrigued men of the new day in Spain. Also, formation of American Societies proceeded much more slowly than in Spain, partly because intellectual life was less well organized in America, partly because of division in the upper class between creole and Spaniard, and partly because Spanish officialdom interfered with the foundation and operation of the American Societies. Finally, the Spanish Societies contributed to this divergence by insisting on the importance of local examination of local problems, which for America meant encouragement to emphasize the fact that metropolitan and colonial interests did not perfectly coincide" (p. 346).

Some of the overseas Societies survived well into the nineteenth century, Guatemala (1881), Puerto Rico (1898), Manila (1890), while the Havana Society exists to the present day. The other eight however either collapsed long before or were converted into political bodies, thus being diverted from their original ends.

Professor Shafer has given us a very thorough piece of work which certainly fills a wide gap in the Spanish colonial field. It seems, however, that the footnoting is over-thorough and has been multiplied unnecessarily. It is a great aid, however, to have the footnotes at the bottom of each page. This in turn probably necessitated using the small print in the text. The writer's apparent annoyance with Menéndez y Pelayo seems out of place, and what is more, illogical, since the very complaints with which he credits Menéndez, that the Societies were "animated by many worthy hopes, but sometimes introducing revolutionary ideas; precipitate in their actions, satisfied with artificial results; and sometimes afflicted with an irreligious spirit" (p. 112), are all for the most part borne out very clearly in various sections of Professor Shafer's book. And finally, since the erection and development of the Societies throughout the Empire followed more or less the same plan, the analysis of each group could become a bit

tedious. Nevertheless, these blemishes, if such they could be called, are definitely minor and certainly overshadowed by the genuine value of the work.

NICHOLAS P. CUSHNER

A HAPPY BEGINNING

THE ART OF THE PHILIPPINES 1521-1957. Edited by Winfield Scott Smith III. Manila: Associated Publishers, Inc., 1958. vii, 94 p. quarto. 19 reproductions in full color, incl. 7 foldouts; 135 figs. in black and white. P17.50.

It is not often that a serious volume on art is published in the Philippines; but when this does happen, there is almost always cause for immediate jubilation. We say jubilation because any sincere attempt at writing is commendable—doubly so when the subject partakes of what Matthew Arnold calls “high culture”; and when local writers succeed in turning out a well-written series of essays on the art of the country, the only type of bliss that can result is Elysian.

Such is the case with the book under review: the fact that it has appeared at all is perhaps *happy* enough. But it is certainly more than merely gratifying to discover that what the book contains, no matter how modest, can generate lines of thought which, when pursued far enough, should make for clearer and easier discrimination between well founded and gratuitous assumptions regarding Philippine cultural history.

The book claims to embody the “first attempt to present the facts of Philippine art in thought-out consecutive form”. It is a layman’s book, and therefore more or less free from the mystifying jargon that art enthusiasts use when they volleyball ideas among themselves. This combination of ambition and simplicity has resulted in a straightforward and valuable Baedeker to Philippine art through four centuries. To our mind, this is what the authors of the book meant it to be: they would “arouse some curiosity in students of the arts in the background of the arts in the Philippines” and, more important to the researcher, they have built “a kind of framework on which to base future studies”.

The framework will probably lend itself to some amount of debating, but the seven who propose it (Fernando Zóbel and Galo B. Ocampo are among them) are so immersed in the cultural life of the country that one will at least find difficulty contesting their right to set the limits of Philippine art. Nevertheless, it is to their credit that they take pains to point out how the book makes no pretense whatever at speaking the last word on anything: if at all, it suggests