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A Note on Jesuits and Philippine Languages, 1581-1900
PATRIA G. ARAÑAS

Four Spanish Jesuits, Fr. Antonio Sedeño and Fr. Alonzo Sanchez, priests; Gaspar Suarez de Toledo, a scholastic; and Nicolas Gallardo, a lay brother, were designated for the first Jesuit mission in the Philippines, and three of them arrived in Manila on 17 September 1581 in the company of Fray Domingo de Salazar, a Dominican who had been nominated for the position of head of an episcopal see in Manila. Sedeño, the superior of the group, was a veteran missionary at forty-six. One of the four Jesuits, Gaspar Suarez never reached Philippine soil, having died during the voyage.¹ The Jesuits were guided by specific instructions to learn the language of the people "in order to help them save their souls as far as they can according to our usual methods." Sedeño, in learning Tagalog, remarked that "although the vocabulary was copious, the structure of the language was simple enough and should give no trouble."² Fr. Pedro Chirino and Brother Francisco were sent to the Philippines and they arrived in Manila on 20 June 1590. Then began the missionary work of the Jesuits with earnest study of the language of the people.³

LEARNING THE NATIVE LANGUAGES

The early Jesuits evangelized with the use of the native language, Tagalog, after studying the way of life of the natives at the mission in Taytay and finding out that the primitive religion

1. Horacio de la Costa, S.J., *The Jesuits in the Philippines – 1581-1768* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 5-9.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-14.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

was closely interwoven with culture and traditions. The missionaries followed the method of St. Francis Xavier by giving instructions to the children in Tagalog. Four prayers were taught; the Tagalog catechism adopted by the Synod of Manila and printed from word blocks by the Dominicans in 1593 was used.⁴

Upon request made by Rodriguez de Figueroa, who helped in building a church in Manila, Fr. Chirino and Brother Francisco Martin were assigned to Figueroa's *encomienda* in Panay even though the Augustinian friars had four missions on the island. Chirino learned his second Philippine language, Haraya, and after a few months composed the first catechism in Haraya. Chirino has been credited with putting the principal truths of the creed and some hymns into the verse form of the traditional Visayan folk songs. The Christian doctrine was thus easily learned. Chirino, with Brother Prospero, also started a school at Tigbauan. Reading, writing in Spanish and liturgical music aside from Catechism in Haraya were taught. When the Spaniards at Arevalo heard of the school, they asked that their children also be given instructions. Because Chirino could not leave Tigbauan, he suggested that the Spanish children stay at his residence. Thus the first Jesuit boarding school was established.⁵

The Tagalog missions were in Antipolo, Taytay and Manila. Other missions established in the Visayas were in Leyte, Cebu, Bohol, and in Mindanao, Butuan. The school at Dulag was the first *seminario de Indios*, a boarding school for natives to be established by the Philippine vice-province. It was a free school. Reading, writing and music in Spanish and the Christian doctrine in Visayan were taught with the help of a Filipino lay scholastic.

The mission in Ormoc, Leyte, founded by Fr. Alonzo Rodriguez and Fr. Leonardo Scelsi in May 1597, introduced the division of the catechism course into grades and copying of the lessons in the native language for home study at the request of the literate Visayans. The missionaries thus contributed a pedagogical principle later contained in the Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum* by the use of written native language in teaching catechism.⁶

The mission of Butuan was the first attempt of the Spaniards to convert the Muslims of Mindanao. Valerio de Ledesma, the first

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-42.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

6. *Ibid.*

missionary assigned to the area introduced the prayers, creed and commandments translated into Visayan verse and taught them to the children, who in turn taught them to their households. It was said that the chanting of the catechism became the evening's entertainment in many homes.⁷

At the mission in Cebu, a primary school and grammar school using Spanish as medium of instruction were founded not only for Visayan but for Spanish and Chinese children as well. Chirino learned Cebuano (his third language) while Francisco Vicente Puche, a newly arrived scholastic, learned Chinese in order to assist Chirino in the ministry for the Chinese community.⁸

The missions in Mindanao were established in the eighteenth century after the Spanish government acceded to opening a garrison. In 1745, Fr. Josef Wilhelm was assigned to Zamboanga. In order to win the favor of the native ruler, Sultan Alimuddin, Wilhelm learned not only the Malay of the Sulus but also Arabic, the learned language of the area. In an effort to convert the natives, the Jesuit missionaries learned the native languages, translated the catechism into the native languages while they taught reading, writing and music in Spanish.⁹

TRANSLATIONS

In their efforts at preaching the Gospel, the missionaries of the Society of Jesus used teaching methods that had been tested in the missions established in China and Japan. After learning the language of the natives, they worked on translations of the prayers and catechism into the native language. Some of the translations have been preserved in the Central Jesuit Archives in Rome.

Diego Luis de Sanvitores translated Jeronimo Lopez' *Acto de Contricion*. Lopez was known for his practice of marching through the streets of the Spanish countryside, carrying a crucifix and crying out the act of contrition. This encouraged people to join the procession which was led back to the church where priests were prepared for hearing confessions.¹⁰ Sanvitores translated the more powerful formula of Lopez' act of contrition and he was

7. *Ibid.*, p.165.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 545.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 471.

successful in converting the Aetas from the Malaraya Mountain near Lake Bai.

Cristobal Jimenez (1573-1628) in 1610, and Domingo Esguerra in 1662, both translated the catechism into Visayan.¹¹ De la Costa lists Jimenez also as the author of *Doctrina Christiana Rob Bellarmini in Linguam Bisayan translata*, published in Manila by Manuel Gomez in 1610. The letter to Robert Bellarmine stated:

I would be justly deemed presumptuous in presenting myself before your illustrious Lordship (Bellarmine being a Cardinal), even if only by letter – were it not that my purpose is (to) humbly beg your pardon – in translating the catechism and Introduction to Mysteries of our Holy Faith which your most illustrious and reverend Lordship wrote, into the Visayan language – This is the first book which the Visayans in the whole course of their history have seen written in their own language; and it is hoped that by reading the wholesome and holy doctrine contained therein, both their own catechists- as well as those who are being educated in the boarding schools, will imbibe as from a pure spring the spirit of truth of our holy faith.¹²

Jimenez also published an introductory Visayan grammar and a confession manual into the same language.

BOOKS

Paul Klein, a German by birth and a Jesuit assigned to the Philippines but who learned from the Spanish Jesuits in the Philippines and who was professor of theology at the College of Manila from 1687 through 1690 wrote a book entitled *Remedios Faciles para Deferentes Enfermedades* in 1712 (Simple Remedies for Various Complaints) and in 1713 a second book, a series of essays on the subject “Ang Infiernong Nabubucsan sa Tauong Christiano, at nang Houag Masoc Doon” (Hell laid Open to the Christian, that he may be Advised not to Enter Therein) of 313 pages. In 1714, he wrote a Tagalog translation of a book of meditations by the French Jesuit Bohours, entitled *Pensamientos Christianos, o Macatouid Manga Panimdim Nang Tauon Christiano* (Christian

11. Miguel A. Bernad, *The Christianization of the Philippines: Problems and Perspectives* (Manila: The Philipiniana Book Guild, 1972).

12. De la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines*, pp. 620-21.

Thoughts; or Reflections of a Christian Soul). A second edition appeared in 1748.¹³

The following publications are all listed in Appendix D of De la Costa's *The Jesuits in the Philippines*.¹⁴ Domingo Esguerra (1601-1670) wrote *Arte de la Lengua Bisaya de la Provincia de Leyte*, published by Imprenta de la Compania de Jesus por Simon Pinpin, in Manila in 1663. The second edition was printed by Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay in 1747. Esguerra was provincial of the Society in the Philippines in 1666.

Francisco Ignacio Alcina (1610-1674) contributed *Manual de Devocion Exercicios Christianos en Lengua Bisaya Para Instruccion de los Hermanos Bisayas Congregantes de los Congregaciones de la Virgen Maria*, printed in Manila in 1703. This is supposed to be a reprint of an earlier edition believed to have come out during the lifetime of the author.

Vocabulario de la Lengua Bisaya, written by Mateo Sanchez (1562-1618) was published by Colegio de la Sagrada Compania de Jesus por D. Gaspar Aquino de Belen in 1711. The only copy is in the British Museum.

Caton Cristiano en Lengua Bisaya, was written by Pedro de Estrada (1680-1748) and it was printed in Manila in 1734. A second volume entitled, *Segunda Parte de la Explicacion del Catecismo Bisaya Ilustrada con Ejemplos y Moralidades Bisaya*, came out in 1735 and a third entitled, *Tercera Parte de la Explicacion del Catechismo Bisaya*, came out in 1737.

Ycaducha nga Bahin sa Pedagogo Christiano con sa Binisaya Padre Phelipe Doutreman de la Compania de Jesus ug Guibouad usab sa Binisaya nga Polong by Francisco Tejada (1647-1728) was published in 1751. This is the second volume of a Visayan translation of Philippe d'Outreman's *Le Pedagogue Chretien*. Volume I is said to have been published in Manila in 1726 but there seems to be no surviving copy.

Juan de Noceda (1681-1747) and Pedro de Sanlucar (1706-?) wrote *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala* and it was printed by Imprenta de la Compania de Jesus por Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay in 1754. This Tagalog dictionary was based on researches of Paul Klein and other Spanish Jesuit missionaries among the Tagalogs.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 507.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 623-28.

Mateo Gisbert wrote a Bagobo-Español, Español-Bagobo dictionary. It was published by Tipo-Litografico de Ramirez y Co. Magallanes, I y Sucursal Escolta in 1892.¹⁵ Part I presents the parts of speech and explains the formation of words and cites several examples. Distinct features are the following: the use of the hyphen between two successive or repeated consonants to approximate the native glottal stops; repetitives in words such as: *sogo-sogo-an*—meaning in Spanish, *mondadero* (religious offering); *songsongno – parche* (dandruff); *tabo taboo – casposo* (stretch out); and *tobid-tobid – despezarse* (covering for wound). An appendix with several additional entries and a Portion for errata are included in the dictionary.

Guillermo Bennasar wrote Tiruray-Español and Español-Tiruray dictionaries published in 1892 and 1895 by Tipo Litografía de Chofre y Comp. Part I has 212 pages and Part II, 175 pages. The prologue written by Francisco Javier Limo explains the purpose of the book and also apologizes for whatever errors, omissions or entries with doubtful bases may have been included. The books have about 6,000 entries.¹⁶ Fr. Bennasar also wrote a catechism in Tiruray entitled: *Catechismo de la Doctrina Cristiano en Castellano y Tiruray por un P. Misionero de la Compania de Jesus*. He has been referred to as the translator of the work of Jose Tenorio whose Tiruray name was Segayan or Sigayon. The book was translated into English by Stuart A. Schegel,¹⁷ in 1970. The treatise gives a description of the people and the place where they lived, their houses and their food.

Jacinto Juanmarti wrote a catechism in Moro-Maguindanao in 1885, *Cartilla Moro-Castellana para los Maguindanao* in 1887 and *Compendio de Historia Universal Desde Creacion del Mundo Hasta la Venida de Jesucristo y Un Breve Vocabulario en Castellana y en Moro-Maguindanao, Por un Padre Misionero de la Compania de Jesus* in 1888.¹⁸ He also wrote *Gramatica de la Lengua Maguinda-*

15. P. Mateo Gisbert, *Observaciones Gramaticales Para Facilitar El Estudio de la Lengua Bagobo: Bagobo-Español* (Manila: Estab. Tipo-Litografico de Ramirez y Co., Magallanes, y Sucursal Escolta, 1982).

16. Guillermo Bennasar, *Diccionario Tiruray-Español* Compuesto por un P. de la Compania de Jesus. Primera parte (Manila: Tipo-Litografía de Chofre y Comp., 1892).

17. Jose Tenorio (Sigayan), "The Customs of the Tiruray People," trans. and annotated Stuart A. Schlegel. *Philippine Studies* 18, no. 2 (April 1970): 364-428.

18. Jacinto Juanmarti, *Compendio de Historia Universal Desde la Creacion del Mundo Hasta la Venida de Jesucristo u un Breve Vocabulario en Castellana y en Moro-Ma-*

nao Segun se Habla en el Centro y en la Costa sus de la Isla de Mindanao in 1891,¹⁹ and *Diccionario Moro-Maguindanao-Español* in 1892.²⁰

The *Compendio*, while teaching the Moro-Maguindanao natives the Spanish language and writing, also gives them an idea of the Christian religion without making allusions to the Moslem religion and customs. The book also includes a collection of *Proverbios*, *Comparaciones* and *Enigmas* which represent beliefs and proverbs of the natives and among the Malays expressed in Spanish, from which lessons were hoped to be learned. In the Introduction, an explanation is given regarding the Arabic characters. The *Compendio* is a remarkable work by a missionary not only because it indirectly teaches a Christian way of life but also because it incorporates native orthography. The book written in Spanish must have involved interpretation of native expressions and beliefs according to the level of understanding of nuances and contexts by Juanmarti.

Gramatica explains the meaning of language as a "conjunction of words for expressing ideas which the people of a tongue use." It includes an analogy; an explanation of the parts of speech; Syntax, Prosody and Orthography. The last pages of the book contain a vocabulary of Spanish, Maguindanao and Malay which demonstrates the relationship of the three languages. An analysis word formation shows that Juanmarti developed a high level of linguistic knowledge because the book included semantic change resulting from the addition of affixes and also the utilization of the passive form which is characteristically oriental.

OTHER WORKS

Many of the contributions of the Jesuits to Philippine linguistics before 1900, were embedded in the Letters written to the

guindanao por en Padre Misionero de la Compania de Jesus. Con las licencias necesarios (Singapore: Imprenta de Koh Yew Hean, 1888).

19. Jacinto Juanmarti, *Gramatica de la lengua Maguindanao Segun se Habla en el Centro y en la Costa sur de la Isla de Mindanao por el P. de la Compania de Jesus* (Manila. Imprenta "Amigos del Pais," 1891), C. C. Smith. (Captain Fourteenth U.S. Cavalry. Washington Government Printing Office, 1906).

20. Jacinto Juanmarti, *Diccionario Moro-Maguindanao-Español* Compuesto por el P. de la Compania de Jesus (Manila: Tipografia Amigos del Pais, 1892), part one: *Moro-Español*, part two: *Español-Moro*.

Jesuit General of the Society. These *cartas* were a requirement for each of the Provinces established in the Mission lands.

When the Jesuits were exiled in May 1768, they left their missions and their mission schools in Luzon and in the Visayas. After a ninety-one-year exile, in 1862 the Spanish missionaries came back and founded the Mission of Tamontaca, the first mission in Mindanao. Some of the letters written by Fr. Jose Ignacio Guerrico, found in the Jesuit Archives at San Cugat del Valles near Barcelona, were translated by Jose S. Arcilla, S.J., an archivist of the Philippine Jesuit Provincial Archives.²¹ The letters stated that the Jesuits at Tamontaca started learning the local Tiruray and Maguindanao languages by means of "mime and patient listing of individual words and phrases until they had the rudiments of a Tiruray wordbook and grammar"²² which later was published by Guillermo Bennasar, another Spanish Jesuit, as a dictionary of Tiruray and Spanish and a dictionary of Spanish and Tiruray. Fr. Guerrico wrote about the efforts to learn the Maguindanao languages:

The hope of winning them to Jesus Christ one day has moved me to collect from their language, the words or phrases that correspond to their Tiruray equivalent. This study of the Muslim tongue is so much more important for us as the Tiruray in general understand and speak it while the ordinary Muslim does not know Tiruray. Thus the Muslim language can serve us in case we need to deal with the Tiruray and instruct them without our having to learn Tiruray—speaking in their language is much more effective for the end in view.²³

The Jesuits at Tamontaca were assisted in learning the language by a Don Pedro Ortuoste who helped them in translating Muslim words into Tiruray. The Tiruray wordbook and grammar could be considered a compilation of words and phrases noted from Tiruray guests who came to the mission daily, attracted by the gifts and kindnesses extended by the Spanish priests who were considered as friends and protectors from the Maguindanao raids.²⁴

21. "A letter from Tamontaca, 1862." Unpublished letter from Fr. Jose Ignacio Guerrico, S.J. pleading for a more sympathetic attitude toward the Muslims of Maguindanao. Annotated translation by Jose S. Arcilla, S.J., *Kinaadman* III, 1981, p. 135.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 146, 149.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-51.