

## PARTE NATURAL OF ALZINA'S MANUSCRIPT OF 1668 A SOURCE OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL DATA\*

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OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE PHILIPPINES' PAST, THANKS TO the work of dedicated archeologists, is growing every day. With the analysis of the painstaking but rewarding finds of Palawan as well as those from Novaliches, Calatagan, Pangasinan, and Sta. Ana, Manila, many prehistoric and proto-historic gaps are slowly being filled. These are but the first scenes of a larger spectacle, the epic of a nation unfolding before our eyes.

The anthropologist is not a collector of artifacts, nor is he a grave digger. His interest lies in people and their way of life. Even when he deals with material culture traits, he does so in order to uncover some of the technological and ritual aspects of a people's culture. Although, in this task, he is often unaided by written documents — as in the case of pre-hispanic Philippines — he will welcome them to supplement and hopefully corroborate those “unwritten” documents with which he works and through which the Philippines' prehistoric past so far has partly revealed itself.

With the advent of the Spanish conquest, written documents appeared. Most of these early writings are reports from colonists to Spanish or ecclesiastical authorities. Though limited by their scope and ethnocentrism, they are the only remaining witnesses of a turning point in the history of the Philippines; as such they are essential to the understanding of the cultural changes brought about by Spain in this part of the world. For the anthropologist, these are precious documents which in due time should contribute to a “text-aided archeology” (Hawkes 1954:158) and advance our understanding of the Philippines' history. Travelogues, missionary letters, and reports provide material for comparison and serve to some extent, as a check on the development of theory and the elaboration of types so important to the archeologist. To Hawkes (*ibid.*:158),

this comparison will not rest on its practitioner's own theory as in the “text-free” archeology... it rests on textual statements guaranteeing that there were such types, standardized and varying only in detail, in the historic cultures concerned.

Moving to the sixteenth and later centuries, Philippine Archeology has to deal with the type of documents which, through their judicious

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use, should shed light on the ideological context of the material culture uncovered and on some of the patterns of behavior the artifacts cannot possibly reveal even indirectly. Historical reconstructions, the domain of the archeologist, require that no stone be left unturned until a complete picture is obtained. This means a painstaking analysis of all available documents.

When he studies the seventeenth century and the immediate pre-colonization period of the Visayas, the anthropologist cannot ignore one of the most complete records that exists, Alzina's manuscript of 1668, *Historia de las islas e indios de Bisayas*. The purpose of this article is to discuss the authenticity and validity of the manuscript's first part, *Parte Natural*, as a source of anthropological data, at least in the Muñoz version made available by the Philippine Studies Program of the University of Chicago.<sup>1</sup> After touching on the historiography of the document, we shall investigate with the use of the text itself Alzina's competence as an observer of the Visayan scene.

### 1. Historiography of the Alzina Manuscript

Fortunately, a good deal of the document's historiography has been undertaken by two scholars connected with the Philippine Studies Program of the University of Chicago. Hester reviewed (1962) the bibliographical notes and references made to the three extant copies of the document, one found in the Muñoz Collection, another referred to as the Lenox text, and the third called the Ateneo copy.

Following Hester, Lietz related (1962) how he traced the location of the original and of the copies and their movements. The original of Part One "thus far . . . has not been located" (*ibid.*:368). All we have of it is a copy Muñoz carefully made in 1784. The two other copies that were made, the San Cugat or Ateneo copy and the Lenox copy apparently "a later and more careless copy" (*ibid.*) were not available for this study. Of the Muñoz version, Lietz stated (*ibid.*:375) that "there are grounds for confidence that this version is a true copy . . . There is meanwhile a continuing search for further threads in this intriguing web of evidence." This version is found in the Biblioteca de Palacio, Madrid, where a microfilm copy was made on which this article is based. Part one alone interests us here since Part Two deals exclusively with the preaching of the Gospel.

With confidence that our text is an authentic copy of the 1668 manuscript, we may proceed to evaluate Alzina's work as a contribution to an ethnography of the seventeenth century Visayas. Following some biographical notes, a study of Alzina's methodology — in particular of his objectivity in recording the data and the limitations inherent to his

<sup>1</sup> At the time this was written, Part Two of the manuscript, *Parte Sobrenatural*, was not available.

station in life — will help to assess its potential usefulness for anthropologists.

## II. The Author and His Purpose

In evaluating written work, a critic must place it in its proper context. Redfield offers the remark (1962:150) that

a written account of a community is something like the community itself: to understand it one needs to take the inside view of it. Of the published study, the inside view is the author's view.

Getting this view requires a knowledge of the author, the main events of his life, his attitudes towards the people, and his stated purpose in writing his observations.

### 1. Alzina

Francisco Ignacio de Alzina was born in Spain "around the year 1609."<sup>2</sup> He joined the Society of Jesus when he was fourteen. As a Jesuit priest, he was sent to the Philippines and reached Manila in 1632. Two years later, he was assigned to the Visayan Islands, where he took residence first in "Ybabao" as he calls Eastern Samar.<sup>3</sup> There he immediately "started studying the language of the place and succeeded in mastering it to such an extent that he thought he knew it better than six others he had used and spoken before."<sup>4</sup>

In the span of twenty four years, he relates, he had managed to draw up a list of about twenty thousand words of Visayan.<sup>5</sup> His fluency in the language is manifested by his detailed knowledge of terms for such things as the variations of the *kasin* game — for which he counted more than thirty different terms "which are not used for anything else;" it is on this occasion that he notes the "incomparable richness of the language" and "the assiduity needed to learn it well."<sup>6</sup> He also carefully took note whenever terms for the same denotatum differed from place to place.<sup>7</sup> His knowledge, he candidly admitted, was considerable and allowed him to preach freely and even write a *Manual de Devocion* in Visayan.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Lietz quotes (1962:369) a note that Muñoz wrote on the copy he was making of Alzina's manuscript.

<sup>3</sup> Alzina: 4, 2, 17-18. The references are made to the transcription of the microfilm of the Spanish text, found in the Biblioteca de Palacio, Madrid, made by Victor Baltazar, Philippine Studies Program, Universities of Chicago. The first number refers to the book, the second to the chapter, and the third to the pages.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: 3, 1, 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: 4, 9, 144: "la abundancia sin igual de esta lengua que para burlas i veras para juegos i cosas severas tienen nombres propios i solos para esto; i en el juego que dijimos de los trompos que ellos llaman *Casin*, i de hai al corazon de hombres o animales porque es casi de aquella hechura llaman *CasinCasin* tienen mas de 30. palabras propias i distantas de aquel juego que no sirven para otros, i lo mismo es de los otros, que cierto es cosa rara i que denota lo mucho que hai que aprender para saberla bien."

<sup>7</sup> For example, *ibid.* 4, 12, 184-5 and 4, 13, 210 and 214.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*: 3, 1, 10. See also Lietz 1962:367, with the accompanying footnote 3.

His work, that of a missionary and later of a vice-provincial, took him through almost all the *pueblos* of the Visayas.<sup>9</sup> In a long letter written in 1660 he told one of his superiors in Rome “. . . we are always on the move, carrying houses on our backs like the tortoise . . .”<sup>10</sup> This, nevertheless, did not deter him from making notes of his observations:

From the beginning he made use of whatever time his apostolate spared him, to study the natural and moral history (“*historia natural i moral*”) of the place. . . Finding some rest in the midst of his worries, he set out to put in order his innumerable notes which he had been forever working on. . . (Lietz 1962:369)<sup>11</sup>

This resulted in the *Historia de las Islas e Indios de Bisayas* (1668). A real mine of details on the fauna, flora, and the culture of the Visayas, its transcription by Baltazar covers 1,485 double-spaced typewritten pages.<sup>12</sup> And this is just Part one, “Parte Natural.”

Father Alzina’s concern went far beyond that of a mere chronicler. He was, first of all, a priest with a deep interest in both the material and spiritual welfare of his people. An instance of his application of his new-found knowledge is the use he made of his discovery of local and Chinese medications. When he learned a certain one, called in Samar *banat* or *palo de China*, was quite effective, he kept administering it to people who needed it, even though it was expensive.<sup>13</sup>

Involved as he was in the people’s welfare, he sympathetically took the people’s side in the face of his countrymen’s excesses and attempted within his means to remedy the injustices and “unreasonable treatments” they suffered.<sup>14</sup> He was aware of the disruptive effects of the practice of removing people by force from their habitat, which caused them “much loss and . . . also tumults and risings of the people.”<sup>15</sup> A 1670 letter to his superiors in Rome shows his deep concern for the *mundos*, people overburdened by Spanish taxes which they could not pay. The *mundos* had fled in fear of reprisals to the hills of Cebu. Fr. Alzina, then the vice-provincial superior of the Jesuits for the Visayas, in this letter took on himself the defense of the *mundos* and of his priests who had started a resettlement project for about three thousand of them as they preferred “to live in communities by themselves.”<sup>16</sup>

Alzina spent his last years in Manila, away from his beloved Visayans. He died in 1674, leaving behind a scholarly legacy, the *Historia*.

<sup>9</sup> Alzina, 3, 23, 342: “pues los he andado casi todos. . .”

<sup>10</sup> Translated and quoted by Father de la Costa (1961:458).

<sup>11</sup> See footnote 2.

<sup>12</sup> Philippine Studies Program, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago.

<sup>13</sup> Alzina, 3, 23, 339-43.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 3, 57.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 8, 125: “. . . o de las casas de los encomenderos sacaban muchos de las suyas, cosa que ellos sienten mucho, y como veremos en su lugar ha sido parte o causa de mucho menoscabo que ha habido en los Naturales, y tambien de algunos alborotos y alzamientos de Pueblos. . .”

<sup>16</sup> de la Costa 1961:466.

This account of Alzina's life would be incomplete without some comments on his personality background, especially on the fact that he was a sharer of the Spanish culture of his time and within it held the role a Jesuit missionary. This note on his early training and theological formation is necessary to get at "the inside view," as circumstances surround the elaboration of the manuscript.

When he reached the Philippines, Alzina came with his own baggage of ideas which gave a particular bent to his temperament and interest. His conditioning to the Spanish culture and the religious and missionary vocation surfaced here and there through the manuscript in the form of value judgments with the advantages and disadvantages they entail.

Spain was at the time — at least in the minds of her sons — the most highly developed country of the world and the center of a growing empire. Every Spaniard coming to the Philippines was imbued with the grandeurs of his native land and felt that he had to bring to the *Indios* the advantages of Spain's "superior" civilization. Alzina was no exception to this ethnocentrism. When judging the quality of the native music for instance, he described it as "barbaric"; writing of the use of rice paste for sharpening the *bolo*, he called it the "practices of a blind people."<sup>17</sup>

Like most Spaniards he complained in condemning tones about the indolence of the people.<sup>18</sup> But this condemnation was, in other passages, tempered somewhat by recognition of the ecological variations obtaining in the area and by the admission of differences among the people and their lack of proper knowledge.<sup>19</sup> The latter consideration, in fact, for Alzina outweighed the strong judgments mentioned. Father de la Costa summarizes Alzina's views of it, and quotes the 1660 letter (1961: 460):

Did this amazing improvidence argue to a lack of natural capacity in the Visayans, as some contended? By no means, Alzina asserts. Missionaries who say such things should examine their consciences carefully to see whether the difficulty lies in the people or in themselves; one naturally hates to admit one's lack of zeal; for it is easier to accuse the natives of being unteachable. But "it is false; they have more than enough ability; they simply do not make use of it..."<sup>20</sup>

Whenever he had doubts about some beliefs, he indicated them, humbly admitting that others could hold a different opinion, as in the case of the wizard where he states that "each one may believe as he

<sup>17</sup> Alzina, 3, 4, 59: "...la mia solo se estiende a la musica, aunque barbara, de estos naturales..." and 3, 5, 79: "...cosas de gente ciega, y que parece no alcanzaba las cosas ni discurria."

<sup>18</sup> Chapter Twenty of Book Three is a good sample of this attitude.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 3, 38; 3, 4, 72 and 3, 5, 74-5.

<sup>20</sup> Fr. de la Costa quotes here a portion of Alzina's letter of June 24, 1660, which he found in the Jesuit Archives of Rome (ARSI, Phil.).

chooses" though for him their existence will always remain doubtful admitting they might exist somewhere else.<sup>21</sup>

Here and there he also mentioned the contributions Spain had made for the betterment of the people, by bringing, for instance, the hoe and the plow and other musical instruments to which the people became attached, and by teaching arithmetic and other sciences.<sup>22</sup>

In all this Alzina showed an awareness that there were two sides to the coin. This makes it easier for the reader to assess both the author's bias and his honesty. A case in point is found in the chapter where the musical instruments of the Visayans are described.<sup>23</sup> After remarking that their music was somewhat "barbaric to his Spanish ears, he wrote that, nevertheless, the people found their own ballads pleasant. He humbly added that little by little, with the passage of time, they sounded "less dissonant" to him.<sup>24</sup> He also noted with some satisfaction the changes occurring in the manner of singing and playing the native instruments under the influence of Spanish music.<sup>25</sup> In these attitudes oscillating between condemnations and appreciative judgments, we are witnessing an interesting acculturation process within the author himself and among the people. As far as our author is concerned, we can safely assume that his openness to a new culture was a trait of his own personality, developed perhaps by his early humanities background during Jesuit training.

So much for Alzina's hispanic cultural background. Another noticeable influence worthy of mention is that of his seminary training in the scholastic philosophy and theology of his time. Many of his value judgments find their origin in it. In this connection, it should be noted that these value judgments are found either at the beginning or at the end of chapters, in a few instances, in both places, and do not intrude into the body of descriptions and narrations. Consequently, it is easy to sift them from the data. Nevertheless, their presence has to be taken into account in evaluating the documents critically.

When he asserted that the Visayan language was "one of the seventy-two primitive languages of the world," Alzina was reflecting contemporary theological interpretations of the Genesis story of the tower of Babel.<sup>26</sup> Where his theological background played a more important role, however, is in the chapters in the third book dealing with the people's knowledge of the divinity and other religious and moral matters.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 18, 264: "...y cada qual creera lo que quisiere, que yo siempre esto y con duda y tal..."

<sup>22</sup> Alzina, 3, Chapters 3 and 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, Chapter 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 4, 59: "...que para ellos eran mui apacibles, aunque para nuestros sentidos poco gratas a los principios hacerla el uso con el tiempo menos disonante."

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 4, 61-2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 1, 7.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 3: particularly at the beginning of each of the chapters 11, 12, 15 and 20 and in the body of chapters 21 and 22.

In the fourth book, it is manifested in the discussion of the moral aspects of the different kinds of bondage, the plurality of wives and the validity of non christian marriage.<sup>28</sup>

Hime's remarks (1964: 1) on the impact of such beliefs on his manuscript are cogent.

It is most amazing that Alzina, writing in an era when such "opinions" were widespread, achieved the high degree of objectivity that he obviously did.

His "opinions" certainly did not deter our Spanish missionary from appreciating the Visayan culture, even if in a relative manner. There is an advantage to these preconceived ideas he came with, one should not forget: they made him aware of his own culture, a thing familiar to people involved in cross-cultural studies. One can also assume that his missionary zeal furnished the interest he kept through the years in the people's habits and beliefs. Furthermore, whatever ethnocentric and religious bias there was, it certainly was not hidden. It is now up to the contemporary reader to see through Alzina's ethnocentrism and particular bias, weighing them in such a manner that the data gain a new perspective.

Alzina was, to sum up, a dedicated worker, a product of his century and a witness of the Visayan scene in the seventeenth century. As an observer his credentials are impressive: the span of time he spent in Visayas and the use he made of it by noting methodically all he observed or learned by report, his thorough knowledge and sincere appreciation of the language, his extensive travel through the islands of the region, and his genuine commitment to the welfare of the people.

A keen observer, he was far from being neutral about the new values and behavior he encountered. Like all of us he had his own preconceived ideas, assimilated during his formative years. Yet whatever value judgments he made, they do not detract from his portrait of the Visayans.

## 2. Alzina's Statement of Purpose in Writing the *Historia*

What Alzina had in mind when he started to write is revealed in two places at the beginning of Part One, just before Book One: in the dedication and, following it, in a more elaborate statement of purpose.<sup>29</sup>

a. Dedicating his work to a former Superior General, Fr. Francis Borgia, Alzina stated that he wanted to bring to light a "Natural History of the Visayan islands before they knew God" along with their "ecclesiastical or supernatural history after they have known him."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 4: 6 and 15. A curious theological belief regarding giants is discussed briefly at the beginning of chapter 17, pp. 261-2.

<sup>29</sup> Alzina, Volume I, pp. 5-11 and 12-18 of the Baltazar transcription.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5: "...i sacar a luz esta Historia natural de las Yslas e Yndios Bisayas o Pintados antes que conociese a Dios, i eclesiastica o sobrenatural despues que le conocieron..."

Part One, which interests us here, was an attempt at recording the fauna and flora of the islands and at reconstructing the material and non-material culture of the Visayans before their Christianization.

A question should be raised regarding this effort at reconstructing pre-Spanish customs and technology. When Alzina arrived in the Visayas, evangelization had been under way for about seventy years; it is possible that the value of this piece of testimony is lessened by the distance in time between the witness and the events described. The answer to this is furnished us by Alzina himself. First, when he wrote about the Visayas, his base line was the Eastern Visayas (Samar and Leyte) from which he compared the other islands such as Panay and Cebu. When, in 1634, he took station in Eastern Samar, or Ybabao as he called it, "... it had been hardly twenty-six years since the preaching of the Gospel had commenced in these islands..."<sup>31</sup> It was then not difficult for him to gather information for instance, on pre-Christian beliefs and practices, especially from the older people. Indeed, as he studied the religious beliefs of the Visayans, Alzina candidly remarked (*ibid.*).

I also came across some who were pagans still, but not many because of the great care of those first missionaries. I dug up these facts and this fundamental principle on which could be based the conclusion that they had knowledge, although very simple and most vague, of the true God. Not all of them had it in general, but some of those who had more intelligence and more capacity and who kept the knowledge which had been passed on from father to son. From them I discovered the fact, not at the beginning, because to find out these things it is necessary to have more than a smattering of the language, but rather it was after a while, gradually, when I was taken by the desire to know the root of the affairs, language, customs and antiquities, that I discovered this and many other facts that I shall deal with...in the following chapters...

This lengthy quotation is necessary if only to illustrate the fact that Alzina sought reliable sources. In other passages he always took pain to mention that he availed himself of the oldest and best informed persons in the area.<sup>32</sup> The distance to the pre-hispanic time in Eastern Visayas was not so great after all.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 11, 177-8: con todo por lo que he averiguado con los mas viejos que alcanze yo en Ybabao, Samar y Leite que cuando yo vine a ellos los mas habian recibido el Baptismo en pie, y no pocos de edad mayor; y apenas habia 26. años que en dichas Yslas habia commenzado la predicacion evangelica, y alcanze algunos, aunque no muchos, por el cuidado grande de los primeros obremos que eran Gentiles aun; rastree las dichas noticias y el fundamento dicho, de que se saca tuvieron conocimiento, aunque cortisimo y obscurisimo del verdadero Dios, aunque no en general todos sino algunos de los mas entendidos y de mayor capacidad; que guardaron las noticias que de Padres a hijos fueron conservando, y de ellos las alcanze yo, aunque no luego a los principios, que para averiguar estas cosas es menester mas que medianas noticias de su lengua, sino despues poto a poco quando llevado del deseo de saber de raiz sus cosas, lengua, costumbres y antiguallas halle lo dicho y lo demas que dire de sus cosas en los Capítulos siguientes donde iremos tratando con alguna claridad de ellas.

<sup>32</sup> For other instances of this, see: *Ibid.*: 3, 11, 171; 3, 19, 278; 4, 1, 10; 4, 2, 24-5, among others.

Whenever the author mixed past events, narrated to him by these informants, with his own observations, he implied the time differential through the use of past tenses. When he talked about the occurrence of death by witchcraft, he did so by cautiously remarking that this belief "was so common and widespread in ancient times that it can be presumed to have lasted until this day . . ." <sup>34</sup> Though it was never stated clearly, an assumption underlay this mixture of past description with present observations, one that I could express this way: "today's behavior of the 1668 *Pintados* is a republication of yesterday's, unless noted otherwise." This pervades the whole manuscript as one goes through it carefully.

b. In a separate section immediately following the dedication, Alzina devoted seven pages to stating his general purpose in writing.<sup>35</sup> It can be summarized thus:

To make known to the whole world the things that God has hidden in this part of the world so that He will be praised for the many wonders the readers will find in this volume;

To inspire people from afar to come to the islands to help the poor people so that there may be no lack of laborers.

To help the missionaries to go on with their work.

These statements apply to the whole Alzina's manuscript, that is, the natural as well as the ecclesiastical history of the Visayan people. Yet it should not be forgotten that the author wrote both with the same frame of mind, that of a Spanish Jesuit missionary of this age, and not with that of modern ethnographer. This is obvious, but this point has its importance in order to nip in the bud any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the author and his work.

The first purpose is religious: "for the greater glory of God." As such this document falls within the category of missionary literature. It is closely related to the Jesuit Relations of North America and, nearer to us, the Jesuit letters of Mindanao. Their aim was to inform the church authorities on the progress of the establishment of the Church in mission lands and to make known views of the writers on pressing problems. In spite of this limited scope, they have proven themselves rich sources of anthropological data (See Lynch 1956 and Duignan 1958). Alzina's first four volumes fall within the general line of missionary reports but with a difference — his two last volumes are more ethnographical than the run-of-the-mill missionary documents. As he wrote, besides the religious intention, he wanted to share his observations with his readers to entice them to join him in his work; here he acted as a

<sup>33</sup> The whole of chapter 6 of Book IV "on the different kinds of slaves" is a good example of this.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*: 3, 19, 280: "...pero de aquel uso tan comun y general antiguamente entre ellos ha quedado viva la presuncion de que hasta hoy dura..."

<sup>35</sup> Proemio e intento de esta obra para quien la leyere." (*Ibid.*, Parte Natural, Volume I of the Balthazar transcription, page 12.)

“public relations” missionary addressing future co-workers. He did it sympathetically, with great admiration for the “many wonders” he found, yet without overselling the people, noting what appeared to him, a Spaniard and a priest, to be flaws or corrupted practices.

The manuscript itself has to be understood to fall within the scope of Alzina’s missionary endeavors to convert the Visayan people to the Christian faith. In particular, this was the concern of the second part of the manuscript, “parte sobrenatural,” but it is also reflected in the first part, as earlier sections of this paper indicated. The “parte natural” is the work of a Spanish missionary whose priestly zeal led him to purify his people from christian beliefs and practices. The two parts are two panels of the same picture: the second complements and transforms the first. His interest in the first is that of a missionary.

c. The title of the manuscript states that it deals with the history of the Bisayan Islands. This should not be understood, however, as covering the whole of the islands and the total culture of their inhabitants. A reading of the third and fourth volumes reveals that what Alzina wrote about was limited to the eastern part of the Visayas, Samar and Leyte, in that order, with some description of and comparisons with life in the Christian *pueblos* of Cebu, Bohol, and Panay (Oton). In fact, in one passage concerning marriage customs, he stated that it was in the two islands of Samar and Leyte that he had amassed “the best information” and had tried hard to ascertain the data.<sup>36</sup>

### III. Alzina, An Objective Observer

Two points are considered here, Alzina’s qualities as an observer; and his limitations, or the nature of his bias. Their consideration will help ascertain the credibility of the author and the importance of his contribution.

#### 1. Alzina’s Qualities as an Observer

Alzina secures his information, as we have seen, through direct observations or with the help of reliable and knowledgeable informants, many of them, old men.<sup>37</sup> On several occasions he expressed his concern for doing a thorough job, as when he took down the religious beliefs of the people:

I will tell here what I have sought with great care. I want to trace what they knew and understood along with the differences I found among them.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 17, 241: “Esto es lo que a mi paracer se usava entre estos Bisayas de quien aqui trato, en especial en los dos islas de Leite Samar e Ybabao de que tengo mayores noticias i hecho algunas diligencias para averiguar la verdad...”

<sup>37</sup> See page 16.

<sup>38</sup> Alzina, 3, 11, 170: “Dire lo que he averiguado con mucho cuidado o en esta parte, y deseo de rastrear lo que sabian y tenian entendido y con la diferencia que hallo entre ellos;...”

These lines are very representative of the author's attitude towards carefully ascertaining the facts. Distinctions between what he witnessed himself and what was reported to him by his informant were always made conscientiously. They abound; but, a few expressions will be enough to give an idea of the man's scholarly fastidiousness in making distinctions about and in quoting his sources: "I shall tell about what is possible to ascertain"; "of this there are still memories among the natives"; . . . "it is a common report and I have heard it from . . ."<sup>39</sup> Whenever he took another's observation, he would make sure to note whether he had himself observed the event or not. The recurrence of the same trait is always painstakingly noted with the number of times he noticed it.

If there seemed to be some confusion among his informants on a particular point, he tried to clarify it, honestly admitting his efforts and the results.<sup>40</sup>

Add to this conscientiousness what we have mentioned earlier of his fluent knowledge of the Eastern Visayan language, is extensive travel and lengthy stay in the Central Philippines, we can be assured then of being in the presence of an exceptional witness of the Visayan life of that time. What Kroeber wrote (1956:135) of the ethnographer's approach comes to mind as applicable to Alzina himself.

He tends to envisage his problems or objectives holistically; and he prefers to acquire his data by holistic contact, person to person, face to face, by word of mouth plus his own observation. . . . As we have already said, the ethnographer makes his documents as he works. He knows their occasion and contexts, he can more or less judge their bias, he can extend or reduce the scope of his inquiry, he can return with fresh insights to recommence it.

Whenever documents were needed to substantiate some of his findings, he searched for them fastidiously. If he failed to uncover them, as in the case of the slaves' registration papers which guaranteed the owner's titles over them, he said so.<sup>41</sup> His doubts regarding the existence of the practice in the past of wearing pearls were clearly noted.<sup>42</sup> If a custom differed from place to place, the difference was recorded clearly and in detail.<sup>43</sup>

So involved was he with the welfare of the people, and so great was his knowledge of their customs' intricacies that he was accepted not only by his fellow priests but also by the people as an authority. One case which he tells about concerned a thorny problem of inhe-

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 15, 236: "Lo que yo puedo decir de lo que he podido rastrear. . ."; 4, 17, 266: "...de que hai aun oy memorias en're aquellos naturales. . ."; 4, 18, 276: "...es voz comun i lo he yo sido ha. . ."

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 18, 279.

<sup>41</sup> Alzina, 4, 5, 77 and 4, 6, 84.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 6, 123.

<sup>43</sup> As in the case of the distribution of the dowry, which differed between the Samar-Leyte people and those of Cebu and Bohol: *Ibid.* 4, 13, 214.

ritance involving descent which the people themselves could not settle. He succeeded in solving the difficulties satisfactorily where another priest had failed. The people were satisfied at the settlement; left to themselves, they would have never been agreeable, but how they agreed that these were the correct lines of succession according to their customs. . . .<sup>44</sup>

Such an attitude on the part of the people certainly indicates that Alzina was not only a keen observer but someone who was so versed in their way of life that he had come to have "the view from within." It was because of this that other priests consulted him on difficult customary laws as well as on witchcraft matters.<sup>45</sup> In these cases of customary law as in others, Alzina demonstrated that he had surpassed the knowledge of the common people, acting more like a native specialist than a foreign observer.

## 2. Alzina's Limitations

In writing his observations, as remarked earlier, Alzina's scope was limited by his station in life and background, and by his stated purpose in composing the manuscript. If it were true that he alternated from severe criticisms of some customs to recognition of "positive" elements in the Visayan culture, the problem of his value judgments must now be faced squarely.

It is admitted quite openly today that nobody is really completely free of valuing. No one faced this particular problem more honestly and courageously than Redfield. He wrote (1962:157) that in spite of their denials, "anthropologists do . . . place values of their own on what they see there." A few lines later he says that valuing "is a necessary part of their work." If some value judgment were inevitable for a twentieth century anthropologist with his exacting scientific training and do not necessarily invalidate his work, then when a seventeenth century missionary without any special training in this type of work comes along with his document, the same fairness and critical judgment should come into play.

One type of ethical judgment that is accepted within Redfield's line of thinking is characteristic of our chronicler; it is that which looks at "noncivilized peoples, not as equals, but as people on a different level of human experience" (*ibid.*:163). When Alzina condemned some of the inhabitants' "unfair" or "cruel" actions and unhygienic practices, he acted merely as a responsible person who looked at them "in the light of civilized ethical judgment" for these judgments originated from his intention to make life in the Visayas "more decent and more hu-

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 14, 228-9: "...i con esto quedaron contentos i ajustos, que a sus solas jamas lo quedaron i convencidos segun sus costumbres, de qua estas eran las lineas rectas de la sucesion..."

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 18, 270.

mane" (*ibid.*). Today nobody involved in social work would begrudge him that. Besides the point that it seems not to alter the facts, this humanistic valuing contributes to a greater understanding of the cultural changes occurring or about to occur at this time of the history of the Philippines. It also has something to say about the author himself, clearly an agent of change in his own right.

Other types of judgment, especially those which were of a religious nature, might not be as welcome, but they are understandable in the light of Alzina's vocation. It is easy to see through them since they seldom interfere with the description of the events themselves. When meeting them, the procedure to follow could be borrowed from Barzun and Graff. They were speaking (1964:163) of another writer, but the point is so applicable that we can substitute "Alzina" for "Macaulay":

The value of knowing all this as one reads an account of the past is that it affords a basis for judging the writer's own judgments. The reader proceeds by a sort of triangulation: here I stand; there to the left or right, stands [Alzina]; and beyond are the events which he reports. Knowing his position in relation to mine, I can work out a perspective upon events as I could not if I saw them exclusively through his eyes.

There is no great difficulty in determining Alzina's position. As we have already seen, the Christian and scholastic ideals, of which the metaphysical concept of the good was one of the universals, molded his mind and consequently his judgments. Once abstracted from the texts, these value judgments appear to have had very little influence on his reporting of facts and events. The triangulation procedure advocated above ought to allow the student to reach the data stored in Alzina's manuscript.<sup>46</sup>

The qualities of Alzina as an observer are so great and the value judgments so minimal and often so balanced, when viewed in their proper context, that his manuscript stands out as a precious and truthful document. Anthropologists will find in him a reliable witness of the Visayan way of life during the seventeenth century. For them as well as for botanists and zoologists, the four books of the first part are a rich source of data that is remarkably free of distortion.

As yet the resources of Alzina's manuscript have been barely tapped. In conclusion, we will review the uses anthropologists have made of it and suggest some others that await exploration.

#### IV. Of Some Uses of Alzina's Manuscript as a Source of Anthropological Data

Two anthropologists, so far as I know, have already made use of Alzina's manuscript as a source of data. Lynch studied (1965) several chapters of Volume Four (First Part) to discover the patterns of the

<sup>46</sup>This should be greatly facilitated when the second part of Alzina's work, "parte sobrenatural," becomes available to scholars.

social stratification and mobility in the pre-hispanic Philippines. The three other Spanish documents he used for this purpose — letters and reports of Loarca, Morga, and Plasencia — were written earlier. Alzina's on the whole agrees with them, and it is the most detailed and organized of the four. So far there is no way to find out if Alzina had any knowledge of the content of their works; he mentions different opinions of other persons, but not their names. Lynch has blazed a trail which should be followed by a more detailed study of the social structure and organization of the Visayans of that period.

Himes made much more ample use (1964) of the third and fourth books of the *Parte Natural* in his master's thesis which deals with a few selected institutions "— religion, recreation, marriage and family, and interpersonal relations" (1964: iii). This work shows how much material there is in Alzina for one who takes pains to analyze the text judiciously. Towards the end, the author lists the kinship terms found in Alzina and analyzes them. Here is a good starting point for a linguistic study of the terms used by the good Jesuit missionary.

The perusal of Alzina by archeologists studying particularly the material culture of the Visayans of that period will certainly bring out interesting results. The third volume is very rich in details on ship buildings, musical instruments, and other tools and instruments. The chapter on burials, burial places, and the things buried with the dead should be studied for corroborating or supplementing the evidence of archeological finds from that period and area.<sup>47</sup> Alzina attempted to recover artifacts from destroyed graves which some people, forerunners of our present day destructive pot-hunters, were pillaging.<sup>48</sup> His account of this attempt contains precious notes on jewels, jars, and plates found lying in caves. Such passages as these, though scattered and scant, lend themselves beautifully the "text-aided archeology" mentioned at the beginning of this paper. In addition, the archeology of the seventeenth century will benefit from Alzina's data on the non-material patterns of behavior which furnish the proper cultural context to contemporary artifacts.

Though the interests of anthropologists no longer go in the direction of historical reconstruction and diffusion, Alzina offers another area of study which, at this stage of research in the Philippines, is quite important. So little is known yet of the changes that occurred under the influence of Spanish colonization and Christianization! Alzina belonged to a time in history when changes in the habits and thinking of the people were making themselves felt, and yet the old way of life was still quite perceptible. The rates of change were probably unequal, even in the Visayas, because of the differences in the timetable of colonization. The 1668 document along side with the documents on the Tagalog

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* III, chapter 16.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 4, the whole of chapter 2.

area could provide an excellent basis for a comparative study of the influence of Christianity, its ingestion rates, and the assimilation and resistance encountered in the process. This type of study would certainly contribute to an understanding of the Filipino.

Other anthropologists of the 'Culture and Personality' school could use this manuscript for a study in depth of the personality of the writer himself, and the Spanish cultural influences, philosophical and theological training and missionary interest reflected in his attitudes towards the Visayans. The adaptation he underwent is noticeable. He became acculturated in a way that should interest students of personality dynamics.

There is no doubt that the student who comes into contact with Alzina's *major opus* will find here an invaluable personality as well as a first rate 'ethnographer' before the name.

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