

SOURCES OF LOCAL HISTORY*

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Local history as an area of inquiry appears so easy a subject to develop that probably the serious students of history thought of it as something beneath their dignity and not worthy of their full attention. This does not exhaust the reason why local history has been neglected by professional historians. If history as a discipline is to expand and recover from the academic pummeling it has been receiving lately from the behavioralists and social scientists, "out of spite" or otherwise, historians and others engaged in similar undertakings must welcome tasks that they had been neglecting in the past. This area is the challenge and I hope historians will respond positively.

Probably on account of this neglect, local history since the appearance of Isabelo de los Reyes' *Historia de Ilocos* during the last decade of the preceding century has been the monopoly of known and faceless amateurs busy writing on the subject for athletic meets or conferences and town fiestas' souvenir programs. Or occasionally when politicians in the local levels want to engage in ego trips, teachers and students were obligated to write local histories, later called *Historical Data Papers* which turned out to be nothing but "boosteristic" activities for their localities or for the enhancement of their political fortunes. Moreover local histories repeat the same refrain of recounting chronological narrative of political and governmental highlights, the local peoples' contribution to episodic events like economic crisis and war, ending up with an ego massage of individuals considered prominent and distinguished including their "mugs," hence the phrase "mug book."

Indeed the cheapening of local history due to mishandling of it by the town-fiesta, athletic-meet and flash-in-the-pan overnight historians or casual and occasional historians was probably one other reason why professional historians and students of history turned against the writing of town, provincial, or regional history.

Regardless, in the past two decades or so Filipino and foreign historians' attention turned to this area of history leading to an explosion of research, writing and publications, a phenomenon matched by similar activities in

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America and elsewhere, coincidentally at approximately the same time. During this period, or probably earlier, I remembered the late professor Nicolas Zafra being requested by the Rizal provincial governor to be one of the judges in the town-history writing contest for the province and one of my friends, Leopoldo Serrano writing the history of Caloocan or Mandaluyong (which of this, I now cannot remember). But Serrano's work, though I believed it won a prize, was never published. Later in the same decade, a group of U.P. historians led by Zafra had been requested by prominent officials and citizens of Marikina to do research and study the shoe industry of the town. Again I am not aware that this work was ever published for general dissemination. If it had come out in print I had not known about it. However, the then Dean Tomas Fonacier came out with an article that appeared in the *Diliman Review* of January, 1953, entitled "The Iloko Movement," discussing the story of the great Ilokano migration all over the country and abroad. Called by one scholar as a "solid work of scholarship" and "the standard work on Bikol regional history," the late Domingo Abella's *Bikol Annals: A Collection of Vignettes of Philippine History*, was an answer to the challenge poised by the needs for local history or history of the Bikol region, coming out in 1954.

But in the sixties, or more particularly in 1967 an American researcher, John A. Larkin, came forth with a call for writing more local history unaware probably that there had been more than passing interest earlier shown by professional historians on local history-writing, with his article entitled "The Place of Local History in Philippine Historiography" (*Journal of Southeast Asian History*). A little earlier, Larkin was preceded by another foreign researcher, Felix Keesing, who put out his *Ethnohistory of Northern Luzon* giving a lot of space to the Iloko provinces. The seventies witnessed the increasing number of scholarly works on local history commencing with Diokno Manlavi's *History of Palawan* in 1970, then the Foronda brothers', Juan and Marcelino, Jr., *Samtoy: Essays on Iloko Culture and History*, in 1972 which was also the year when Larkin's *The Pampangans, Colonial Society in a Philippine Province* was published abroad, with a local edition being published in 1975. Two years earlier, former Dean Cesar Majul of the University of the Philippines, performed for the Muslim Filipinos what others had been doing for the Ilokanos, Pampangans, Tagalogs, etc. when his *Muslim in the Philippines* was published in 1973. And later Rose Cortes, my colleague in the U.P. History Department, came out with *Pangasinan, 1572-1800*. In 1977 even the military sponsored the writing of the profile of the Ilokano and Iloko region, entitled *Ladaoan: The Ilokos and the Ilokanos* as a birthday gift to President Ferdinand E. Marcos.

Many of the preceding writers in turn stimulated the interest of students to write, as their masteral thesis or doctoral dissertations, local histories.

Some of these had already seen publication like Samuel K. Tan's *Sulu Under American Military Rule* in 1967; Cortes' which we already mentioned earlier; Ma. Fe Romero's *Negros Between Two Powers* in 1975 and others whose works are probably in the process of being printed or published like Maldonio Lao's *Cagayan de Oro in the 19th Century* (1980), Wilfredo Tamayo's master thesis on "The Fragita Condition: Cooperation and Discord Within the Panay Resistance Movement, 1942-1945" and Nilo Ocampo's "Ang Palawan sa Panahon ng Kolonyalismong Espanyol at Republikang Pilipino, 1621-1901." This of course does not complete the list since recently we witness the appearance in print of local histories written by foreign authors.

All the above was just one facet in the growing interest on local history since the fifties. This interest is also manifested in the form of conferences held on local history like that one at Xavier University, Cagayan de Oro City, on September 22-24, 1978, and now this national Seminar/Workshop sponsored by the National Historical Institute, the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, and the Philippine Historical Association.

One or two sour notes however accompanied this recent renaissance of local history-writing by experts and professional historians. Most if not all of them have adopted the paranoid style of (1) assuming an air of martyrdom for the imagined snobbish treatment and insult hurled by national historians to local history and its practitioners, and (2) simultaneously adopting a superior mien and attitude based on the mistaken notion that without local histories there can never be a national history, conveying a one to one correlation between the whole and its parts.

There is no doubt that local history has just emerged as one of the most promising areas of historical inquiry. But to pit local history against national history is simply too much. True that local history can help explain further national events and developments. But it is equally true that some national events cannot find any parallel in local episodes and developments.

The emergence of local history as an area of investigation is of course significant since it (1) may probably lead to revision of interpretations in major areas of Philippine history, (2) can be the basis for a broader thesis about national history, (3) may revolutionize methodologies and stimulate conceptual innovations that will revitalize history as a discipline, and (4) focus attention on the "history of the people" or history "from bottom up."

The opportunity therefore is in this area of investigation. But problems abound in the writing of local history. One is definitional. What is local

history? And how local is local history? Is it a place? a relationship? a politico-administrative unit? an ethnic group? On account of difficulties or problems of definition, many practitioners lack clear conception of what is really distinctively local in their writings (worse, and more important, are they truly writing local history or "national history localized?")

Thus, it is important that we define the area we will work on and delimit the coverage in order to start with a clear concept of what we intend to do. Moreover, the definitional problem is just one among many. The other is the problem of sources. Once we identify the subject-matter we will work on, the problem is where to go to find the sources. This depends on the nature and character of the sources. If books and periodicals, it is easy to go to the library and the newspaper morgue. If reports of officials probably the place is that official's place of work, i.e., the Treasurer's reports to the Treasurer's office; parish records to the church or convent; artifacts to the museum, etc. Again, if we succeed in locating the place where we can find our sources of information, the next question is what to look for. One way, among many, to lick or surmount this problem is through careful delineation of coverage and subject-matter, i.e., include, exclude, or add and weed out topics whose sources may be meager or nil.

There is no need for me to overstress the fact that there can be no history without sources. Even in the presence of sources history writing is already difficult how much more in their absence unless you are writing a historical romance or fiction, in which case sources would be extraneous. But it is usual for libraries and archives to have finding aids or bibliographic aids like Wenceslao Retana's three-volume *Aparato bibliografico de la historia general de filipinas, 1524-1800* (Madrid, 1906), I. R. Rodriguez's "A Bibliography on Legazpi and Urdaneta and their Joint Expedition," (*Philippine Studies*, April, 1965), Henry Scott's *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History* (Manila, 1968), Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera's *Biblioteca Filipina*, James Robertson's *Bibliography of the Philippine Islands*, James LeRoy's "The Philippines, 1860-1898; some Comments and Bibliographical Notes" (B & R, Vol. LII) and many others recently published. Many libraries and museums have listings of their own holdings. To be sure, one must check these listings to see if they contain sources on local history that may interest the local historians.

Sources on local history that may interest the historians depend on periodization. Following the traditional division of Philippine history into pre-colonial, Spanish colonial, Revolutionary, American Colonial, Japanese Colonial and contemporary Republican period, researchers may easily identify the places where they desire to go. For the Spanish period for instance, easily the National Archives, the Dominican Provincial Archives (Convent of Santo Domingo), the Rizal Library of Ateneo de Manila

(Diliman, Quezon City) are among the few logical places to go because of their rich collection of Spanish sources on local history.

It is not unusual that some general works contain bibliographies that will assist researchers. As a matter of fact, whether one is interested only in local history or national history, the basic search he/she ought to do is take hold of Teodoro A. Agoncillo and Milagros Guerrero's *History of the Filipino People*, or Garel A. Grunder and William E. Livezey's *The Philippines and the United States*, either of which contains a list of sources that may be of assistance to local history researches.

On the assumption that regardless of the criteria used by researchers in delineating local history — i.e. geographic homogeneity or proximity, politico-administrative division, and ethnocultural delimitation—all will observe certain uniformity in coverage and subject matter, let us cite some sources in the form of manuscript collections. In this connection, one must use the Philippine National Archives which, according to the late Domingo Abella, contains the largest collection of manuscript sources dealing with the entire Spanish colonial period from 1565 to 1898. It contains an estimated 11 million documents packed into *legajos* (bundles) and up till now still uncatalogued except for the topics on *guerra*, 1837-1898 and *Mindanao y Sulu*, 1857-1897.

Most of the sources to be found in the Archives can be classified as "scraps of evidence" taken from listings with topic and subtopic headings. To cite a few random samples, we have the *estadística* or statistics by provinces, towns, number of inhabitants, marriages, births, deaths, and even *ganaderías* or stocks of cattle and *fincas* or any kind of property yielding income. The researchers will also find the heading *terrenos varias provincias* with tax collections, accounts of public income, *cedulas*, emigration, appointment of officials, and the like. *Erecciones del Pueblos* pertain to foundation of towns, barangays, *visitas* and *sitios*; while *actas de elecciones de gobernadorcillos y demas oficiales* contain records of electoral proceedings of town officials including the local police and officers in-charge of rice fields. *Expedientes* from provinces and others refer to despatches, complaints and other subjects like the suppression of the *malhechores* (*tulisanes*); and the *relaciones de los ministros de justicia nombrado* of course deal with reports of the judges in provinces and regions. There are also *reales ordenes* (appointments and resignations of officials), *padrones de polistas*, (lists of those who rendered forced labor by provinces, towns, etc. and *instituciones docentes* or records of schools, teachers and students. Others on the Chinese population include the *padron general de Chinos* by provinces giving in the census the name, age, religion, place of origin in China, place of residence in the Philippines, etc. There are also the *quintos* or compulsory military service of Filipinos

and mestizos in the military establishment and the *cedularios* or compilation of royal decrees issued by the King, already considered rare, as early as 1632.

The Filipiniana division of the National Library contains books, periodicals, and manuscripts on local history. Beginning with books or accounts written by Spanish historians or chroniclers, mostly friars and not a few lay authors, many works were about the activities and missions of various religious orders who saw service in the Philippines. In a broad sense the earliest local histories were written by Pigafetta and Transylvanus, referring to those sections of the Visayas and Palawan touched by the Magellan voyage or remnants of his expedition. Translation of these works are in the 55-volume work of Emma Blair and James Robertson, volumes 33 and 34 for Pigafetta and volume 1 for Transylvanus.

The missionary historians' accounts are quite significant for local history since their religious orders brought to so many areas of the country christianity or Catholicism. Their reports are significant as records of the foundation of towns which the religious orders stated as *visitas* initially; although in many cases the people themselves were responsible for founding towns. The order of St. Francis for instance had been active in and about Manila, the Tagalog region or provinces, Camarines, and other regions. The Franciscan Juan de la Plascencia, upon request of Governor de Sande, wrote his *Las Costumbres de los Tagalos* (B & R, volume 7) that was not only significant as source of local history of the Tagalog region but also as guide to the *alcaldes* in adjudication of cases involving the Filipinos. Indeed it is called the first civil code of the Philippines. And so with the account of Fr. Felix de Huerta, *Estado geografico, topografico estadistico, historico, religioso de la Santa y Apostolica provincia de S. Gregorio Magno de religiosos menores la regular y mas estrecha observancia de H.S.P.S. Francisco en las Filipinas* (1863). The Society of Jesus also had their own chronicler and historian. Since the Jesuits were active in Cebu, Leyte, Samar, Bohol and other islands in the Visayas, including the coastal region of Mindanao, Pedro Chirino's *Relacion de las islas Filipinas y de lo que ellas en trabajado los padres de la compania de Jesus* (B & R, volumes 12 and 13), 1604 would be important in the history of those places. The order of St. Dominic had been active in and about Manila, Cagayan, Pangasinan, Panay and other places. The order's historian, Vicente de Salazar, wrote *Historia de la Provincia Santisimo Rosario, 1742* touching on those places that might interest the researchers of local or regional history. Similarly, the Augustinians had labored in the Visayas, Ilocos, Pangasinan, Pampanga, in and about Manila. These places were discussed in the Augustinian Joaquin Martinez de Zuñiga's *Estadismo de las islas Filipinas* (2 volumes, 1893). This does not exhaust the list.

Other important sources are in the form of *diccionarios* like those of Manuel Buzeta y Felipe Bravo's and M. R. Berriz. The former wrote *Diccionario geografico, estadistico, historico de las islas Filipinas*, 1850-1851, (2 vols.) giving valuable statistics; while the latter wrote *Diccionario de la administracion de Filipinas*, 1887-1888 containing texts of royal decrees (15 vols.). *Guia oficial de Filipinas* for certain years gives us census of tribute payers, non-tribute payers, population by provinces, and the administrative and ecclesiastical system in the country.

Most of the sources we discussed are in the nature of manuscripts, books, and periodicals. This is true also of ethnic groups in the Philippines like the Muslim and Igorot Filipinos. There are already many bibliographic aids written on these two groups of Filipinos like Scott's which we already mentioned for the Igorots; and Alfredo Tiamson's "Bibliography of Cotabato" prepared for the First National Conference on Local/Regional History, Xavier University, Cagayan de Oro City in September 1978.

Probably sources of local history will be hard to come by for the contemporary period although here, in addition to written sources, artifacts can be used together with oral sources or sources by word of mouth. Various areas, in this connection, can be included like religion, recreation, education, demographic patterns, social mobility rates, family networks, old age, women and others. Potential sources would be local newspapers, speeches of politicians or prominent men, interviews, films, slide shows, reminiscences, etc. To extract information and "scraps of evidences" out of the above, interviews can be had with selected people whether elite or the ordinary. The parish records also may yield genealogical informations like birth, death, marriage, baptism, and the like, and social mobility from one place to another, etc.

The municipal records yield a mine of information on local history or sources giving a more or less complete characterization of the local community or town. For instance, in the town of Marikina, I found records of recruitment, arrest, detention, types of crime committed, peace and order general situationer, traffic, fire and statistics on the socio-civic and religious organizations. All this can be found in the record section of the town's police department. The municipal secretary's office is the repository of various typescript data ranging from ordinances, resolutions, administrative circulars, to the cultural activities, barrio records, proceedings of the town council, and ecological data from the engineer's office spelling out town planning and development. Social, urban and oral history could be written on the basis of the above data obtainable from the municipal offices. And despite the lack of index, catalog, checklist, and bibliographical aids, the serious researchers must still continue in search

of the elusive data, which he can find only by imaginative sleuthing and detective work.

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