

Capítulo 20

DA CUENTA DE OTRAS COSAS MUY NOTABLES QUE SE HALLAN EN ESTOS MARES Y RIOS, Y SU MODO DE PESCAR EN ELLOS

Ser centro el mar, donde se hallan cosas más maravillosas y raras que en la tierra, es autor Plinio en su *Natural Historia*. Pondremos en este Capítulo algunas de las más raras de por acá, dejando para el otro lo tocante al ámbar, que es parte suyo; y, dejando, por abreviar, la multitud y novedad de piedras que en los lugares o más o menos hondos de estos mares produce la naturaleza, con tanta variedad y hermosura que en balde las imitará el arte.

En especial las que con más abundancia se crían en todas ellas son las que llaman en unas partes *binagong*¹, y en otra *asang*² que se hallan y ven a modo de hongos muy grandes que, teniendo uno como tronco más pequeño, crecen como ellos en notable grandeza, unos más y otros menos, de hechura de bolas, unas tan redondas (excepta la parte donde tienen el pie o como tronco) que en balde procurará el arte sacarlas más redondas o bien hechas; otras anchas al modo de los dichos hongos o quitasoles; y todas ellas de materia muy sólida y durísima, juntamente muy porosa, y de tal hechura que, como en los hongos, se ven aquellas venas o telillas que por la parte inferior les sirven como de cimbrias, en que la superficie más sólida se sustenta; así estas muestran semejante composición, acabando todas por la parte estima en unas como estrellitas muy pequeñas que, unidas con otras, hacen toda aquella exterior compostura y rotundidad de muy apacible hermosura y maravillosa arquitectura,

Chapter 20

[CONCERNING A CHAPTER THAT] GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF OTHER VERY NOTABLE THINGS THAT ARE FOUND IN THESE SEAS AND RIVERS; ITS MANNER OF FISHING IN THEM

The sea is the central place where more marvelous and unusual things are found than on the land, says the author Pliny in his *Historia Natural*. We shall set down in this chapter some of the more rarities over here, leaving for another the matter of amber which is important in itself and omitting, for reasons of brevity, the multitude and variety of stones which nature produces in places of varying depths in these seas with great variety and beauty and which art could try vainly to imitate.

In a special way those which are developed in the greatest abundance in all of the islands, are the ones which they call in some regions *binagung*,¹ and others *asang*.² They are found and recognized in the form of very great mushrooms. Some, having a kind of very small trunk, grow like them to a remarkable size, some more, others less, like the shape of a ball. Others are so round, except for the part where they have the kind of trunk or stalk, that artistic skill might try in vain to get them more perfectly round or well-formed. Others are broad, in the fashion of these mushrooms or umbrellas, and all are of a very hard and extremely tough material, at the same time very porous. They are of such shape that, like the mushrooms, there are seen the fibers or membranes which on the under side serve as a frame on which the very solid surface is sustained. Likewise, these show a similar composition, ending at the top in something like very tiny little stars, one joined with the other, to give that outer surface that compactness and roundness

creciendo cada día y renovándose (aun después de haberse sacado en mucha cantidad para hacer cal de estas piedras, que se hace tan blanca como la nieve y tan dura y buena para los edificios que en nada es inferior a la mejor en este género) como suelen las hierbas en el prado y los árboles en la selva.

Coral blanco llaman acá los españoles a otra especie de estas piedras, a que los indios *baganbang*³. Nace, crece y se halla en árboles, o su figura, con sus troncos, ramas mayores y ramillas menores, como se ve en el coral colorado; pero son acá sin comparación mayores los árboles de este color blanco y él es blanquísimo, aunque no tan sólido como el colorado, antes en parte más hermoso si no fuera tan fácil de quebrarse por ser de unas labores muy menudos y muy vistosas.

De que se hallaría acá también del colorado y aun azul, son señales clarísimas el hallarse por las playas piedrecillas de estos dos colores, tan sólidas como el coral de allá, aunque mucho mayores, y en el efecto de estas piedras corralinas, o verdaderos corales, de por acá.

He oído decir son medicinales y de las mismas virtudes que los de Europa, que quizá si acá se buscasen por personas entendidas, se hallarían de la misma manera; porque un marinero que se había hallado en Cerdeña, Sicilia, y Mallorca, en los lugares donde se saca el coral fino, me dijo que en las costas de Ibabao (donde estuvo un año por centinela de las naos que vienen de Nueva España acá) había visto las mismas señales que por allá tienen las partes donde se coge; y que, si tuviera quien le diese lo necesario para su beneficio, le sacaría tan bueno como allá, y mucho mayor, según lo que él había visto en varios puestos que para asegurarse había mirado.

Hállase por acá coral negro, y tanto como el azabache, a que llaman los indios *banawog*⁴. Cógese en lo más profundo del mar, no lejos de las orillas; que en poco fondo no se halla. Es árbol mayor que el del coral de por allá, con tronco y ramas y sin hojas, bajo del agua blando y flexible. Fuera de ella, cuanto más va, se endurece.

of very soft beauty and remarkable structure. These creatures grow each day and renew themselves, even after having been taken out in large quantity to make lime from these rocks. This becomes as white as snow and very hard and suitable for buildings. It is no wise inferior to the best in this category, like the grasses in the meadow and the trees in the forest.

Coral blanco is what the Spaniards here call another species of these rocks and which the natives [call] *baganbang*.³ It buds, grows and develops into the shape of trees, along with their trunks, large branches and little twigs, as seen in the red coral. But here the trees of this white coral are incomparably larger. They are extremely white, although not as hard as the red, part more beautiful except that it is very easily broken because it is of a very thin and very attractive design.

There are very clear indications that there may be found here also the red and even blue coral because there are found little pieces of these two colors on the beaches as hard as the coral over there although much larger.

About the effect of these coralline stones, or true coral here, I have heard it said that they are medicinal and of the same healthful properties as those in Europe. Perhaps, if they were sought by the knowledgeable individuals here they would be found in the same manner, because a mariner who had visited Cerdeña, Sicily and Mallorca, in places where the best coral is taken out, told me that on the coasts of Ibabaw, where he was stationed for a year as a sentry for the ships that come from *New Spain* here, had seen the same landmarks which the places have over here where it is taken. If he had someone who would give him what was needed for his labor, he could take out as good a quality as over there, and much better, according to what he had observed in various places which he had examined in order to make sure.

There is found over here black coral and almost like jet which the natives call *banawug*.⁴ It is taken from the deepest places in the sea, not far from the shores, and is not found in the shallows. It is a larger tree-like than that of the coral over there with a trunk and branches and without leaves. Under the water it is soft and flexible; outside, the longer it stays, the harder it becomes.

Háylo de dos maneras; uno totalmente liso y sin tropezón, sino es cuando son muy gruesos; otro con un modo de puntillas, no agudas ni que piquen, pero redondillas, a modo de granitos pequeños. Este hace mayores y más largos los brazos o vástagos, y es más flexible y menos lustroso cuando se saca; pero bruñido después, con sólo estregarlo mucho con cualquier trapo, toma tez sólida y tersa como el otro, y en parte es algo más hermoso por aquellos como granitos que le dan especial gracia.

De uno y otro dicen es muy medicinal, en especial contra las piedras que se crían en el cuerpo, que por acá es muy mucho lo que a muchos afligen, y no son pocos los que padecen de este achaque, y yo entre ellos.

Dicen es contra el mal viento y el pasmo. Y por esta causa en algunas partes de estas Islas casi todos hombres y mujeres traen sus manillas, o ajorcas, en los brazos o en las muñecas; y aun muchos de los españoles y españolas lo usan. Estas lo guarnecen con oro, que con lo negro sale más bien, con que es gala y medicina.

Dicen es contra reumas, y que las detiene o expele; contra ponzoña, así de animales como de otros mixtos. Dios sabe su mayor virtud; pero las dichas y otras muchas he oído yo referir de este coral negro, no solo a los indios sino mucho más a los españoles de por acá.

Otros muchos arbolitos, de mucha y varia hermosura, se hallan en el mar, que nacen de entre las peñas, y a veces es cosa maravillosa, cuando en algunos parajes se navega encima de bajos, aunque profundos, estando el mar en calma y sin olas, que se ve como por un cristal lo inferior, con tanta variedad de arbolitos y de tan varios colores que admiran.

Hay algunos que son entretallados los ñudos, digámoslo así, pues es a trechos de piedra blanquísima y más dura que el alabastro, y los intermedios de un género como de palo pardisco y blando como madera, y al revés otros.

Hay algunos colorados allá abajo, y aun afuera, de color como azarcén, que, recién sacados, tiñen la mano. Con el tiempo, aunque

There are two types: one totally smooth and without bumps, except when it is very heavy; the other with a kind of little point, not sharp or prickly, but rounded in the manner of little granules. The latter grows larger and longer branches or stems, and is more flexible and less shiny when it is taken out. But polished afterwards solely by rubbing it with some kind of cloth, it takes on a hard and smooth surface like the other. In part it is somewhat more beautiful because of those little granules which give it a special grace.

The one and the other, they say, are medicinal, especially against the stones which grow in the body. Here this is very widespread and many individuals suffer from this illness, I among them.

They say that it is especially [good for] flatulence or convulsions. For this reason, in some parts of these islands, almost all the men and women wear bracelets or rings of this material on their arms and wrists. Even many of the Spaniards, both men and women, wear them. These decorate them with gold, which goes very well with the black so that it is an ornament and a medicine.

They say that it wards off rheumatism and that it stops or eliminates it. It is an antidote against poison, both from animals and from other mixtures. God knows its greatest worth but these and many more I have heard ascribed to this black coral, not only by the natives, but much more so by the Spaniards over here.

Many other little trees of considerable and varied beauty are found in the sea and spring up from among the rocks. Sometimes it is a marvelous thing in some places on traveling over the deeper spots, or even the great depths, when the sea is calm and there are no waves that one can see the bottom as in a crystal with such a variety of little trees of so many different colors that it fills one with admiration.

There are some where the joints are raised, we may say it thus, for at intervals it is of very white stone and harder than alabaster. The sections in between are similar to a dark brown stick and soft like wood; other are the opposite.

There are some red ones there below, and even exude a color like orange, which when they are recently extracted, stain the hand.

conservan el color, se echa de ver que no es sólido sino en la tez solamente, pues, estregándolo mucho, queda como piedras de las dichas arriba, de color algo blanco, de modo que de casi todos los colores se ven en dichos parajes, y todos de tanta variedad y hermosura que se hacen sacados de allí, y en su suelo natural remeda (y más si hay algun montecillo) unos hermosos calvarios, a que nunca llegará el arte ni la mayor curiosidad a solas; y de esto pueden ser testigos todos cuantos han navegado, y navegan, entre estas Islas, que entre ellas se ven muchas de estas maravillas.

Vengamos a otras que no lo son menos, y estas son como excrementos del mar (digámoslo *así*). “Aguas malas⁵” las llaman los españoles. Los indios con varios nombres, según sus diferencias. Estas son muchas. Diré algunas, lo más digno de memoria y de ser sabido.

*Buquia*⁶ llaman a unas de estas aguas malas que viven y crecen en el mar, y así no sólo será agua mala sino viviente de ella, aunque los españoles por acá no les sepan sus nombres, y las llaman en general con el dicho. Sábenlos los indios, y sus diferencias y calidades.

Esta *buquia*, pues es en dos maneras: Háylas muy grandes, y son como unos muy grandes platos, o palancanas de cristal (que, a ser sólidas, no había más que desear), tan transparentes como él. Las figuras comúnmente de estas más grandes, redondas y como platos.

Algunas tienen su modo de bordo más alto, otras con labores varios. Y yo he visto algunas que imitaban un sol con rayos, todo de la dicha materia, y con tanta proporción como si fueran variados de metal, o hechas como el vidrio al fuego.

Otras hay menores, y son como boles grandecillas, menores unas, mayores otras que la cabeza humana. Son cristalinas, aun más que las grandes, y tienen en la parte superior unos como dedos, más o menos anchos, que se menean, y con ellos nada, al parecer.

Quitán los indios estas extremidades y algo de la circunferencia, que es como ollejo, aunque todo transparente como el cristal, y

With time, even though they preserve their color, it can be seen that it is not throughout but only on the surface. For when they are handled a great deal, they become like the stones above, of a whitish color. Therefore, almost all colors are to be seen in these places, and all of very great variety and beauty can be taken from there. In their natural place they resemble, especially if there is some little hillock, some beautiful calvary all alone, which art or the greatest skill will never match. Of this all those who have sailed and sail among these islands can be witnesses. Among them are seen many of these marvels.

We come now to others which are not few and these are like excretions of the sea (if we may put it thus). "*Bad waters*"⁵ the Spaniards call them. The natives with various names according to their differences. These are many. I shall say something about the most worthy of remembrance and of being known.

*Bukiyá*⁶ they call one of these *bad waters* which live and grow in the sea; so it would not only be unclean water but something living in it. Although the Spaniards here do not know their names and they call them in general as mentioned, the natives know their differences and characteristics.

This *bukiya* then is of two kinds: there are the very large ones, like very large plates or basins of crystal, and being hard, leave nothing more to desire, as transparent as this is. Ordinarily the shape of these very large ones is round, like plates.

Some have a kind of raised edge, others with various designs. I have seen some which resemble a sun with its rays, all of this material and with such fine proportion as if they were worked from metal or made like glass in the fire.

Now, others are smaller and are like little balls, some smaller, others larger than a human head. They are more transparent than the large ones. They have in the upper portion something like fingers, of greater or lesser width, which move about. With these they appear to swim.

The natives take off these extremities and something of the circumference which is something like a pot, yet all transparent like crystal. What is inside is eaten with great relish, especially if

lo de dentro se lo comen con mucho gusto; y más si tienen un poco de vinagre en que mezclarlo o sazonarlo. Hasta algunos de los españoles que andan por acá entre ellos, comen estas *buquia* y hacen ensaladas de ellas, crudas como se cogen, teniéndolas por cosa regalada y fresca.

No las he probado, porque dicen así estos, como los indios que usan comerlas, que algunas de ellas dejan un escozor notable en la boca, y aun la hincha algo, si no saben quitarles todo lo que se debe quitar; y así, por no exponerme a eso, no he cuidado de probarlas; y porque me parece no puede ser cosa de monta.

Una cosa muy rara cuentan los indios que se halla en estas *buquia*, y es en ellos cosa muy asentada y sin duda, aunque yo siempre me estoy con ella, y así diré lo que ellos dicen porque no puedo alegar experiencia en contrario, antes algo sí que lo confirma.

Dicen, pues, que algunas de estas *buquia* crían una piedra como una nuez, poco más o menos, o, cuando no tanto, como una avellana, tan sólida, dura y transparente como un pedazo de cristal. Hállanse por acá, en algunos montes, otras piedras cristalinas que si no lo son lo parecen, la calidad de esta piedra dicen que es tal, que el que la lleva consigo (como allá dicen de los saories⁷) ve aun lo que hay bajo de tierra hasta cierta distancia; y que ningún vestido, si no es colorado, impide a que no vea a los demás en cueros; cosa peligrosa y poco decente. La verdad Dios la sabe.

En prueba de esto me dijeron que cierto indio (que después apostató y mató uno o dos Padres⁸, aunque criado entre nosotros desde niño; que por estos se dijo: “Criad cuervos, etc.” como después veremos), que en varias ocasiones había sido mi piloto en navegaciones lejas [sic], porque era hombre de mar y, según decían, era hijo de un grande herbolario y él sabía no pocas de estas cosas, tenía una piedra de estas, y que contaba de sus efectos, y aun defectos bien escondidos y encubiertos de algunas personas, porque dicen las veía en cueros.

they have a little vinegar in which to mix it and season it. Even some of the Spaniards who travel through here eat these *bukiya*, and they make salads of them in raw form as they are caught, considering them as a rare and refreshing delicacy.

I have not tried them because those, such as these natives who habitually eat them, say that some of them leave a severe smarting pain in the mouth and even cause it to swell somewhat, if they do not know how to take off everything that should be removed. Hence, not to expose myself to this danger, I have not taken the trouble to try it, and because it does not seem to me to be a matter of importance.

The natives relate that there is one rare thing found in these *bukiya*, and there is common agreement among them on the matter and there is no doubt, even though I am inquiring about it. So I shall tell what they say because I cannot produce contradictory evidence, but rather something that seems to confirm it.

They say, then, that some of these *bukiya* grow a stone about the size of a nut, or when not as large as hazel nut; as solid, hard and transparent as a piece of crystal. Other crystal-like stones are found here in various mountains. If they are not the real thing, they appear to be so. The quality of this stone, they say, is such that the one who carries it with him, as they say over there about the *saories*⁷, see even what there is under the ground to a certain distance, and that no clothing, unless it is red, hinders him from seeing the rest of the body naked, a dangerous thing and hardly decent. The truth of this, only God knows.

As proof of this, they told me about a certain native, who afterwards apostatized and killed one or two Fathers,⁸ although he had been a servant among us from childhood for whom it was said, "*Care for the raven, etc.*" as we shall see afterwards, who had been my pilot on various occasions during the long journeys, because he was a seafaring man. According to what they said, he was a son of a great herbologist and he knew much about these matters. He had one of these stones and told about the possessions, and even of the well-hidden and concealed effects of some persons, because it is said that he saw them naked.

Preguntéselo yo amigablemente, dándole a entender el peligro de semejante piedra, por las ocasiones y objetos que le podía ofrecer de gran peligro para su alma, y, aunque no me atreví a decirle que me la mostrase, por no exponerme a algún peligro menos decente o a algún pacto que pudiera haber, si era fuera de la fuerza natural de dicha piedra, con todo, ni me confesó que la tuviese ni me lo negó absolutamente, sino con algunas deshechas frívolas; con que me incliné entonces más a que la tenía que lo contrario, y añadió que no dudaba él ser muy peligroso su uso, confesando o consintiendo en las calidades dichas de la piedra, aunque nunca confesó tenerla.

Pocos meses después de este caso sucedió la sublevación de aquel pueblo donde él vivía (de que trataremos en su lugar) y, después de muchas maldades que este hizo, además de las dichas muertes y otras, lo mataron a él en el monte, con que se lo llevó el diablo, pues murió apóstata de la fé y con tantos sacrilegios sobre ello que con toda seguridad se lo llevaría al infierno sin pasar por purgatorio. Esto es cuanto a dicha piedra.

De otras especies de estas aguas malas, coloradas como cuajaronas grandes de sangre, que llaman estos indios *muto*⁹, y otras rubias de la hechura de las *buquia* y que escuece tanto, como decíamos de las *cuquitas*, cuando llegan a la carne, por no tener cosa especial, no me alargo porque son muchas y varias; y, aunque les aplican los indios varias cosas y útiles *in bonam et malam partem*¹⁰, las dejo por tener lo más de ellas por cosas de cuentos y no ser tan creído, aun de los mismos indios cuerdos, como lo que referimos de la piedra de las *buquia*.

De los ríos de estas Islas poco hay que añadir a lo apuntado arriba, sino su mucha abundancia, pues en las dos islas de Ibabao y Samar, y la que llaman de Leyte (a esta la he bojeado toda, a la otra casi toda) son tantos que se puede decir son innumerables: los grandes, no pocos; los medianos más; y los arroyos muchísimos, que todos salen al mar, y para el efecto se juntan muchos en uno.

I questioned him in a friendly manner, letting him understand the danger of such a stone because of the occasions and objects it offer him of great danger to his soul. However, I did not dare to tell him to show it to me, as not to expose myself to some danger of indecency or to some pact that he might possibly have, if the powers of that stone should be outside the natural order. All in all, he did not confess to me that he had it, nor did he deny it absolutely except with some trifling denials. As a result I was inclined then to the point of view that he had it rather than to the contrary, and I did not doubt of its being very dangerous. He confessed and agreed to these properties of the stone, although he never admitted to having it.

A few months after this event, there occurred the uprising of this town where he was living (which we shall treat in its proper place) and after many evil things which this fellow did, besides these murders and others, they killed him in the forests. So, with this, the Devil carried him off, for he died an apostate of the faith, and with so many sacrileges against it that there is every assurance that he was carried off to hell without passing through purgatory. This is all there is about this stone.

Among other kinds of these *bad waters* are the red ones like large clots of blood, which these natives call *mutu*.⁹ And other golden ones of the size of the *bukiya* and which pain as much as we mentioned in the case of the *kugitas* when they touch the flesh. Because there is nothing special, I shall not expound upon how many and varied they are. Although the natives apply them for various things and uses *in bonam et malam partem*,¹⁰ I omit these because the majority of them I regard as only hearsay. [Such] are not even widely believed by the prudent natives, such as we described in the case of the stone of the *bukiya*.

Concerning the rivers of these islands there is little to add to what has been noted above, except their great abundance. On the islands of Ibabaw and Samar, then, and the one they call Leyte, I have rounded the latter and almost all of the former, they are so numerous that one can say that they are countless. There are not a few large ones; more medium ones and very many small streams and all flow into the sea. In this way many are joined into one.

Hay en lo mediterráneo de la isla de Ibabao un monte alto (es el que en ella descuella más que todos) llamada *Yawa*¹¹ en su lengua (nombre que tenía antiguamente el demonio entre estos indios). Este es casi vacío, pues tiene (hánlo visto muchos indios y algunos españoles, de quien lo sé como de testigos oculares) una grandísima cueva, (que, como a otra que hay en el reino de Valencia, bien cerca de Gandía donde yo nací y la ví varias veces, y llaman de *Las Maravillas*, así por su grandeza y bóveda capacísima y que ninguna artificial la imita, como por la varia multitud de figuras, como de bulto, de labores varios, como órganos, columnas muy grandes y redondas, y otras cosas que en sí son maravillas), y se podía llamar así esta, aunque, según lo que me han contado, es tres o cuatro veces más capaz, más honda y más alta que la otra.

Hállanse en ellas muchas cosas como las dichas, fuentes y arroyos friísimos; árboles y frutas que no se ven en otras partes; pero lo más principal es que parece monte de agua con ser de peñas tan sólidas como pedernales.

Nacen de este monte tres ríos, los mayores de la dicha isla; el uno es el que llaman de Catubig, que sale a la mar no muy lejos de Palapag. Su boca, o barra mira al norte. El otro el de Bangahun, no menor que él, y sale a la mar cerca de Catbalogan, en lo de Samar. Su barra mira al poniente. Y el tercero, que desagua en las costas de Ibabao, llamado de Ubasan, cerca de Tubig y mira al oriente.

Son todos muy caudalosos y nacen de dicho monte, sin una grandísima cantidad de otros riachuelos menores, en que se hallan los peces, como truchas y otros, que dijimos, regalados, de agua dulce, y otros mariscos que llaman *bebe*¹², o *balisara*¹³, de que sacan mucha cantidad los naturales y circunvecinos, de varias maneras que, por no alargar, no pongo aquí, aunque notables, y les sirven de vianda que, aunque de recia degestión, la comen con gusto a falta de otras.

Hállanse en dichos *bibi* algunas como perlas, o que se les parecen, aunque no igualan a las de las conchas del mar, si bien se le parecen no poco. Yo he de tener por curiosidad algunas de ellas que, a la primera faz, parecen perlas netas, aunque no lo son.

In the interior of the island of *Ibabaw* there is a high mountain – it is one that rises higher than all the others – called *Yawa*¹¹ in their tongue, a name which the Devil had in ancient times among these natives. It is almost hollow, for it has, many natives and some Spaniards have seen it, from whom I know of it as from eye witnesses, a very large cave. [It is] like another which exists in the kingdom of Valencia very near to Gandia, where I was born, and which I saw various times. They call it *Las Maravillas* (The Wonder), both because of its great size and spacious vaults, which no artificial one can copy, as well as for the varying multitude of shapes as though sculptured variously resembling organs, great rounded columns, and other things that are marvelous in themselves. In the same way this one here can be called so; it is three or four times larger, deeper and higher than the other.

There are found in it many things similar to those mentioned: fountains and freezing streams, trees and fruits that are not seen in other places. But the principal matter is that it seems to be a mountain of water although it is made of rocks as hard as flint.

Three rivers spring from this mountain which are the largest on this island; one of which is called Catubig, which flows into the sea, not far from Palapag. Its mouth or sandbar faces north. The other is that of Bangahun, no smaller than the other and runs into the sea near Catbalogan in that of Samar. Its sandbar looks west. The third, which empties at the coast of Ibabaw, near Tubig is Ubasan and flows east.

All carry much water and spring from that mountain, in addition to a great number of other smaller streams in which are found the fish, such as trout, which we said were a delight from fresh water and other shellfish, which they call *bibi*¹² or *balisara*.¹³ The natives or those around, catch a great quantity of them in various ways which, in order not to prolong this, I do not set down here, even though notable. They serve them as food and, although difficult to digest, they eat them with delight when others are lacking.

There are found in these *bibi* a kind of pearls or what resembles them. Although they do not equal those of the shells from the sea, yet they resemble them very much. Out of curiosity, I have kept some of these, which at first sight seem to be fine pearls; however, they are not.

Del monte, que ya dijimos llamarse *Amandivin*¹⁴, en la isla de Leyte, y es el mayor de aquella isla y en esta lengua quiere decir “Padre de un pajarito,” llamada *diving*, menor que un gorrión (que se parece a aquel *parturient montes*, etc.,¹⁵) nacen otros ríos como el de Jaro, de muy buena agua y fría, y bien cerca del otro que en su nacimiento sale hirviendo, y pasa por el pueblo de Alangalang, aunque no se tiene por buena su agua para bebida, por saber algo a piedra azufre.

Hacia a la parte del pueblo de Ogmuc, que es hacia el norte de dicha isla, nacen de dicho monte algunas fuentes tan calientes como el agua cuando hierve en una olla, y, con zambullir en ellas los puercos, o venados, del monte que por allí se cogen en abundancia, se pelan con muchísima facilidad y quedan muy blancos y limpios, a muy poco trabajo; y casi en toda su falda, *a quatuor ventis*¹⁶, es abundantísimo este monte de aguas, algunas muy buenas, delgadas, otras medicinales y que pudieran servir para baños de mucha salud, y otras de otras calidades.

De modo que, en general, estas dos islas en especial (algunas de las otras mayores no tanto) son abundantísimas de agua y copiosísimos ríos, arroyos y fuentes; y, aunque algunas tienen cosas notables, por haberlas semejantes en otras partes y haber ya dicho algo arriba, no las pongo con más extensión, porque se alargaría mucho este libro.

Sólo añado las regaladas ranas que así en ellos como en otros de estas Islas se hallan, nada inferiores a las de Castilla y quizás con más abundancia. Hélas comido no pocas veces y así puedo hablar de su bondad.

Son las ordinarias del tamaño y colores que las de Castilla; aunque hay unas que tienen dos cuernecillos, verdes totalmente todo el cuerpo, de las cuales no me atreví comer, como ni tampoco de unas que hay muy grandes, que llaman *gongon*¹⁷ los indios; que a las ordinarias llaman *pacla*¹⁸. Y son tan grandes algunas de estas que remedan en las piernas a una de un buen pollo, y su carne es mucho más blanca.

From the mountain, which we have already said was called *Amandiwing*,¹⁴ on the island of Leyte, and is the largest one on that island and in this language means to say "father of a little bird," called *diwing*. It is smaller than a sparrow, and is like that saying, *parturient montes, etc.*¹⁵ There originate other rivers like that of Jaro [with] very good cold water, and very close to it another which emerges from its source boiling and flows through the town of Alangalang. However, its water is not regarded as suitable for drinking because it tastes somewhat like sulphur.

Around the town of Ugmut [Ormoc], which is toward the north of this island, there rises from this mountain some springs that are as hot as water when boiling in a pot. When the hogs or deer from the mountain, which are caught there in abundance, are dipped into the water, they are skinned easily and become very white and clean, with very little effort. On almost all of its slopes, from *quattuor ventis*,¹⁶ the mountain has an abundance of waters, some very good and fine; others medicinal and which can serve as baths with very healthful characteristics.

In this manner, in general, these two islands especially, not so much so in the case of other larger ones, have a great abundance of water and overflowing rivers, streams and springs. Although some have notable qualities, because similar ones are found in other places, and I have already described them to some extent above, I shall not describe them in greater detail so as not to prolong this book too much.

I shall only add mention of the prized frogs, which not only in these but in others of these islands are found, in no way inferior to those of Castile and, perhaps, in greater abundance. I have eaten them frequently and so I am able to speak of their goodness.

Ordinarily, they are the size and color of those in Castile, although there are some which have two little horns, the whole body is green. I have not dared to eat these, nor of the ones which are very large, called *gumgum*¹⁷ by the natives. The common ones are called *pakla*.¹⁸ Some of the former are so large that their legs resemble those of a good sized hen and their flesh is much whiter.

Comen muchos de los europeos estas ranas grandes con mucho gusto, y las alaban. Nunca me atreví a comerlas por parecerme sapos, aunque en la figura nada distintos de las ranas. Sólo en la grandeza y en la voz que, según su tamaño, es como el bajo en la “Capilla real”. Con esto vamos a otras cosas del mar.

Many Europeans eat these large frogs with gusto and praise. I have never dared to eat them because they seem to me as large toads, although in shape they are no different than the frogs. Only in their size and in the voice which, depending on their size, is like bass in the royal chapel. With this, we come to other things in the sea. □

Chapter 20

ANNOTATIONS

[1] *Binagong. Binagung.* Store from the sea, with holes. It is so-called from the *bagung*, which is an edible root and looks like it. *Maminagung kita, kaya-pugun* or *igkukuta sa singbahan*. Sánchez also gives another entry similar to the above – *bagungun*: a certain shell-fish or sea snail. *Bagungunun nga dagat ini*. Sánchez [1711], *op. cit.*

[2] *Asang.* Sánchez has an entry under *asang*, but it has a completely different meaning; could it possibly be named after this ash? His entry reads: “The ash from which salt is made, already curdled and boiled.” Should this word read with the letter ‘h’ *hasang*: “The gills of the fish and the lock of the door or the iron dress hardened in the force.” Neither of these entire cast any light on the matter.

Tramp give the meaning for *hasang*: sediment of a river; gills. *Op. cit.*, p. 178.

[3] *Baganbang.* Better “*bagangbang*: coral stone from the sea; a species of coral.” De la Rosa-Alcázar [1914], *op. cit.*, p. 27.

[4] *Banawog. Banawug.* “*Banaug* or *banawug*: Coral or little sea tree, black in color.” *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[5] *Aguas malas.* Jellyfish or umbrella fish; *bukya*; bad water from the sea. Cf. Footnote #6, below.

[6] *Buquia. Bukiya.* In ancient times and often even now it is spelled *bukya*: “bad coagulated water in the sea. It is like a large mushroom with some poisonous threads called *kaway*. *Salabay* is a species of *bukya* which is also poisonous. *Mutu* is still another species of *bukya*. Sánchez [1711], *op. cit.*

De la Rosa-Alcazar state that it has many tentacles that are poisonous. When it is dead it can be eaten. p. 67.

Tramp presents it merely as a jellyfish with poisonous tentacles. *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

[7] *Saories. Zahori*, (from the arabic *zuhari*, a servant of the planet Venus). A person to whom the ordinary people attribute the quality of seeing the hidden things, even under the earth. Figuratively a sharp and inquisitive person. Cf. *Diccionario de la lengua*, h-zuzón, p. 1408.

[8] This is a reference to the infamous Sumuruy of Palapag, Samar who sparked the *Palapag Uprising in 1649* which caught fire throughout the Bisayan Islands, parts of the Bicol Region and Mindanao.

He was an incredible seafarer, a trusted and a faithful leader in the *pueblo* in charge of the fort and defense of the town.

As time went on, Sumuruy, whose baptismal name was Augustine, began cultivating a *querida*, for which Father Miguel Ponce Barberán, Rector of the Palapag *Residencia*, admonished him several times. Sumuruy later abandoned his wife and settled down with this woman, to the scandal of the community. Father Miguel had the woman taken and sent away to Catubig; Sumuruy was angered and became resentful; the problem in gathering men from the town for the Cavite shipyards, added fuel to the resentment. Then came plotting, scheming, gathering of supporters and the revolt broke out with the killing of Father Miguel and later Father Damian, etc, etc. Cf. *The Sumuruy Uprising of 1649-1650*, Cantius J. Kobak, O.F.M. and Pablo Fernández, O.P. in *Philippiniana Sacra*, Vol. XVIII, Number 52, 1983, pp. 89-157.

[9] *Muto. Mutu.* A dark-red jellyfish, a medusa, Tramp, *op. cit.*, p. 277. Sánchez describes *muto*, more properly *mutu*, as a certain kind of bad black water. [1711], *Op. cit.*

[10] *In bonam et malam partem.* A Latin phrase meaning: 'in good and bad birth'.

[11] *Yawa.* Sánchez makes this entry under *yawa*: a demon, satan or devil; by way of a metaphor, one who is not a Christian; e.g. *Yawa ka pa* – you are still an unbeliever. Somewhere in the course of his *Historia*, Alcina mentions how the Bisayans refer to the people from Java as 'Yawa' [meaning, of course, non-Christians]. *Op. cit.*

[12] *Bebe. Bibi.* The manuscript reads *bebe*; Sánchez enters it as *bibi*: certain edible oyster; it is attached to the river stones, as a secondary meaning. Its first meaning is 'to sacrifice' or bless the *Pangasi* (*pangair*) or other drinks. *Di tapanatanginan an pangasi kun an tuba, kay kanan Diwatahan yadto, diri kanan kristianos. Namibi na sila kuan. Ibid.*

"*Bibi*: Shell from the river or fresh water." De la Rosa-Alcazar [1914], *op. cit.*, p. 44.

[13] *Balisara.* A shell-fish, according to De la Rosa-Alcázar p. 31; Sánchez, in turn, has only *balisungáy*: certain shellfish that stick to the rock of the sea. Also, *nakupkup*. [1711], *op. cit.*

[14] *Amandiwing.* A celebrated, very high mountain on the island of Leyte and the region of Dagami. Another form for the small bird, which Alcina mentions as *diwing*, is also *iwing*.

[15] *Parturient montes.* A Latin phrase meaning 'giving birth to mountains, etc.'

[16] *A quattour ventis.* A Latin phrase: 'to the four winds'.

[17] *Gongon.* Or better *gumgum*: a species of a large frog; Samareños call it 'an american frog', since it is so much larger than all the others.

[18] *Pacla.* More properly *pakla* or also *baku*: a frog. *Mamakla*, to catch frog; or *mamaak*, *pinamakla* – the frogs taken or caught. *Pamaklahun.* Sánchez [1711], *op. cit.*

Or *sapu*: a frog. *Papgakla*: the singing of the frog. The word *sapo* means to disturb; to croak in concert.

Capítulo 21

DEL AMBAR Y SU ORIGEN, Y DE CUANTAS CALIDADES SE HALLA EN ESTOS MARES, Y SU ABUNDANCIA

Aunque el ámbar, (según el parecer de muchos) se lleva la primacía entre los demás olores, y su valor (mayor que el de los otros comúnmente) lo testifica y la estimación entre lo más calificado lo pregonan, es con todo indubitable que solo él valiera poco en la esfera odorífica, ayudado empero de los otros que le avivan y afirman o sacan (por mejor decir) a plaza su fragancia, campea más con ellos y sobre todos ellos. Y la experiencia es maestra de esto.

De su origen, nacimiento o causa eficiente o próxima, no he visto hasta ahora nadie que dé noticias probables (que infalibles lo tengo por imposible). Con algún cuidado he deseado rastrear cuál sea su principio, dónde o cómo se cría; quién le da aquella calidad; qué materia es la [que] ennoblecida con dicha forma le da los mayores quilates de su fineza. De lo cual no tenemos noticia, aunque consta ser producción del mar y obra de sus profundos e inescrutables senos, que, expuesta o dispuesta en las olas, después de haber sido su juguete muchos días, y aun meses, se halla echado en una playa donde la suerte, o dicha, del que menos lo pensaba, topa con él y halla en él un tesoro, que no es poco el que su valor rinde al que le sabe estimar; cosa que de pocos años a esta parte les sucede a estos indios bisayas, enseñados de los españoles, de el valor de este aroma, que en su antigüedad ni lo estimaban porque no lo conocían,

Chapter 21

CONCERNING AMBERGRIS AND AMBER; ITS ORIGIN AND AN ACCOUNT OF THE KINDS FOUND IN THESE SEAS AND ABOUT ITS ABUNDANCE

Although ambergris seems, according to many, to occupy the first place among other scents and its greater value than all others can testify to it, the esteem among those best qualified to know proclaims it. All in all, there is no doubt that it is valued only little in the area of aromas but in the production of the others which enliven and refine it (or to say it better) bring out its fragrance into the open which has greater excellence with them and is superior to all of them and experience demonstrates this.

About its origin, source or efficient or proximate cause, I have not seen anyone up to now who can give any but probable information (I hold it impossible to be infallible about this). So, with some care, I have desired to investigate what could be its origin, where and how it develops, what person or thing gave it that quality, what matter is it which is ennobled with this form giving it its greatest degree of purity. About all this we have no information, although it is evident that it is carried about by the sea and the product of its profound and inscrutable depths. Exposed or dispersed on the waves, after having been at their mercy for many days and even months, it is thrown up on a beach where the fate or fortune of someone who least expects it comes upon it and finds in it a treasure. It yields no little amount to one who knows how to estimate its value. This is a skill that has been acquired by these Bisayan natives who were taught by the Spaniards the value of this aroma. In their antiquity, they had no regard for it because they did not know it, nor did they keep it because they lacked a

ni lo guardaban por faltarles la estima que hoy tienen, quemándolo antes como si fuera brea, sin otro útil más que el del alumbrarse, aunque no sin admiración de su buen olor, aun en tan vil oficio.

El que se haya hallado siempre en estas Islas con abundancia testifica la tradición de estos naturales de lo pasado, (aunque sin nombre propio), y más las ocasiones más modernas en que con más logro han gozado de su hallazgo.

De las diferencias que yo he visto halladas en estas Islas se colegirá su mayor o menor calidad y valor, y rastrearemos su origen y adivinando lo que pueda ser, pues nadie ha visto lo que es, ni dónde, cómo o cuándo se cría en los senos del océano.

El más bajo ámbar es totalmente negro como pez, aunque no tan sólido como ella. Esta negrura, a mi parecer, se le pega de los soles que, como por acá son tan ardientes, y más en las playas, donde con su reflexión cada arena parece una centella (es cierto que me ha sucedido a mi más de dos veces, y más de diez, haber de caminar algún pedazo de playa, o ya por no poder ir embarcado por los muchos mares, o ya por ahorrar el dar vuelta a alguna grande punta o por otras causas, y hallar tan ardiente la arena que, aun calzado, no se podían poner los pies en ella. Tanto era el fuego, que con los rayos del sol tenía concebido este calor del arena. A mi ver, le cuece demasiado, y con algunas otras cosas que se le pegaran, le vuelve más negro, menos limpio y casi de ningún provecho. Y aunque sirve y acompaña a los otros olores este ámbar negro, no llega de mucho, aun en grande cantidad, a la poca del fino y limpio.

Segunda diferencia es la que se halla de algunos pedazos de ámbar, no tan negros aunque denegridos, en algunas vetillas blancas. Es lo blanco, en algunos pedazos más sólidos que lo moreno, y en otros al revés, el que tiene más vetas o motas blancas o cenicientas y que tiran a brea, aunque está también algo pasado, no empero tanto como el totalmente negro, sirve mejor, es más liviano y por sí solo huele algo (que el negro solo antes huele mal que bien), y que en éste se engañan no pocas veces los indios quemándolo por brea, porque arde muy bien, siendo género de ámbar, aunque no

sense of the value in which they consider it today. Formerly, they burned it as if it were pitch without any other purpose than that of illumination, although not without admiration for its fine scent even in such a lowly use.

That it has always been found in these islands is greatly attested to by the traditions of these natives from the past, although without their giving it any proper name and especially in more recent instances when they have enjoyed more gain from discovering it.

The differences in which I have seen it found in these islands will determine its greater or lesser quality and value. We shall describe its origin, being brief as possible, for no one has seen what it is, or where, how or when it developed in the depth of the ocean.

The most inferior amber is completely black like tar (pitch), although not as hard. In my opinion, this blackness is acquired from the sun, which here is so burning hot. Especially on the beaches where by its reflection each grain of sand seems to be a fiery spark (certainly I have experienced it more than twice and more than ten, on having to travel some stretch of beach; either because I could not go by vessel because of the rough sea or at another time to avoid making a turn around some large point or for other reasons. I found the sand so hot that even with shoes I could not put my feet on it; so great was the fire which had been kindled by the rays of the sun). This heat from the sun, in my opinion, bakes it excessively (and together with other things which become joined in it), it turns very black; less pure and almost useless. Although it may assist and accompany many other aromas, this black amber does not amount to much, even in large quantity, compared to a little that is fine and pure.

The second variety is the one which is found in various pieces of amber, not as black although somewhat blackish; as various white or grayish veins and which resembles pitch. Although it is a bit dark, it is not so much however as the latter which is totally black. It has more use; is lighter in weight, and by itself it has aroma (the black alone on the other hand smells bad rather than good). In this regard the natives are deceived frequently, burning it for pitch because it burns very well being a species of amber

el fino, pero como medio entre el más ínfimo y el más supremo. Y, si es pedazo algo grande éste de que tratamos, suele tener en su interior algo de ámbar bueno y limpio.

A este llaman ámbargris¹. Su color es pardisco y, cuando toca en rubio, es mejor y más liviano por no estar aún endurecido con los soles. La materia, por esta misma causa, es más porosa. Hélo visto yo recién hallado, que casi se semejaba a un trozo de moñiga de vaca y, mejor, a un género de hongos sólidos que se suelen criar, (aun en España), en los árboles, que son de color pardo claro y se suele hacer de ellos yesca allá; (que acá no sirven para eso). Este es el de mejor casta, calidad, estima y valor, y que, en poca cantidad, confeccionado con otros olores, los levanta a todos de punto.

De este género de ámbargris he visto yo aun dos diferencias; uno muy blanco y más duro, que suele oler bien quemándolo, aunque el olor no se percibe luego, sino cuando el aire ha dado alguna rarefacción al humo; y otro que no huele cosa, aunque el humo es blanquizco y no del color ordinario.

Y este humo es la señal más cierta, (a lo que he oído y experimentado también en varias pruebas que he hecho), de su bondad, que por él se conoce. El modo es que se toma una aguja, o punzoncillo, de hierro y se calienta o en las brasas o en una candela, (limpiándole si es en esta del humo negro que se suele pagar). Estando caliente, se hincan en el pedazo del ámbar. Si el humo que sale luego es blanco y tira para arriba derechamente sin torcer a un lado u otro como una barilla muy delgada, es bueno; y, aunque haya viento, si no es mucho, no se esparce luego sino cuando ha salido como dos palmos, poco más a menos, de alto. En teniendo alguna mezcla térrea o grosera, ni sube tan derecho ni tan blanco ni alto, antes se esparce a poco trecho que salió del pedazo donde se hizo la prueba.

Hélo notado no pocas veces haciendo dicha prueba, con admiración mía y de los indios que se hallaban cuando me lo traían a mostrar, y preguntarme si acaso era ámbar o no, y a las veces les vale mucho esta diligencia de acudir al Padre, que no les engaña (si engañara según razón), porque si van primero a alguno de los

although not the best. But it is the medium variety between the worst and the very superior. If the kind we speak of is somewhat a large piece, it usually has some of the fine pure amber within.

To this one called *ambergris*,¹ its color brownish and which it is slightly golden, is better and lighter, because it has not yet been burned by the sun. The material, for the same reason, is more porous. I have seen it just after being found and it almost resembles a piece of dung of a cow or better, a kind of hard mushroom which is accustomed to grow, even in Spain, on the trees and is of a light brown color. Over there in Spain, they often make tinder out of these; here they are not used for this. This amber is the best variety, in quality, esteemed and valued and which slightly mixed with other aromas raises them all to a high point of perfection.

I have even seen two different kinds: one very white and more tough which when burned has a fine fragrance, although the aroma is not perceived immediately, but only when the air has caused the smoke to thin out. The other does not have any fragrance at all, although the smoke is whitish and not of the ordinary color.

This smoke is the surest sign, from what I have heard and experienced also in various trials I have made, of its goodness and can be recognized by it. The method is to take a needle or a little iron punch and warm it in the embers or in a candle flame to clean it if there is anything remaining of the black smoke clinging to it. When it is hot it is thrust into the piece of amber. If the smoke that comes forth then, is white and floats straight upward, without twisting from one side to the other, like a very thin little rod, it is good quality. Even when there is a wind, unless it is excessive, the smoke does not dissipate itself until it has emerged about two *palmos*, more or less, in height. If it has a mixture of earth or impurities, it does not rise so straight or as white or as high. Rather it scatters at a short distance after it emerges from the piece on which the test is being made.

I have noticed this many times on making this test, to my own surprise and that of the natives who have found it when they brought it to show me, and to ask if by chance it was amber or not. Sometimes, the practice of coming to the Father has been much to their advantage for he would not deceive them in principle. Whereas

españoles, que andan entre ellos, les engañan, o les suelen decir que no es ámbar sino brea, o que es malo para comprárselo a viles precios. Y a los principios fue mucho más que ya ahora, como saben el valor, aun lo que no es ámbar ni tiene que ver con él (por hallarse mucho género de breas o resinas en las orillas del mar, y más cuando ha habido muchas avenidas que los ríos meten en el mar) lo guardan muy bien y se fían poco, sino de quien tiene[n] mucha seguridad.

Las cantidades de ámbar que se suelen hallar, a las veces, son muy considerables, a las veces muy pocas, que está en dichas. Parece que [se] hallaba más cuando la apreciaban menos, y que ahora que ha crecido la codicia, ha faltado la materia de ella, y más en esta de tanta estima é interés para estos miserables.

La mayor cantidad que ha llegado a mi noticia fue una que en la costa de Ibabao, (de que hemos tratado, no muy lejos del cabo del Espíritu Santo), halló acaso un indio, poco entendido y nada ladino², y fue considerable, pues fue a buscar, o hacer, cestos de bejuco en que ponerla. Llenó de ella, que la hizo pedazos que en un trozo grande la halló, tres cestos grandes y aun más. Llevólos a su casa, que por estar algo apartada de otras y lejos del pueblo, tenía pocos que la viesan. Fue gastado, como si fuera brea, para alumbrarse, (como ellos suelen de noche), con ello, hasta que acaso otro más entendido, habiendo ido a caza, y héchosele tarde cerca de la casilla de este, ya de noche se recogió en ella, y reparó en el humo blanco que salía de el *aquipo*³, (que así dijimos se llaman a estos atados,⁴ que les sirven de candelas), y, antes de subir, porque ardía ya, reparó en el buen olor. Preguntó, después que hubieron cenado, que dónde había hallado aquella brea. Contóle dónde y cuándo y en qué cantidad. Pidióle un pedazo, que sin dificultad se lo dió. Fue al pueblo, mostroló al Padre, sin decirle cómo ni dónde lo había habido. Y vióla, y conoció ser ámbar gris y muy bueno. Quedóse el Padre con el pedazo de la muestra por señal, y mandóle fuese a

if they go first to one of the Spaniards who are among them, he will deceive them; either telling them that it is not amber but pitch or that it is bad so as to buy it from them at low prices. In the beginning there was much more than today for they now know the value even if what is not amber or looks like it (for there are found many kinds of pitch or resins on the shores of the sea and especially when there have been many floods and the rivers push them into the sea). They keep it very securely, and few are trusted except those in whom they have much confidence.

The quantities of amber that are ordinarily found from time to time, are very considerable; at other times very small. One becomes rich, it seems, and finds more who least knows its value. Now that the cupidity has grown, the material cause of it has become scarce and especially in this matter of such great esteem and interest for these poor people.

The greatest quantity that has come to my attention was one piece found by a native of little knowledge, and in no sense a *ladino*², on the coast of Ibabaw, of which we have spoken, not very far from the *cabo del Espiritu Santo*. It was of considerable size, and he went then to look for or make baskets of rattan in which to put it. He filled three large baskets or more with the large lump broken into pieces which he had found. He carried it to his house which was somewhat away from the others and at a distance from the town so that there were few who saw him. It was used as if it were pitch for the purpose of lighting at night, as they were accustomed doing it, until by chance another wiser person, who had gone hunting found himself later near the hut of the former. Since it was already night, he took refuge there. He observed the white smoke which issued from the *agipu*³ (which we said, is what they call those bundles⁴ which serve them as candles). Prior to going up into the house, because the amber was still burning, he carefully noted the fine odor. He asked after they have eaten where he had found that pitch. The native told him where and when and in what amount. He asked for a piece, and without any difficulty it was given to him. He went immediately to show it to the Father without saying how or where he had obtained it. The Father saw it and recognized it to be ambergris of very good quality. The Father kept the piece shown him as an evidence and ordered him to go

traer lo demás, con lo cual avisó al que lo había hallado, (que de los tres cestos ya no había más que el uno por haberlo quemado del modo dicho).

Lleváronlo al pueblo, y, por hacerles buena obra, el Padre lo remitió a Manila en ocasión segura, y en dicha ciudad, que allá la conocieron mejor, le pagaron trece reales por la onza. Y fue precio moderado, (que a mucho más suele correr), con que juntaron el que lo halló y el tercero, que fue causa de su noticia, más de dos mil pesos, cantidad que ni todo su linaje había visto junta, ni aun todos ellos jamás.

Esto sucedió por los años de 1632 o 1633, un año antes que yo fuese a aquella casa, donde me contaron lo dicho. Fuera de que yo estaba en Manila cuando llegó a ella dicho ámbar, aunque no había sabido de dónde ni de quién era.

Esta es la mayor cantidad que se halló entonces. Otras menores he visto que me han traído a saber si lo era, varios indios, y en varias partes.

En la isla de Capul se halló un buen pedazo, y, aunque de la calidad que dijimos, que es segunda en este género, le valió muy buenos pesos al indio que lo halló en el Pueblo de Bangahun⁵.

Estando acaso en una embarcacioncilla, surta cerca de la barra, unos indios mientras hacían de comer, salió la madre de uno de ellos a ver si hallaba algún marisco por la playa, y topó en ella un trozo, que le parecía de cera (a ella), rollizo como el brazo, de un palmo poco más o menos de largo. Guardólo pensando que era cera. Llevólo a su casa, y, poniendo un poco al fuego, porque le pareció que habría estado aquella cera en el mar muchos días y que estaría ya pasada, vió que se derretía con dificultad y no tan fácilmente como la cera y que olía mucho mejor. Túvolo por algún género de sahumerio, y como de tal usó de él y dió a muchas otras mujeres, cuando se lo pedían por tal, varios pedazos; hasta que reparó un hijo suyo, y del que le quedaba me trajo un pedazo para ver lo que era. Vílo, y por el color conocí lo que podía ser. Hice la

and bring the rest. However, the one who had found it advised him that of the three baskets he now had no more than one, because he had burned it in the manner mentioned.

They carried that to the town and to do them a good turn, the Father sent it to Manila at an opportune time. In this city, where they knew it better, they paid thirteen *reales* an ounce for it. As a result, the one who found it and the third man who was responsible for the news, collected together more than three hundred *pesos*; an amount more than all of his lineage had ever seen or would ever see.

This happened during the year 1632 or 1633 and a year before I arrived to that coast, where they told me this. Besides I was in Manila when this amber arrived there, although I did not know from where nor whose it was.

This is the largest amount that was found at that time. I have seen other lesser quantities that various natives have brought me to find out if it was amber, and in various places.

On the island of Capul, a good chunk was found and although of a quality which we have said was second in this kind, it was worth many *pesos* to the native in the town of *Bangahun*⁵ who found it.

By chance some natives were on a little vessel anchored near the sandbar while they had a meal. The mother of one of them went out to see if she could find some shellfish on the beach and by chance came upon a piece of something which appeared to her to be wax; round, like the branch of a palm, and about the same in length, more or less. She kept it believing that it was wax. She carried it to the house and placed it in the fire briefly, because it seemed to her that it had been in the sea many days and that it was now already spoiled, she saw that it was melted with difficulty and not as easily as wax and then it smelled much better. She took it for some kind of aromatic, and she made use of it, as such. She gave it to many other women who asked her for various pieces for this purpose. Finally, one of her sons noticed it, and from what was left, brought me a little to see what it was. I looked at it and by the color I knew what it might be. I made the test with the smoke and it was one of the best pieces I have seen and a very fine

experiencia con el humo y era de los mejores que yo he visto, y muy lindo ámbar gris. Pero valióle poco esta diligencia porque, cuando volvió a su casa y le contó a su madre (que ella misma me contó después el tamaño y circunstancias), ya no llegaba a una onza lo que le había quedado, y habiendo sido más de treinta, según el tamaño del trozo que me dijo las que había dado. Y no pocas las que había gastado en sahumero, pensando que era alguna brea olorosa, que acá hay muchas de buen olor.

Del tercer e ínfimo género he visto varias veces; pero, por ser malo, se hizo poco caso. Y de un pedazo que yo no quise por malo y tendría sus doce o más onzas, un medio mestizo, que anda por acá, echó mano, dando no sé que al indio y lo llevó a Manila, vendiéndolo por muy buen ámbar. Comprólo quien no debiera y no lo conocía, (aunque con escritura que, no lo siendo, se le volvería el valor). Recibió la mayor parte del dinero el que hizo la *droga*⁶, y partió con él y desapareció. Conocióse el engaño después, queriéndolo vender a mayor precio el que lo había comprado, y me remitiéron [a mí], estando en Catbalogan, la dicha escritura para que cobrase lo que el primer vendedor se había traído: pero, por no tener ni una blanca⁷, aunque estuvo preso por justicia, se salió sin pagar cosa. Para que se conozca los muchos engaños que hay, y puede haber, en esta materia, si no se conoce su calidad; porque, como suelen decir: “la codicia rompe el saco⁸.”

La cantidad que los años pasados se halló en la isla de Jolo, (cuando estaba aún allí el presidio de los españoles), fue aún mucho mayor que la que arriba dijimos; pues, según me contó un Padre de los nuestros, (que entonces se halló en aquella isla), el trozo había sido mayor en lo grueso que el cuerpo de un hombre, y en lo largo dos veces más. Y fue de ámbar gris fino, que compraron todos cuantos españoles tuvieron con qué, cuanto quisieron, y se malbarató mucho, aunque quedaron algunos, de los que tenían más mano y mayores caudales, muy aprovechados, aumentando con esta ocasion los suyos. Y los moros (que tales son los joloos) quedaron muy aprovechados y con mucha cantidad de pesos. Y, si hubiera sido en parte más acomodada y cercana a Manila, hubieran ganado muchísimo mas.

ambergris. But his measure availed him little because when he returned to his house and told his mother, and she told me afterwards of its size and what had happened, what was left to her did not come to an ounce. There had been more than thirty pieces the size of the one which she described. A number had been given away to women, and others had been wasted as aromatics, because it was thought to be a kind of fragrant pitch of which there are many kinds here of fine scent.

Concerning the third kind, I have seen it at various times; but because it was poor, I paid little attention to it. A piece which I did not want because of its poor quality which weighed a dozen ounces or more. A *mestizo* who was traveling through here took it, gave I do not know what to the native, and brought it to Manila, selling it for very good amber. Someone bought it, who did not know about it and should not have done so. Nevertheless, he had a contract that if it were not amber, the value would be returned. The one who made the *droga*⁶ received the larger part of the money and left with it and disappeared. The one who made the purchase learned the deceit afterwards when he wished to sell it at a higher price. They sent the bill of sale to me when I was in Catbalogan, so that what the first seller had carried for might be recovered. But because he did not have any money,⁷ although he was imprisoned for justice, he came out without payment of a cent. I relate this, so that the many deceits that are and have been suffered in this matter unless the quality is recognized, because as they say, avarice destroys everything.⁸

The amount of amber that was found in past years on the Island of Jolo, when the garrison of the Spaniards was still there, was even greater than what we have described above. For according to what one of our Fathers told me, who found himself on that Island at the time, the piece had been larger in thickness than the body of a man, and twice as long. It was as fine ambergris and all the Spaniards of means purchased as much as they wished. Much was ill spent although some of those who were more clever and had greater resources made a large profit and with a large amount of pesos. If it had happened in a place more convenient and near to Manila very much more would have been made.

Esto cuanto a la cantidad, abundancia y calidad del ámbar, de que alguien se podrá aprovechar para conocerlo.

Vengamos ahora a su origen, o causa productiva, que no la deja de tener natural, como todas las demás cosas; porque, reducirlo a la primera y divina, (aunque todo nace, depende y se conserva de ella), es Filosofía, como dicen, de sacristanes, pues se recoge a la sacristía o a lo sagrado. Diré lo que siento para que otros juzguen después lo que les pareciere mejor.

A tres causas, o principios, me parece se pueden reducir las efectivas o productivas del ámbar, a lo que he podido alcanzar, tratándolo con los indios más entendidos, y a lo que de los varios y diferentes pedazos que he visto, he podido discurrir, y quizás no será alguno de estos; pero bueno es discurrirlo todo para conocer algo.

La primera (y es sentir de algunos) es que el ámbar es género de zacate o hierba marítima y que nace en los profundos del mar, (pues es cierto criarse muchas de estas hierbas en él), la cual, comida o pacida por algún gran pez (como decíamos) padece el *duion* y, digerida, podía ser género de excremento, aunque yo no me inclino a que sea excremento ya digerido, sino que, si es hierba, fue comida con mucha abundancia de algún grandísimo pez que, no pudiendo sufrir su demasiado, o calor o frío u otra calidad, la trueca – que puede muy bien en mucha cantidad un pez muy grande –, sirviendo de primer instrumento, para juntarlo, la voracidad del pez (y más si es hierba que no nace en todo tiempo), de desmenuzarla y cocerla el buche, y de darle su perfección el sol, cuando sobre aguado, por ser materia liviana juntamente con la humedad del agua cálido y humedo, calidades perfectivas (y corruptivas a veces), le dan la última perfección. Y este puede ser que sea el más perfecto si se halla en sazón, y antes que los muchos calores y soles de las playas lo hayan alterado; porque, hallarse más blando unas veces que otras, consta de lo dicho, y aún en el mismo ámbar gris se hallan pedazos sólidos y huecos, y algunas ojillas enteras y pelillos que, o cuando se comió (si vale lo dicho), o cuando se desechó, y más siendo llevado de unas partes a otras por las olas, se juntaron. Y por esto

This suffices then, concerning the amount, abundance and quality of amber from which anyone can profit by recognizing it.

We come now to its origin or natural cause, which it has to have by all other things. Because to resolve it into its first and Divine cause, although everything is born, depends and is preserved by Divine power; this is, as they say, the philosophy of sacristans, for it is to take refuge in the sacristy or in the sacred. I shall say what I feel so that others may judge later on what seems to them better.

It seems to me that the effective or productive cause of amber can be deduced to three principles, from what I have been able to ascertain by dealing with the most intelligent natives and what I have been able to discover from various pieces which I have seen. Perhaps, it may be none of these, but it is good to discuss all in order to know something.

The first, and it is the feeling of some, is that amber is a kind of a weed or maritime herb which springs up in the depths of the sea, for it is certain that many of these herbs grow in it. This is eaten or chewed by some great fish (as we said, passing through and digested); it could be some form of excrement. However, I do not incline to the idea that it may be already digested excrement, but rather that it is a herb which was eaten in large amounts by some huge fish. Not being able to endure its excessive heat or cold or other quality it vomits it. A very large fish is able to do this easily in great quantity, serving as the first receptacle for gathering it, as is true of the fish (and especially if it is a herb which does not grow all year long). The maw grinds it up and digests it; the sun purifies it when it is floating on the water, because it is a light material. These, along with moisture of the water (warmth and moisture, sometimes purifying agents, and at times corrupting) give it its final perfection. This could be the most perfect type if found in time and before the excessive heat and the sun of the beaches have changed it. For at one time it is found softer than others as a result of this. Even in the same piece of ambergris are found solid portions and hollow ones; entire little leaves and stems which, either when they were eaten (if what is said is true) or when they were digested and besides being carried from one place to the other by the waves, were joined together. For this reason, these natives

le llaman estos indios *tae sa bongansiso*, que en su lengua es: "excremento de ballena."

La segunda causa puede ser que sea el ámbar género de resina de árboles que en su profundidad cría el mar, pues es cierto que se hallan muchos y muy grandes en los profundos, (como se puede ver en casi todos cuantos tratan del mar), y de las muchas arboledas, y aún bosques, que en él se hallan, como consta de varias partes de la India Oriental, donde hasta cocos nacidos en el profundo del mar se hallan como en Zaldívar⁹, y otras frutas y árboles más grandes.

Y en estas Islas, en muchas partes, he oído decir a los indios hallarse árboles en todo muy distintos a los de la tierra (y del Mar Bermejo¹⁰ lo dice bien claramente Plinio). Puede ser, pues, que estos árboles echen su modo de resina, (como vemos en muchos de los montes), o naturalmente, o golpeados con los movimientos interiores del mar, y más cuando hay tempestades y que estos se junten, conglutinen y unan, saliendo a la superficie del mar, y que en él reciban su última y perfecta calidad, como dijimos arriba. Y a esto persuade el modo de betumen, o resina, que en algún ámbar se halla, como ya dijimos; y que, según las otras cosas de la espuma, algas, y otras vascosidades de la mar se altere su perfección, se aumente o disminuya su calidad, pues evidentemente se colige de algunos trozos haber mezcla de diferentes materias que, cuando son menos nobles le causaron la negrura de que dijimos en la especie más ínfima, y el agregado menos puro y más adulterado.

La tercera causa puede ser, (y quizás es la más adecuada), que será este ámbar género de lamas [*la mar* in text] u ovas glutinosas que en algunas partes, en especial en las montuosas y de peñas o piedras (que las hay muy grandes sin duda, pues la experiencia lo manifiesta en muchas), produce el mar, que tiene la calidad y virtud odorífera que trae consigo el ámbar, pues no hay razón porque en la tierra se produzcan (¿quién lo negará?) tantas y tan varias hierbas y flores olorisísimos, como vemos, y no las puede el mar producir de la variedad y diferencia en color, hechura, solidez o blandura, que en muchas lamas u ovas vemos, en especial entre las piedras o arrecifes que dejan las bajamares descubiertas (en

call it *tai sa bungansisu*, which in their language is "excrement of the whale".

The second cause may be that the amber is a kind of resin of various trees that grow in the depths of the sea. For it is certain that these are found in great numbers and very large in the deep. This one can be found in almost all writers who tell about the sea and the many groves and even woods that are found there. This is evident in many parts of *India Oriental* where even coconuts are found sprouted in the depths of the sea, as in Zaldivar,⁹ and other fruits and very large trees in these islands.

In many places I have heard it said by the natives that trees have been found completely different from those of the land (Pliny says it very clearly concerning the Red Sea¹⁰). It could be said that these trees give off their own peculiar resin (as we see in many of the forests) either naturally or by the blows struck by the internal movement of the sea, especially when there are tempests. These resins are united and stick together coming up to the surface of the sea. With this they receive their ultimate and perfected condition, as we said above. This view is supported by a kind of wax or resin which is found in some amber, as we have already said. As with the other scum, algae or other viscous matter from the sea its purity may vary; its quality may be better or worse, for it can be determined from various pieces to be a mixture of different materials which, when they are less cause the dark color of fine which we spoke is the poorest variety and the entire less pure and more adulterated.

The third cause could be, and perhaps it is the most adequate, that this amber is a variety of lime or *ovas*, as the sea produces in some places, especially where there are rocks or stones (and there are very large ones, as experience shows, in many places). They have a character or power of being fragrant and enhance the amber. Then there is no reason why, with (who would deny it?) so many and such a variety of herbs and flowers being produced on land with great fragrance, as we have seen, that the sea cannot produce them as from the variety and differences in color, size, hardness or softness which we see in the many kinds of slime, especially among the stones or reefs which the low tides leave exposed in these islands every day.

estas Islas cada día hay tantos testigos cuantos las andan y navegan), pues, ¿porqué no puede ser una de ellas allá en lo más profundo o en lo más somero que sea dicho ámbar, que después con los soles y olas se perfeccione?

En los peces vemos muchos muy olorosos. El pulpo pequeño, que será como el puño de la mano, huele famosísimamente, como lo he experimentado yo muchas veces. ¿Quien sabe si es porque paze esta hierba? De los excrementos de algunos peces (lo he oído yo a muchos) que huelen algunos muy bien, y de la ballena lo cuentan, (y hay quien diga ser su excremento el ámbar); ni la figura del ámbar lo contradice, antes lo manifiesta, pues el mejor es poroso, de materia poco sólida y con algunas capas más o menos duras, que parece cosa de ovas o lama; y de lo que yo he visto y reparado me he inclinado más siempre a creer que sea algo de ésto.

Valga la conjetura lo que valiere; quien supiere más de ello lo podrá añadir; que ésto es solo opinar. Si con fundamento o no, véanlo los entendidos, y, si alguno pensase que es género de brea que cría el mar, come dijimos de la tierra, quizás daría en el punto.

There are as many witnesses of this as there are people who travel and sail among them. Then why could it not be one of these, there in the deepest part or in the shallows which forms this amber, and afterwards with the sun and waves perfect it?

Among the fish, we see many very odorous ones: the small cuttlefish, which is about the size of a fist, has a very famous odor which I have experienced many times. Who knows whether it is because of digesting this herb. About the excrement of various fish (I have heard from many), some smell very well. They affirm this about the whale and there are those who say that the amber is its excrement. The appearance of the amber does not contradict, but supports the idea, for the best amber, if porous and of a very soft quality with various somewhat hard layers which seem like the work of *ovas* or a slime. From what I have seen and carefully observed, I am always more inclined to believe that it may be something like this.

The conjecture may be taken for what it is worth. Whoever knows more about it can add to it; this is only an opinion. Let the wise individual decide if it has any basis or not. If someone thinks that it is a form of pitch which grows in the sea, as we described that of the land, perhaps he explains the point. □

Chapter 21

ANNOTATIONS

[1] *Ambergris*. A waxy, grayish substance formed in the intestines of sperm whales and found floating at sea or washed ashore. It is used as a fixative in perfumes. Alcina here weaves in and out a bit between amber and ambergris in his descriptions, it seems.

[2] *Ladino*. A Spanish word meaning sagacious, cunning, sly; speaking foreign languages.

[3] *Aguipo*. *Agipu*. Partly burned sticks. E.g. *Amuy agipuhun sa infierno an mga makakasala; magagipu kita kay ba kita kapaangan sining suga*; let us take a burning stick, just in case, etc. *Magagipu kamu kay magdamdam kun mangitngit*. Sánchez [1711], *op. cit.*

Tramp's entry comes much closer to what is meant in Alcina's text – *agiput*: wick. v. to make a wick. *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

[4] *Atadols*. A Spanish word meaning: bundles, spiritless, irresolute; a pack.

[5] *Bangahun*. An ancient name for the present *pueblo* of Gandara, Western Samar, a non-coastal settlement. It has been described previously in one of the footnotes.

[6] *Droga*. Here in the textual context the meaning is trick, deceit. The literal meaning of *droga* is drug.

[7] *Ni una blanca*, simply means without any money; absolutely without any money. Still very common sentence in today's Spanish.

[8] *La avaricia rompe el saco*. Spanish proverb: "Grasp all, loose all!"

[9] Zaldivar. Difficult to know the place. We guess Alcina might refer to Zanzibar.

[10] *Mar Bermejo*. The Red Sea.