

PHILIPPINIANA RECORDS

ALCINA'S *Historia de las Islas...* (1668)

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Capítulo 28

DE LAS CAÑAS DE ESTA TIERRA: SU GRANDEZA Y VARIEDAD, Y DE LOS UTILES QUE DE ELLAS SE SACAN

Son las cañas de estas islas la cosa más socorrida que hay en ellas, y es tanta su variedad, abundancia y bondad que es una de las mayores muestras de la divina liberalidad para con sus naturales, que se sirven de ellas en tantas y tan varias cosas, que es una de las maravillosas de por acá.

Basta en primer lugar (antes que bajemos a tratar de sus útiles en particular) decir que con solas cañas pueden hacer, y de hecho hacen, en algunas partes de ellas, los naturales sus casas, muy grandes y capaces, porque de las mayores y más sólidas y de la parte más cerca de la raíz, por ser allí más espesos los cañutos, o ñudos, hacen los postes o columnas que acá llaman *harigues*¹ y de las demás, escogiendo a su voluntad todo el maderaje y techumbre que cubren con estas cañas, partidas y encajadas unas sobre otras, como con tejas, y a mucho menos costo; y,

¹ *Harigues*. Vide *harigue*. *Harigue* (*harigui*, *harigi*, *hariguis*, *harigis*) was a log, usually round, which served as a post, pillar or column in buildings, especially in the past, for major constructions and churches. Today, with the use of concrete, the *harigues* are very rarely used; the reason is also the scarcity of thick, appropriate trees to be used as pillars (Cfr. Sánchez de la Rosa, Antonio, O.F.M., *Diccionario español-bisaya para las provincias de Samar y Leyte*, Manila, 1914, 143, Bisayan Part).

The bamboo wood used for houses lasted longer if it was smoked. The natives dried the wood, to remove the humidity, and thus the possibility of the canes becoming rotten was greatly diminished.

The Igorots of the Cordillera region, in the island of Luzon, who still live a very communal way of life, make their fire within the houses and thus soon these houses become black. It gives to the buildings, objects and artifacts they manufacture an aura

Chapter 28

CONCERNING THE BAMBOOS OF THIS LAND, THEIR SIZE, VARIETY AND THE USES WHICH ARE MADE OF THEM

The bamboos² of these islands are the most useful thing that exist in them. So great is their variety, abundance and fine qualities that it is one of the greatest manifestations of the Divine generosity towards these natives. They utilize them in so many and varied ways that it is one of the wonders over here.

First of all, before we come to treat their uses in particular, it would suffice to say that with the bamboos alone the natives can build, and in fact do build in some parts of these islands, their very large and spacious houses. Out of the largest and strongest bamboos, especially the portion nearest the root, since the bamboo between the knots is at that point very thick, they make posts or columns which they call *harigues*. From the remainder they select it all at will for the framework of the roof, which they cover with these split bamboos and fit them

of antiquity and durability. These objects, if truly aged with smoke and old, are highly appreciated by experts and ethnologists. Today they carry a quite high price in the market.

² *Bamboo*. Alcina describes the abundance of bamboo canes in Samar. That was true all over the Philippines Islands. Today we cannot say the same. A trip through Samar, the subject and the island of Alcina's investigation, and other islands, will show the devastation that has taken place in the forests and the mountains of the Philippines. Up to 1945, the end of the IIWW, the country, on the whole, was thickly forested. Today the forests are practically gone; only pockets here and there remain.

Some bamboo groves can be seen, as one crosses the land, but they do not exist any more to be used industrially for building houses. Today, at most, bamboo is used for furniture and for other minor usages.

aunque no duran tanto, duran muchos años y más (como acá es lo común en todas sus casas) cuando reciben humo, que con él se endurecen, ensolidan y deshechan la carcoma.

Fuera de darles casa, sin que sea necesario otro árbol para suelos, *dindines*, divisiones, etc, les dan de comer, pues todos los renuevos de todas las cañas que, como veremos, son muchas, sirven, cuando tiernas, que llaman *dabong*,³ de comida que ellos comen, o cocida o enrachada⁴ (que ya dijimos cómo se hace) y enrachada son muy buenos, y los españoles también los comen, pues parecen palmitos.

Sírvenles las cañas de varias vasijas para cargar agua y guardarla en sus casas, con que no necesitan de cántaros ni otras vasijas de barro, que se quiebran presto, y éstas duran mucho. Cuando les falta olla, de uno o dos cañutos la hacen, cociendo en ella su arroz y otras comidas, y aun nosotros tal vez usamos de ellas para guisar anguilas u otros peces semejantes.

Sírvenles de hachas, o teas, para alumbrarse en sus casas y en los caminos sin ser necesarias otras (pues aun la tea de España no arde tan bien como los *bacacayes*⁵ de acá, y sin el humo de aquellas) y de otras

³ *Dabong*. Cane shoot. *Dao quinasalan nga dabong*. It is said of those who tremble and change their color. *Baga ca mananabong*. It is said of those who diligently look for something. *Baga tinubo nga dabong*. It is said of those who grow fast (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 101, Bisayan Part).

⁴ *En rachada*. The transcript is quite clear. We read *en rachada* twice. The *Diccionario de lengua española, Real Academia*, does not have the word 'rachada'. And the word 'racha(s)' meaning wood pieces, sprinters, does not fit Alcina's meaning. My conclusion is that the *amanuensis* heard the word and spelled it *en rachada*, but, once again, it is the case of a hispanized word, in this case *atsara*, of a Filipino word meaning 'pickles'. *Atsara* are varied vegetables in vinegar to keep them longer and give a sour taste, so agreeable to the Filipinos still today (Cfr. J.V. PANGANIBAN, *Diksyunario-Tesaurus Pilipino-Ingles*, Lungsod Quezon, 1972, 82).

⁵ *Bacacayes*. Vide *Bagacay*. Alcina, once more, pluralizes and hispanizes the Word *bagacay*. In the many instances where the word is used in this chapter, the spelling is not uniform. We have *bacacayes*, *bacacaies*, *bacacay*, *bacacai*, *bagacaies*, *bagacai* and *bagacay*.

Bagacay. Bamboo cane. This cane can reach a height of more than eight meters. It is very common in the mountains of Samar. It is beautiful, very straight and clean and it is used in looms and to make thorns, pointed things and for other usages. There are varieties of this cane, like *caraye*, *damoluan*, *macaranas*, *guigacye* (strong c) and other species (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 392, Bisayan Part).

together one over the other, like tiles and with less cost. Even though they do not last forever, they last many years, especially since here it is common experience in all the houses that when they become impregnated with smoke they are preserved, hardened and repel the wood louse.

Aside from providing dwellings, — and there is no need of any other type of wood for floors, *dindines*,⁶ partitions, etc. — the bamboos provide food. The new shoots of all the bamboos, which as we shall see are plentiful, are used when tender as food and they are called *dabong*. [They are prepared] either boiled or in *atchara* (we have already shown how it is done). In *atchara*, they are very delicious. The Spaniards also eat them because they are like the palm heart.

The bamboos serve as various small containers to carry water and to keep it in their houses, so that they do not need pitchers or other containers of clay, which are readily broken. They last a long time. Whenever they need a pot they make one out of one or two bamboo stalks cooking in it their rice and other meals. Sometimes even we use these to cook eels and other similar fish.

They also serve as tapers or candlewood for lighting their houses and streets, without needing anything else. The candlewood of Spain does not burn as well as do the *bagacay* here and without the smoke of

⁶ *Dindines*. Vide *dingding*. This is the Tagalog word. Sánchez does not include it in his *Diccionario* with the meaning of partition wall, but as a voice to lull the babies (Cfr. *op. cit.*, III, Bisayan Part).

We have said oftentimes that the Spaniards, in their overseas dominions, and thus also in the Philippines, accepted into their own spoken and written language, local words for which they had no easy alternatives. Here *dindines* is a hispanized and pluralized form of *dingding*, a Tagalog/Pilipino word meaning partition wall of bamboo. The partitions in houses and rooms are normally called *dingding na sawali*: bamboo partition wall.

The first time I have encountered the use of the word *dindines* as a Spanish word, though with a clarification, is in Miguel de Loarca's *Relation/Relación*, penned in Arevalo, Iloilo, on June of 1582. He speaks of the myth of the origin of man in the Philippines. Here are his words in translation: "Then they relate also the story of the reed, and the aforesaid man and woman came out. They add that the first time when Cavahi [Cauahi] gave birth to children, she brought forth a great number at once. One day the father went home, very angry, and threatened the children. The latter were frightened and fled; some into the most hidden rooms of the house; some hid in other places nearer the open air; some hid themselves within the *dindines* ["y otros se escondieron en los dindines, que son las paredes de la casa hechas de caña..."] or walls of the houses which are constructed of reeds...". It is, then, here where the word *dindines* was hispanized for the first time. [By the way, the translation of 'caña' for 'reeds' is

muchas cosas que iremos advirtiéndolo, dejando lo medicinal, que, para sacar sangre extraviada o por heridas o por otra causa, y para las mal purgadas en los partos es eficacísima el agua de cañas, que se hace cociendo rajas de ellas con agua; y su carbón es bonísimo para curar heridas que, despolvorizadas con él, se enjugan, no crían materia y se cierran presto; de modo que son muchos los útiles de estas cañas cuanto a lo medicinal.

Llámanla los bisayas en nombre genérico *cauain* [*cawayan*],⁷ que es lo mismo que caña en nuestra lengua; pero, como son de varias diferencias, así tienen diferentes nombres. Pongamos primero las mayores y sus diferencias, que luego trataremos de los menores, que son aún muchas más y todas con notable abundancia en estas islas de Bisayas.

*Patong*⁸ llaman a las mayores de todas, y su grandeza parecerá increíble a quien no las ha visto. Háylas de cuatro y cinco palmos de ruedo, y tal vez seis; el *cancho*⁹ es muy gordo en las de esta especie; los cañutos de a dos y tres palmos de largo, que, cuanto más van subiendo en la caña, son más largos. Su longitud alcanza a diez y doce brazas de alto, y comúnmente son derechísimas, sin vuelta ni revés alguno, y suelen servir de árboles a embarcaciones bien grandes.

Esta especie es la mayor y la más dura en algunas partes, aunque en otras es mayor y de más solidez la que se sigue.

Y es la segunda especie, a que llaman *cabugavan*¹⁰ en algunas partes, y en otras *tangnan*. Es género espinoso y que en las ramas que

definitely not a happy one. *Caña* stands for *caña de bamboo*, or bamboo cane (Cfr. *Relation* by Miguel de Loarca, in E.H. BLAIR & J. A. ROBERTSON, *The Philippines Islands, 1493-1898*, 55 vols., Cleveland, 1903-1909, 5, 126-127).

⁷ *Cauain*. Vide *Cauayan / Kawayan*. Bamboo cane. Generic name of many canes (Sánchez, *op.cit.*, 90, Bisayan Part).

⁸ *Patong*. A cane of this name. It is large, strong and durable. The young shoot of the cane can be eaten (Sánchez, *op.cit.*, 243, Bisayan Part).

⁹ *Cancho*. Edge or thickness of an object. Here *cancho*, from the Latin *canthus*, means the thickness of the bamboo cane.

¹⁰ *Cabugavan*. Vide *Cabugauan*. A cane of various colors and extremely strong (Sánchez, *op.cit.*, 73, Bisayan Part).

the former. [The bamboo] has many other uses which we will discuss here, leaving out now its medicinal virtue. For drawing out clotted blood, either from wounds or from other causes and of those badly cleansed after childbirth, the juice of the bamboo is most effective. It is prepared by cooking pieces of bamboo in water. Its ash is very good for curing wounds; dusted with it, they dry up, do not fester, and quickly close, so that there are many uses of these bamboos in terms of medicine.

The Bisayans call it by a generic name, *cawayan*; this is the same as "bamboo" in our language, but there are various different ones and so they have distinct names. We shall treat first of the larger ones and their differences; then we will deal with the smaller, which are even more numerous. All grow in remarkable abundance in these Bisayan Islands.

Patong is what they call the largest one of all; its size would be hard to believe to one who has not seen it. It is four or five *palmos*¹¹ in circumference, perhaps six. The hull is very thick in those of this species, the part between the knots is two or three *palmos* long and its length depends on how high the bamboos reach. Their length reaches from ten to twelve *brazas*¹² in height and ordinarily are very straight without any bends or twists. They are customarily used for masts in rather large ships.

This species is the largest and the most durable in some places, although in others the one that follows is greater and sturdier.

This second species is the one they call *cabugavan* in some places, and in others, *tangnan*.¹³ It is a thorny variety. In the branches which sprout from the base and in the knots of each bamboo it has some very

¹¹ *Palmo*. From the Latin *palmus*. A measure of longitude, almost a fourth of a meter, divided into twelve equal parts of fingers. It is equivalent to 21 centimeters and it is supposed to be the length of the extended hand of a man from the tip of the thumb to the little finger, with the hand fully extended (*Diccionario de la lengua española*, Real Academia, h-zuzon, Madrid, 1984, 1000).

¹² *Braza*. From Latin *brachia*, plural form of *brachium*, arm. The distance from the two forefingers of a man, extending the arms horizontally. A measure of longitude used in the navy, equivalent to 1,6718 meters (*op.cit.*, a-guzpatarra, 213).

¹³ *Tangnan*. Strong cane, with small hole or tube (Sánchez, *op.cit.*, 343, Bisayan Part). The water in which the tender shoot of the *tangnan* is boiled, when drunk, is a good medicine to cure and clean internal and bleeding wounds (*Ibidem*, 420).

echa en los pies y en los ñudos¹⁴ de cada cañuto¹⁴ tiene unas espinas muy fuertes y agudas como uña de gato. Esta, aunque no suele ser comúnmente mayor ni tan grande como la de arriba, tal vez la excede en uno y otro, según las tierras e islas (que en unas es mejor este género y en otras el otro).

Contóme un hermano nuestro (para que se vea el tamaño de los cañutos) que él había llevado hasta la corte de Madrid, desde estas Islas, dos docenas de platos finos de China dentro de un cañuto de esta caña *cabugavan*, con lo cual era fuerza tuviese más de un palmo y dos dedos de diámetro el vacío de dicha caña, pues tienen tanto o más de ancho dichos platos. Y añadió que se admiró más en la corte de la grandeza y solidez de la dicha caña que la fineza y hermosura de la loza, con serlo tanto la de China.

A las demás cosas que se dicen de estas cañas, añadiré yo una que he visto no pocas veces, y es que, de estas cañas que llamamos *cabugavan*, estando de mediana sazón, ni muy duras ni muy verdes, que ellos llaman *palasaiavan*, se saca de cada cañuto, quitándole el cancho con suavidad, un pliego de papel entero y redondo; de modo que, cortándole por el un lado, queda de la medida de un pliego grande de papel, más o menos, según es grueso el cañuto.

Yo he escrito acá no pocas veces en él, y recibido billetes¹⁵ de otros Padres que nos escribíamos con dicho papel. Y sólo tiene de malo (si es malo y no mayor bondad) el ser tan liso y terso como el papel bruñado, de modo que caduqueaban las letras si la tinta no era muy buena; y de estas telas, que llaman los indios *holbo*, dicen se hacen en la Gran China un género de papel muy fuerte, que acá llamamos de bejuquillo.

Lo cierto es que de la dicha tela se pudiera hacer, sin más diligencias, muy bien de una pieza las linternas redondas que en España se usan de papel, o de lienzo, que acá se pudieran, dejándola los dos

¹⁴ *Cañutos*; *ñudos*. Alcina always writes *cañuto*, with 'ñ' and *ñudos*, also with 'ñ', not *canuto* and *nudo*, as we have today in Spanish. We will spell it as Alcina has it, to give the usage of Alcina's time. (In my region of Burgos, Aranda, Caleruega, as in some other regions of Spain, when we were little children, following always our elders, we used to pronounce 'cañuto' and 'ñudo'. Only when later on we were introduced to "perfect" Spanish were we corrected and told to pronounce 'canuto' and 'nudo', without the 'ñ'). The use of the 'ñ' shows better the origin of the word *canuto* and *nudo* as they come from *caño* and from the Latin *innodare*, respectively.

¹⁵ *Billete*. A small little written note. Short letter. Perhaps the word *billete*

strong sharp spines, like the claw of a cat. Although this one commonly does not become longer or larger than the one above, in certain instances it exceeds it, depending on the land and islands. In some places this kind is better and in others, the other.

One of our Brothers told me (so as to realize the size of these bamboo segments) that he carried to the court of Madrid, from these islands, two dozen fine plates from China in a section of this *cabugavan* bamboo. For this it was necessary that the hollow opening of the bamboo should be more than a *palmo* and two fingers¹⁶ in diameter; these plates are this size or greater in diameter. He added that the size and strength of this bamboo was more admired in the court than the fineness and beauty of the glazed pottery, though the pottery of China is so beautiful.

From the many good things that are related of these bamboos which we call *cabugavan* I will add one that I have seen many times. And it is this, when they are growing and are neither very ripe nor very green and which they call them *palasaiavan*, they take from each bamboo section a sheet of paper whole and circular by peeling off the hull with skill. By means of cutting through it down the side there remains from the center a large piece of paper, greater or smaller depending on the girth of the bamboo section.

I have written on this paper many times and I have received little notices in them from other Fathers, since we use that paper for writing. It has one bad feature (if it is bad at all and not a greater good) in that it is very smooth and terse, as if it were polished. So much so that the letters rub off if the ink is not very good. Out of these membranes, which the natives call *holbo*¹⁷ it is said that in China they make a very strong kind of paper which we call here little rattan.

In fact, from this membrane there can be made, very well and without great effort from a single piece, the round lanterns which in Spain are made from paper or linen. Here they can be made, leaving

for the paper money comes precisely from the use of small paper bills to relay short messages.

¹⁶ *Finger* (sp. *Dedos*). From the Latin *digitus*, finger. A measure of longitude equivalent to the twelve part of a *palmo*, not even 17 milimeters (*Diccionario de la lengua española, h-zuzón*, 446).

¹⁷ *Holbo*. Skin, film or thin layer of the plant called *bacong*; the interior part of the cane (Sánchez, *op.cit.*, 155, Bisayan Part).

ñudos (que ya yo lo he probado) arriba y abajo hacerse enteras, sin juntarlas ni pegarlas, y quedaran linterna y caja toda de una pieza. Sólo tiene en contrario que con la luz se encoje la dicha tela, y arruga, y más si es grande la candela que se mete dentro, que también lo he probado yo, y puede servir con ese cuidado con la luz.

A la tercera especie de las cañas llaman con el nombre genérico de *cauaian*. Imitan éstas a las pasadas en lo grueso y largo; sólo que es género de poca dura y se carcome luego, si no es cogiéndolas o cortándolas en el mes de abril, que es acá la primavera, y llaman *cagdarapdap*,¹⁸ por florecer entonces el palo llamado *dapdap*,¹⁹ de que tratamos arriba. Porque en este tiempo están según su calidad más sazonadas que antes, y después no tanto, y así las entra carcoma y gorgojo, que las gasta en breve.

Diré lo que he notado en esta especie de cañas, y no me han sabido dar razón de ello los indios. Y es que cada cañuto, en medio, tiene uno como agujerito del tamaño de la punta del dedo meñique. Esto sin falta, y aunque, creciendo la caña se cierra de modo que no se sale el agua que dentro se pone (pues ellas son los cántaros de esta tierra más ordinarios, y para cargar cinco o seis cañutos llenos de agua, son menester buenas fuerzas) dicen los indios que es gusano que les da, siendo nuevas, pero parece imposible, porque en todas y siempre y en esta especie no más. Parece que no puede ser gusano tan regular, y siempre en la mitad del cañuto, y así juzgo que para otro efecto, que no alcanzamos, la naturaleza le dio aquel como respiradero.

De lo dicho se sacará que no es difícil hacerse, como se hacen, de estas cañas tantas y tan diferentes cosas: escaleras muy altas, que un hombre muda de una parte a otra con mucha facilidad; andamios muy fuertes, como hacen acá para todas las obras; balsas en que se cargan y

¹⁸ *Cagdarapdap*. The time when the tree *dapdap* blooms. Formed with the preposition 'ca' and the reduplication of the syllable 'da/ra'.

¹⁹ *Dapdap*. Large tree with long, abundant branches and thorny trunk, broad, egg-shaped and pointed leaves. It drops the leaves during January and February, with plentiful red color flowers, ending like bunches. The fruit, that ripens in March, is black, round and long, like the cacao. The wood is light and soft. The leaves, applied to the head, calm headaches. The grated root, wrapped in a cloth,

intact the two knots (I have tried it), above and below, of one single piece, without joining or glueing them. They become a lantern and a box all in one piece. It has only the disadvantage that with the light, the membrane shrinks and wrinkles, especially if the candle placed within it is large. I have also tried this and it can be useful with this caution about the light.

The third species of bamboo is called by the generic name of *cawaian*. These resemble those above in thickness and height. However, it is a kind that lasts a short time and then the wood louse infest it, unless it is gathered or cut in the month of April, which is spring time here. They call it *cagdarapdap* because the wood called *dapdap* flowers then (which we treated above) and because at this time, according to its nature, it is more seasoned than earlier. It is less so later, so that the wood louse and the weevil enter it and quickly consume it.

I shall speak about what I have noticed concerning this species of bamboo. The natives have not been able to give me a reason for it. It is that each bamboo section, in the middle, has a kind of small hole of the size of the tip of the little finger. This is invariably the case. While the bamboo is growing, the hole closes so that water found inside does not run out. These are the ordinary pitchers of this land, and to carry five or six bamboo sections full of water requires substantial strength. The natives say that it is a worm that bores the hole when the bamboos are young, but it seems impossible because it occurs in all invariably and in this species and no other. It seems improbable that it could be a worm; the hole is always so regular and always in the middle of the bamboo section. So I judge it to be for another purpose that we do not understand; nature provided it as a breathing hole.

From what has been said it will be understood that it is not difficult to make out of it, as they do with these bamboos, very many different things. They make very tall ladders which a single person can move from one place to another with great ease; very strong scaffoldings

warmed at the fire, is used to cure the sickness called *mal de culebra* (snake sickness), applying it to the affected area. The grated bark is applied as emplaster to the belly of women suffering from menstruation. Also the root is boiled in water until it diminishes to half the size and then the water is given as a remedy to the woman who suffers from menstruation and oftentimes it is very effective. During April the tree grows some white shoots (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 107;401, Bisayan Part).

conducen infinidad de maderos muy grandes para las fábricas de casas, iglesias, naos y otras obras mayores, que de otra manera por acá costaran mucho, y con éstas cañas se hacen con facilidad y a menos costo, como se ve cada día.

No dejaré de contar aquí otro uso muy esencial de estas cañas (y que no sé lo usen otras naciones). Y es que en las embarcaciones de que usan estos naturales (que, como veremos en su lugar, son varias y de varias formas, y todas las hacían antiguamente sin clavo alguno de hierro, y hoy también en algunas partes se hace así) les ponen a los lados unos que llaman *catig*, y se hacen de tres o cuatro cañas, o de una o dos, según el porte del navío, enteras, las cuales le sirven de sostén y seguridad porque, atravesando en las embarcaciones unas llavetas o vigas que sobran de un bordo y otro, una braza poco más a menos, según el buque, y, amarrando en estas navetas otros palos rollizos y algunos torcidos, como una S, a la parte inferior donde se amarran las cañas, hacen uno como andamio o arandela, que viene a quedar a la lumbre del agua, levantando algo más las puntas de la parte de la proa (porque, al navegar, no sirvan de impedimento, como sirvieran si vinieran a quedar dentro del agua). Con ésto va el navío como contrapesado y sin balances, como topa el dicho *cate*²⁰ (que vendrá a estar distante del bordo una o dos brazas, según es la embarcación) de un lado y de otro, le sirven de escora, donde el vaivén halla arrimo.

Y aunque todo esto es *balumes*²¹ y hace más pesadas las embarcaciones, no se puede negar que es de gran seguridad, y que son muchas las embarcaciones, que, aunque se llenen de agua, no se han hundido, ni ido a pique, por estar como en balanzas, contrapesadas con dichos *cates*, con que van siempre sobre aguadas, por lo cual son muchos los que han escapado sus vidas por tener esta prevención. Y yo soy uno de ellos, que ya dos veces me he visto con la embarcación, hundida y entre dos aguas; que, a estar sin *cates*, nos hubiéramos ido a pique. De que se saca y colige el útil grande de estas cañas, y más en estos mares tan peligrosos, como veremos después.

²⁰ *Cate*. Hispanized form of *catig*. *Cates*. Pluralized and hispanized form of the same word *catig*.

²¹ *Balumes*. Vide *balumba*, *balumbo*. *Balumba*. From Latin *volumina*, plural of volume. Bundle made by putting many things together. *Balumbo*, from *balumba*. Large, bulky things; they become hindrances more because of the volume than of the weight (Cfr. *Diccionario de la lengua española, a-guzpatarra*, 169).

such as they construct here for all work; rafts in which they carry and convey a multitude of very large pieces of lumber for the construction of houses, churches, ships and other large projects, which here would cost much by any other method. With these bamboos they build with ease and at minimum cost, as one can see everyday.

I shall not neglect telling here of another very essential use for these bamboos. I do not know of any other nation who make such use of it in ships as these natives here. As we shall see in its place, these [vessels] come in various shapes and forms. In ancient times they made all of them without any iron, nails and today in some places they still do so. They place at the [vessels] sides some pieces that they call *catig*;²² these are made of three or four bamboos or else one or two, according to the burden of the vessel, and in their entirety. These serve as balance and safety, because, crossing some logs or beams in the ships, which extend beyond each side for about a *braza* in length according to the size of the ship, they fasten other round logs, some twisted into an "S" shape, to the lower part where they fasten the bamboos, making a kind of a gangplank or half port, which remains immediately above the water. The tips of the part towards the prow are somewhat raised so that they will not be a hindrance while sailing, as they would do if they came to rest in the water. As a result the vessel always sails with counterbalance and without roll, since this *catig* hits the water; it extends one or two *brazas* from one side and the other, according to the type of vessel. They serve as list and the swaying is controlled.

Even though all this makes for volume and weight in the vessels, it cannot be denied that it is a great security. Many are the ships which although filled with water have not foundered nor capsized because they were balanced as though by counterweights with these *catig*. As a result they always stay afloat and there are many persons who have escaped thereby with their lives for having this safeguard. I am one of these; twice I have found myself in a foundered ship and in the water. If we have been without *catigs* we would have drowned. From this can be seen and understood the great utility of these bamboos, especially in these very dangerous waters, as we shall see later.

²² *Catig*. Wood but more often bamboo canes put together on both sides of minor boats, above other transversal pieces, to keep the balance of the ship (Sánchez, *op.cit.*, 89, Bisayan Part). Outrigger boat.

Con estas cañas se han sacado a salvo algunos galeones de estas partes que, por hacer varado con varias ocasiones, en especial al echarlos al agua, se perdieran sin remedio, como sucedió con la nao *Nuestra Señora de Guia* (que así se llamaba) que por ser el botadero de poco hondo, encalló, y, hubiera sido sin remedio humano a no haber la multitud de estas cañas arrimadas a los bordos en las bajamares mayores, y bien atracadas con el casco, ayudándole con su liviandad en el mayor crecimiento da a las²³ aguas vivas a sobrelevarse y nadar; con que se sacó del riesgo infalible en que estaba, y con esta misma traza se han soliviado otras en varias ocasiones y de infalibles peligros que por acá son muchos.

Las cosas que se hacen de estas cañas, partidas y labradas, como listones más a menos delgados, podrían llenar muchos pliegos de papel, porque de ellas se hacen varios géneros de esteras, de cestos, de trojes para guardar arroz, y otros mil vasos necesarios y manuales para los usos domésticos y del campo.

De la Gran China se trae[n]²⁴ a Manila varias cosas curiosísimas y, entre ellas, aventadores o abanicos, de obra muy prima, que nadie dijera ser de cañas sino las conociera y supiera lo mucho para que sirven, que fuera alargarnos mucho reducirlo todo a número, pues no lo tienen sus útiles.

Vengamos al segundo género de cañas que acá son aun más en cantidad, y demás especies que llaman con nombre genérico *bagacay*, y se van allegando más a nuestras cañas de España en su tamaño y les semejan no poco, pero más en especial las que se quedan con este nombre de *bagacay*, que, aunque es genérico, constituye como en las cañas mayores su especie aparte; y, aunque se semejan mucho a nuestras cañas, son estos *bagacayes* mucho más fuertes, más sólidos, más largos, y de cañutos tres y cuatro veces más rollizos y más derechos, de modo que en algunos pies pasan de braza un cañuto solo, y sirven de sarbatanas²⁵ o pasadores²⁶ para tirar las flechecillas que por acá se usan, (que, aunque pequeñas, son fatales por traer toda hierba mortal).

²³ The sense of the Spanish text seems to be very obscure here!

²⁴ In the text *trae*.

²⁵ *Sarbatana*. Vide *Cerbatana*. From the Arabic *Zarbatana*, a tube to throw objects against birds. A tube in which pellets or other things are introduced to eject

With these bamboos they have managed to save some galleons in these regions which for various causes had run aground; especially upon filling up with water, they would have been lost without fail. This happened in the case of the ship *Nuestra Señora de Guia*, as it was called. Because the dock was too shallow it ran aground and would have been beyond human aid if it had not been for the great numbers of these bamboos tied to the sides at the lowest point of the tide and attached firmly to the hull. They aided by their lightness at the high point of the tide and gave an opportunity to the water to lift and float the vessel. Thus it was saved from the inevitable danger in which it lay. With this same contrivance others have been saved in various instances and from impending dangers, of which these are numerous.

The items made out of these bamboos, some split and fashioned like thin lathes more or less, would require many sheaves of paper to describe. From these are made various kinds of mats, baskets, containers for keeping rice and a thousand other necessary and handy containers for use in the home and in the field.

From China they bring a variety of very interesting things, among them winnowers and fans of very skillful workmanship which no one would say are from bamboos unless one might have known them and found out how useful they were. It would cause us much delay to consider all of these one by one for their uses are endless.

We now come to the second class of bamboos which here are even more plentiful and in a greater variety. They are called by the generic name of *bagacay*. They come very closely to our bamboos in Spain in size, and they resemble them a great deal, especially those that retain this name of *bagacay*. Although this is a generic name, it designates, as in the larger bamboos, its separate species. Even if these *bagacayes* resemble our bamboos very much, they are much stronger, more firm, longer and with bamboo sections three or four times bigger around and straighter, so that at the base a bamboo section is more than a *braza* in length. They are used as *cerbatanas* or crossbows in order to hurl the little arrows which they use here; even though these are small, they are fatal because they all carry a deadly poison.

them, by blowing strongly, from the other side (*Diccionario de la lengua española, aguzpatarra*, 306).

²⁶ *Pasadores*. A kind of a very pointed arrow or dart thrown with a crossbow, *op. cit.*, 1019).

Son todas estas diferencias de este *bagacay*, cuando tiernas, comestibles, como dijimos de las cañas grandes, y son mucho más socorridos para el efecto por ser su cantidad mucho mayor, y tanta que en algunas partes son bosque y maleza impenetrable,²⁷ aun a los mismos javalíes, porque los vientos recios suelen echarlos al suelo, y es imposible el romperlos y pasar.

Antes de contar sus diferencias diré en general de algunos de los útiles y usos de estos *bagacayes*:

Lo primero, sirven de armas ofensivas y defensivas, porque, sacándoles una punta (que, por ser muy sólido el cancho, aunque delgado, son fortísimas, y más, si se tuesta un poco) se usan como lanzas y picas y como *asagaias* que se tiran de lejos. Llámanlos *agus*²⁸ estos naturales, y los más advertidos llenan el último cañuto de arena, con lo cual, por llevar más peso, es más cierto el golpe y mayor.

Esta es el arma más común de los *Camucones* enemigos, que, aunque viles, rateros, cobardes y para poco, hacen muchísimo mal a estos naturales, como después veremos.

De este *bagacay* se hacen unas puntas, o púas, de varias longitudes que, clavadas bien en la tierra y sacadas las puntas de la parte superior (que llaman puyas los españoles, y los indios *suiac*) son impenetrables para los vallados y fosos, de que por acá se usa mucho, y son tan afiladas como el más aguzado cuchillo, y de suyo muy ponzoñosas,

²⁷ *Maleza impenetrable*. (Impenetrable bush). Alcina shows the impenetrability of the bamboo forests that even wild boars could not pass through. (Now we can see the precision of the denomination of "Bamboo curtain" for China and nations in Asia with Communist regimes, while for Russia and other European nations they used the words Iron Curtain).

²⁸ *Agus*. *Agus* is found in Sanchez' *Diccionario*, but not with the sense given here by Alcina. In fact, *Agus* in the Dictionary appears as a verb and means the rapid cascading flow of water in a river that is shallow and has big boulders (*op. cit.*, 10, Bisayan Part).

In Mindanao we have the province of Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur. The Agus River, in Lanao del Norte, supplies the beautiful Maria Cristina Waterfalls, today a major hydroelectric power station for the whole of Mindanao.

These are all the different qualities of this *bagacay*. When it is a new shoot, it can be eaten, as we have said of the larger bamboo and it is of much greater use for this purpose because it grows in greater abundance.²⁹ This is so great that in some parts there are useless briar patches and impenetrable woods even to the wild hogs because the strong winds throw the bamboos to the ground and it is impossible to break through them and pass.

Before relating their differences, I shall speak in general about the usefulness of these *bagacayes*.

In the first place, they serve as offensive and defensive weapons; for in bringing them to a sharp point (their husk is very firm, although thin, they are very strong and especially if scorched a bit) they are used as lances and spears, and like *asagaias*, which they throw from a distance. These natives call them *agus* and the more skillful fill the last section with sand. In this way, since they are heavier, the blow is more certain and greater.

This kind of a weapon is most common among the *Camucon*³⁰ enemy. Although they are vile thieves and cowards and for no great things, they do work great evil against these natives, as we shall see later.

From this *bagacay* they make pointed shafts of various lengths, buried in the ground, with the points fashioned on the upper portion, which become impregnable palisades and trenches for which they are frequently used here. The Spaniards call them sharp goad and the natives, *suyac*.³¹ They are filed like the sharpest knife and are themselves very poisonous, especially if they are half rotted. It is almost impossible

²⁹ The survival of the panda in China is due precisely to the abundance of fresh stems of bamboo, eatable not only by animals but also by men. The Chinese find many culinary uses for the bamboo stems, when tender.

³⁰ *Camucon*. In the history of the piratical raids against the Christian settlements during the Spanish period in the Philippines, the *Camucones* followed the trail of the raids of the Moros of Mindanao and Jolo/Sulu. They came from Northern Borneo. In the annals of the Spanish missionaries, as we see in Alcina, the *Camucones* were considered cowards and traitors but they caused terrible sufferings and losses to the natives of the Philippines.

³¹ *Suiac*. Vide *Suyac*. Thorn, sharp point ending as a cutting edge. To be wounded by a thorn or pointed sharp object (Sánchez, *op.cit.*, 320, Bisayan Part).

y más si están a medio podrir, que es casi imposible el sacarlas, porque se quiebran dentro y se quedan las astillas.

Y, para conocer la fuerza de la corteza de estos *bagacayes* y el filo tan agudo, sea que cualquiera raja les sirven [sic] a estos indios de cuchillos, de navajas y de tijeras. Con ellos cortan sus vestidos, con ellos alisan los palos, se quitan las barbas y cortan muchas cosas.

Diré lo que pasó con un indio que estaba preso y con grillos por causas graves: que habiendo alcanzado un pedazo de esta caña, aun blando y que no tenía el cancho duro, le fue sacando las cortezas *extimas*³² [sic], y retorció como un cordel grandecillo, y con él, así retorcido³³ —que por todos lados era corteza—, limó la chapeta de los grillos, que era bien grande también, y aún más presto que la lima más acerada, y, sin ser sentido, con lima sorda que dicen, cosa que, a no haberla visto muchos y haberse hallado dicho cordel cuando hizo fuga, no se creyera que podía suceder.

De lo cual se sacará con evidencia la fuerza cómo de acero de dichos *bagacayes*, que excede a todas las cañas y palos que sabemos, en lo afilado y cortante, que, a no mellarse con facilidad como corteza, y bien delgada, excediera al hierro y al acero.

Vengo a las diferencias de estos *bagacayes* que no son pocas. *Bongbong*³⁴ llaman a los más gruesos, y algunos de ellos los son tanto como las cañas grandes, y excédenles en tener los cañutos doblado más largos; y, como el cancho, o bordo, es mucho más delgado son mucho más capaces, y así suele haber cañuto de estos que no llena con dos y tal vez tres azumbres de agua.

Sirven estos para hacer varios tejidos, como de esteras, que llaman *sinico*, muy a propósito para trojes, que, por su dureza y más por lo acerado (digámoslo así, de las cortezas, en que todos son semejantes)

³² *Extimas*. In the text, this is what we read. We do not know the meaning of the word, which is not Spanish. It might simply be a misspelling. It might even be *externas*, outer bark.

³³ *Retorcido*. In the text *retorcidos*.

³⁴ *Bongbong*. Wall of wood, nipa or of any other material. The putting up to the wall. To hide behind this wall. To take shelter. Contrary wind. Put a mark in the tree as a sign of proprietary right. Mark on the trees (Sánchez, *op.cit.*, 53, Bisayan Part). None of these meanings seem to fit Alcina's sense.

to get them out of the flesh because they break off within and the splinters remain.

To understand the strength of the hull of these *bagacayes* and the sharpness of the edge, we have to say that any splinter serves these natives as knives, as folding knives and as scissors. With them they cut out their clothing; with these they smooth out their planks, take out thorns and cut many things.

I shall tell what happened in the case of a native who was a prisoner in fetters for serious causes. Having secured a piece of this cane, even though soft and which did not have a hard husk, he peeled off the external fibers and twisted them like a rather large rope. With it thus twisted and having the husk protruding on all sides he filed the metal plate of the fetters, which also was quite large and even more quickly than with a sharp file and without being found out, as with a silent file, escaped from prison. They say that had they not seen this and found the said rope when he fled, it would have been impossible to imagine how it happened.

From this one may understand with clear evidence the steel-like strength of these *bagacayes*, which surpasses all the bamboos and woods that we know on being sharp and cutting. If it were not because it can be nicked, as bark that it is, and very thin, it might surpass iron and steel in hardness.

I come to the differences of these *bagacayes*, which are not a few. The thickest they call *bongbong* and some of these are as thick as the large bamboos. They exceed them in having sections twice as long and since the hull or outer cover is much thinner they are more capacious. Thus it is usual to have a section of these bamboos that cannot be filled up with two, and perhaps three, *azumbres*³⁵ of water.

They use these for various woven articles like mats which they call *sinic*,³⁶ very useful for grain containers. Because of their durability and more because of their toughness (we may thus speak of their hulls in

³⁵ *Azumbre*. From the Arabic *at-tumm*, the eighth part of the *cántara*. A measure of capacity for liquids, composed of 4 *cuartillos* and equivalent to two liters and 16 millimeters (*Diccionario de la lengua española, a-guzpatarra*, 162).

³⁶ *Sinic*. Alcina's word *Sinico* refers to China, "from China." In fact it would mean "Chinese goods," perhaps because of the similarity to the textiles from China.

resisten a los dientes de los ratones que con dificultad los roen, costándoles sangre cuando porfían en ello.

Usámoslos los Padres para tecas,³⁷ o zejas, que llaman acá los indios *luoas*, donde se guardan las imágenes de pincel; y dentro de un cañuto caben las ordinarias y las más anchas en dos, y en los muy gruesos caben holgadamente, y, haciéndoles tapaderas que encajan en lo mismo, están defendidas de muchos infortunios que por acá se suelen padecerse, y se llevan de unas partes a otras con comodidad.

Y aunque todas las cañas sirven para cargar agua y en lugar de cántaros, éstos mejores, y de ellas ha quedado llamar *bonbones*³⁸ a las cañas aguaderas. Y fuera de ésto, en ellos traen del monte la miel de abejas que juntan, la manteca que sacan de los puercos y otros licores, cuando se ofrece.

Caragnas es otra diferencia de *bagacayes*, también grandes: *damolohan* otra; *caiari*, otra; *boos* y *lilicsan*, otra, que en lo grueso, en lo largo de los cañutos y en lo duro del cancho (aunque todas estas especies lo tienen delgado) son diferentes y por tener varios usos les acomodan diferentes nombres.

Añadiré acá un uso de estos *bacacayes*, por ser particular en algunas islas de estas de Bisayas, que es uno de los más útiles. Y éste es que sirven para techar sus casas y las nuestras y las iglesias, y, por ser extraordinario el modo, lo pongo aquí. Y es que cortan cada cañuto aparte, dejándole en lo inferior el ñudo; hienden los así cortados de alto abajo, y luego los aplastan, de modo que quedan como una tablilla delgada tan ancha como era de grueso, que a veces pasa tres y cuatro dedos de un palmo, y los más gruesos llegan a dos.

Así aplastados, los ponen unos encima de otros, porque no se vuelvan a encoger y a su natural redondo, y los asolean y secan, con que quedan como tablillas delgadas, y de estas van asentando sobre otras tiras de cañas, que ellos llaman *siac* (por henderlas de largo a largo, de

³⁷ *Teca*. From the Greek *teka*, box. A small box where things are kept, especially relics (*Diccionario de la lengua española, h-zuzon*, 129).

³⁸ *Bonbones*. A clear case of pluralizing and hispanizing a native word, in this case *bongbong*.

which all are similar) they resist the teeth of the mice who can gnaw them only with difficulty. It causes them to bleed if they persist.

We *Padres* use it for boxes or *cejas*, which the natives here call *luoas*, where they keep the painted statues. The ordinary kind fit in one bamboo section; the widest, in two; and in the largest they fit amply. By making lids which fit over them, they are protected from many misfortunes, which are the usual thing here. They may also be carried from one place to another with facility.

Even though all the bamboos are used to carry water in place of buckets, these are the best. Thus, because of this the bamboos carrying the water are called *bonbones*. Besides this they carry in them the honey of the bees which they gather in the forest, the lard which they draw from the hogs and other liquids when they can be had.

Caragnas is another kind of *bagacayes* also large; *damolohan* is another; *caiari*,³⁹ another; *boos* and *lilicsan* are still others. These in size, in the length of the sections, in the hardness of the hull (even though this is thin in the whole species) are different and because they have various uses, they accord them different names.

I shall add here one use of these *bacacayes* because it is distinctive of some of the islands of these Bisayans and is one of the most useful. This is what they use them for roofing their houses as well as ours and the churches. Because the method is unusual, I describe it here. They cut each bamboo section apart, leaving the knot at the bottom. Then having cut them from top to bottom they flatten them out so that they become like little thin slats, as wide as they had been thick, which at times is three to four fingers more than a *palmo* and the largest are nearly two.

Thus flattened out, they place one on top of the other so that they would not curl up and return to their natural shape. They dry them in the sun. Thus they remain like little thin boards. These they fit over other strips of bamboo which they call *siac*.⁴⁰ They split them from end

³⁹ *Caiari*. Vide *Caraye*. Long and thin cane (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, p. 87, Bisayan Part).

⁴⁰ *Siac*. To cut, to splinter a piece of wood or a log. A piece or a splinter of a log, or any piece of wood (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 295, Bisayan Part).

dos dedos poco más a menos de ancho) que asientan sobre los cabrios como cintas, y, poniendo la parte que tenía el ñudo en la parte superior, (aunque arrimada a dichos listones no se pueden caer) y añadiendo así a lo alto, van cubriendo sus casas, poniéndoles de cuando en cuando por arriba otro listón, pero de *bagacay*, que le llaman *lipit*, que sirve de apretar unos con otros y asegurarlos contra los listones de abajo.

Alcánzanse juntamente cinco o seis cañutos, unos encima de otros, y viene a tener la techumbre⁴¹ de grueso un jeme,⁴² poco más a menos, y queda todo el techo llano y hermoso, al modo de los techos de pizarras que se hacen en algunas partes de Europa, por quedar todas las cortezas hacia arriba y de mucha dura, pues suele durar diez y más años sin que sea necesario mudar dichos *bagacayes*, que con el tiempo y lluvias se van incorporando y conglutinando unos con otros tanto que parecen tablones sólidos, y es menester, cuando se han de mudar, cortarlos a trozos grandes, pues vienen a quedar como argamasa fuerte, sin haber otra cosa que dichos *bagacayes*. Y, después de la teja a nuestro modo, éste es el mejor, más fuerte y que dura más de los techos que por acá se hacen con hojas de varias palmas, como dijimos arriba.

Acabo este capítulo con otro género que llaman *balucahui*⁴³ en su lengua y quiere decir que arremete a ser palo y no lo es, pues es otro tercer género de cañas, tan sólidas que todas son cancho, y tan duras que no ceden a los palos recios. Tienen cañutos y ñudos como cañas, y en las hojas se les parecen a las mayores, aunque sólo dan unas podas en la punta o cogollo, y suelen ser mucho más largos por arrimarse a los árboles y trepar por ellos como el bejuco; de modo que, a mi ver, tienen de caña los cañutos, de *bagacay* la dureza, de bejuco la solidez y de palo la firmeza. Sirvenles para varios usos y duran mucho.

Al género de las cañas de Castilla se semejan acá unas que llaman *tambo*, que en todo semejan a las de allá, y en nacer en lugares húmedos, pero acá la que más crece es como el dedo pulgar, y son muy débiles y flojas, por eso de ningún provecho ni dura.

⁴¹ *Techumen* in the text.

⁴² *Jeme*. From the Latin *semis*, half. Distance from the thumb to the small finger, with the whole hand extended (*Diccionario de la lengua española*, 796).

⁴³ *Balucachui*. Vide *balocaui*. Small cane of this name. A kind of rattan (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 32, Bisayan Part).

[N.B. The words *palasaivan*, *asagaias*, *luoas*, *caragnas*, *damolohan*, *boos*, *lilicsan*, *lipit*, and *tambo* are not found in Sánchez'.]

to end and of two fingers width, more or less. They fit these over the rafters, like ribbons and placing the part which had the knot at the upper and (although joined to the rafters they cannot fall off) and building thus toward the top they cover their houses, putting on top of them from time to time another lath but of *bagacay* which they call *lipit*. This serves to fasten down one upon the other and to tighten them against the lathes below.

Thus five or six bamboo sections overlap, one on top of the other, and the roofing comes to have a thickness of about a *jeme* more or less. The entire roof becomes smooth and beautiful, in the manner of the slate roofs which are constructed in some parts of Europe. Because all the sections remain on the top and are very hard, they usually last ten or more years without the need of changing the *bagacayes*. In time the rains cause them to be fused and to stick together, one with the other, so that they appear like solid boards and it is necessary when they have to be changed to cut them into large pieces because they have become like a strong mortar without having any other material than these *bagacayes*. After the roofs made in our fashion of tiles, this is the best and strongest and lasts longer than the roofs which are made here with the leaves of various palms, as we explained above.

I shall finish this chapter with another kind which they call *balucahui* in their tongue, which is to say that it pretends to be wood, which it is not. There is another variety of bamboos so solid that the whole is a hull and so hard that they do not yield to the strong woods. They have sections and knots like the bamboos and in their leaves they resemble the largest ones, although only a few sprout from a point or heart. They are usually much taller because they fasten themselves to the trees and climb through them like the rattan. As a result, in my opinion, they have of bamboo the sections, the hardness of the *bagacay*, the strength of the rattan and the firmness of the wood. They are used for various purposes and last a long time.

There is a type of Castilian bamboo which is similar to this one here and which they call *tambo*. They are similar in all respects to those here and grow in humid places. But here the one which grows the largest is about the size of a thumb and it is very weak and flexible. For this reason it has no usefulness nor does it last.

Capítulo 29

DE LAS CAÑAS DULCES, SU VARIEDAD Y GRANDEZA, DE OTRAS PLANTAS QUE SE LES PARECEN Y DE VARIAS HORTALIZAS

Cuanta diferencia puso la naturaleza en las cañas de que hemos tratado, tanta remedó en las cañas dulces o de azúcar, que acá llaman *tobo*,¹ que en lo grueso, largo y crecido imitan a su modo a las mismas cañas, y se diferencian en varias especies, y de varios colores, y tamaños, aunque dulces todas, algo más o menos según sus especies, de que trataré en este capítulo

Y, aunque yo nací donde se hace el mejor azúcar del mundo, que es en Gandía,² cerca de la ciudad de Valencia, y las cañas de allá son muy dulces y que hacen ventaja a todas cuantas por acá hay; pero, respecto de la abundancia de acá aquello es nada: respecto del tamaño y grandor, aquellas son como pintadas, y respecto de la duración continua y sucesión con que acá se plantan siempre, aquellas son breves y que presto se acaban. Vengo a su variedad.

Pinatong llaman acá a las más gruesas; y, como entre las cañas, como dijimos, los *patones* son los mayores, así estas cañas dulces, que

¹ *Tobo*. Sugar or sweet cane. Sugar was widely cultivated during Alcina's time. Today it is one of the main products of the Philippines (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 368, Bisayan Part).

² *Gandía*, Valencia. Here we find a very important biographical note about Alcina himself. We know, of course, from other sources, that he was from Gandía; but in his whole work there are many more references to his life and land. All through his *Historia* Alcina compares plants, trees, fruits, customs in the Philippines, especially in the mission of Samar and Leyte, with his native Gandía and with

Chapter 29

CONCERNING THE SWEET CANES, THEIR VARIETY AND SIZE; OTHER PLANTS WHICH RESEMBLE THEM AND VARIOUS VEGETABLES

Whatever differences nature has placed in the bamboos we have discussed, it has reproduced just as many in the sweet canes or sugar canes which here they call *tobo*. In their thickness, length and growth, they imitate in their way these bamboos. They differ from one another in various characteristics and in the variety of colors and sizes. All are sweet, some more so, others less, according to their variety, which I shall discuss in this chapter.

Although I was born where the best sugar in the world is produced, which is in Gandia, near the City of Valencia and the sugar canes there are very sweet and they are superior to any that there are here, yet in the abundance of them here, those over there are nothing. As to size and grandeur, those are as if they were imaginary. Regarding the continued and successive times they are planted here, those over there are short-lived and quickly die off. I come now to their variety.

*Pinatong*³ is what they call here the thickest ones. As among the bamboos, as we have stated, the *patones* are the largest, so among these

the Kingdom of Castile, that most often stands for Spain. Now as he compares the sugar cane of Samar with that of his native Gandía, he gives the primacy to Gandía's in sweetness, but not in its abundance, size and durability. In relation to these aspects, Alcina says that those of Spain seemed to be painted, too small, in comparison.

³ *Pinatong*. Vide *Patong*. The infix "in" is added here to the word *patong* to signify that it is similar to, like the *patong*. *Patones*. A pluralized and hispanized form of *patong*.

llaman *pinatong*, que es decir remedan al *patong*, son las más gruesas. Hélas visto yo, sin encarecer, mayores que un brazo y casi como la garganta del pie del hombre más fornido. Lo alto a proporción, y, si no es partiendo el cañuto, o trozo, en cuatro partes o rajas, no se pueden comer, porque no cupieran, aun después de mondadas, en la boca.

Es, aunque tan grande, esta caña bastante dulce, pero tiene mucho *borujo*,⁴ o estopa, cual su cuerpo grande y grueso pide para poderse sustentar y defenderse de los vientos. Es de color verdinegro.

Pinarasan es otra diferencia, y es la más larga y casi la más dulce, a no ser algo dura. Llámamla así (que significa que es como el bejuco *parasan*, de que tratamos) pues crece sin término y dura muchos años.

Ya dije del largo de una que vi, y todas cuantas se dejaren algunos años alcanzarán y excederán al que dije (porque es género de caña que nunca echa la espiga, que las demás echan al año) sino que va creciendo siempre, y por esta causa la suelen plantar arrimada a los árboles para que se empinen en ellos y sobre ellos, pues crecen sin término, aunque siendo ya muy antiguas⁵ tienen poco jugo en el pie.

Puédese contar en esta caña dulce cuántos años tiene⁶ porque cada año comienza de nuevo a crecer si no la cortan, quedando los cañutos últimos del año antecedente más cortos en señal de que hasta allí llegó, y, comenzando de nuevo el año siguiente a crecer, lo hace de la misma manera, y siempre cuanto tiempo la dejen.

Es de color colorado claro y correosa, por la causa dicha de crecer y empinarse tanto. Es buena para hacer azúcar.

Maburuc llaman a otra de mediano porte, pero de color colorado y amarillo, a vetas cada cañuto, una veta amarilla y otra colorada. Esta

⁴ *Borujo*. Also *Burujo*. Spanish word from the Latin *voluculum*, wrapping. The mass left after the olives have been peeled off and pressed. In Alcina *borujo* is the thick, hairy wrapping, also called *estopa* (tow) that is under the skin and in between the inner juice of the sugar stem (*Diccionario de la lengua española, a-guzpatarra*, 209)

⁵ In Alcina's text *antigua*.

⁶ In Alcina's text *tienen*.

sugar canes those called *pinatong*, which is to say “they resemble the *patong*” are the thickest. I have seen them without exaggeration larger than an arm and almost like an ankle of a very corpulent man. Their height is in proportion. Unless the section of husk is split in four parts or splinters, it cannot be eaten because it cannot be sucked in the mouth even after peeling.

Even though it is so large, this sugar cane is quite sweet. But it has a great amount of pulp or fiber which its size and heaviness require in order that it may sustain and defend itself from the winds. It is greenish, black in color.

*Pinarasan*⁷ is another variety. It is the tallest and almost the sweetest but is somewhat tough. They call it thus because it resembles the rattan *parasan*, about which we have spoken and it grows endlessly and lasts many years.

I have already spoken about the length of one which I saw, and all those which are left alone for some years will equal and exceed the one I described. Because it is a kind of cane which never produces a seed shoot, such as the others produce every year, but it goes on growing perpetually. For this reason they plant it against the trees so that it may rise on them and above them, for it grows endlessly. However, when it grows very old it has little sap in the stalk.

It is possible to count in this sweet cane how many years old it is, because each year it begins to grow anew unless cut and the last cane sections from the previous year are shorter, an indication that it grew to that point. The following year, when it begins to grow again, it does so in the same manner, and thereafter for as long a time as they permit it.

It is a deep reddish color and leathery by reason of this rapid growth and towering height. It is good for making sugar.

Another kind, of a medium size, is called *maburuc*⁸ but each section is striped red and yellow; one stripe is yellow and the other is red.

⁷ *Pinarasan*. Vide *parasan*. The name of a large and long rattan (Sanchez, op. cit., 240 Bisayan Part). *Pinarasan* means like, similar to the *parasan*. The infix “in” is added to the word *parasan*.

⁸ *Maburuc*. Vide *boroc*. Sugar cane, with purple and white spots (Sánchez, op. cit., 55, Bisayan Part). *Maburuc* means that there is *boroc*, *buruc*. “Ma” is a prefix added to the word *boroc*.

especie es la más blanda (aunque no la más dulce) y, por serlo, es de la que más plantan para comer.

Y tan blanda como esta es otra que llaman *minay*,⁹ aunque es de un color solo, casi amarillo, y cañutos largos una y otra, con que se cansan menos en mondarla, porque acá ninguna de estas cañas se pueden comer sin mondar y descortezar, no como en Gandía que se descortezan o mondan por melindre no por necesidad.

*Putian*¹⁰ es la más delicada y blanca y menos dura que otras, y es la que más se parece a las cañas de allá.

*Dinay*¹¹ es otra especie que más se semeja a ésta, y ambas son de las más regaladas, aunque no tan jugosas como otras, y por eso más dulces. No son muy grandes sino medianas, y algo más delgadas que las que llaman *maburuc* o *minay*.

Sagao es la más correosa de todas, la más dura y la más dulce, y la que plantan menos por esta causa, aunque para hacer azúcar (y más con trapiches, como se muele por acá, muy diferentes que los de Gandía) es la más a propósito, por ser difícil en quebrar y tener más hebra para entrarla y sacarla por entre dos palos rollizos como dos cilindros, que son los que la muelen en los trapiches, tirados de carabaos o de vacas o caballos. Y así en esta categoría del azúcar entran otras diferencias, como son las que llaman *tinuítug* y *balug*, y otras que llaman *bugug* que la golpean primero unos pedazos con otros, para que dé el zumo (que de otra manera no la da) y, aporreada, da mucho.

Y por concluir con esta diferencias, son las siguientes: *bulilao* que es vareteada, aunque no como la *buruc* sino de color mezclado de verde, colorado y amarillo. *Salagi*, que es casi de color morado; *linuia*, porque cansa a los que la mascan por ser dura; *ata*, que es de color negro; *tanbong*,¹² su semejante; y, finalmente, *butcun sin amó* es otra especie

⁹ *Minay*. Sugar cane of this name (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 207, Bisayan Part).

¹⁰ *Putian*. Vide *Potian*. Sugar cane of this name (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 254).

¹¹ *Dinay*. Sugar cane of this name (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 111, Bisayan Part).

¹² *Tanbong*. Vide *tambong*. To attend or to go to a gathering, a meeting or banquet. Also a kind of fish with this name. None of these descriptions, however, fits the word used by Alcina (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 339, Bisayan Part).

This variety is the softest, although not the sweetest. Because of this it is the one most frequently planted for eating.

As soft as this one is another which they call *minay*, although it is almost yellow in color. Both have long cane sections so that it is less tiresome to pull off the husks. For here none of the canes can be eaten without peeling or taking off the husks, not like in Gandía where they peel or take off the husks because of mincing delicacy, not by necessity.

Putian is the most delicate and white and less hard than others. This is the one which most resembles the canes over there [in Spain].

Dinay is another kind that closely resembles this, and both are the sweetest kind. Though they are not as juicy as the others, they are for this reason sweeter. They are not large, but of medium size and somewhat thinner than those which they call *maburuc* or *minay*.

Sagao is the most leathery of all; the hardest and the sweetest. For this reason they plant less of it, yet for making sugar (and especially with the sugar mills that they use here, very different from those of Gandia) it is the most suitable, because it is difficult to break and has more fibers. For this reason it can be put in and drawn out from between two round logs, like cylinders, which are the means of grinding it in the mills turned by carabao or oxen, or horses. Likewise, in this classification of sugar cane there are other different kinds like those which they call *tinultug* and *balug* and others call *bugug*. This they beat first, one piece against another, so that it will yield its juice. Otherwise it would not do so, but having been beaten, it yields in abundance.

In concluding these different varieties, they are the following: *bulilao*, which is striped, although not like the *buruc* but with mixed colors of green, red and yellow. *Salagi* which is almost violet; *linuia* because it tires those who chew it, since it is tough; *ata*, which is black in color; *tambong* similar to it; and finally *butcon sin amó*,¹³ another

¹³ *Butcon sin amó*. This is a composed sentence. *Butcon*, the arm, or member of the body that goes from the shoulder to the extremity of the hand (Sánchez, *op.cit.*, 16, Bisayan Part). *Sin*, indefinite article used with substantive and adjectives in the genitive, accusative and ablative (*Ibid.*, 299, Bisayan Part). Since this species of sugar cane resembles the arm of a monkey (*amó*) it was called *butcon sin amó*.

que es algo chata y se parece al brazo del mono, y en el color pardisco. De modo que las especies de caña dulce, que yo he contado acá, son quince o dieciseis y algunas se me habrán pasado. ¡Tanta como ésto es su variedad!

El útil que de estas tienen estos naturales no es mucho, porque no hacen azúcar por su poco caudal, que no llega a poder comprar los adherentes e instrumentos y vasijas que para ello son menester. Y así las más de ellas gastan comiéndolas a todas horas, cuando las tienen, y muchos las tienen siempre porque las plantan muchas veces. Y, aunque en tiempo de aguas, que es el como de invierno de acá, son poco dulces por la abundancia de humor áqueo que chupan de la tierra, con todo entretienen, y más a los niños y gente menuda, que con eso se divierten y engañan la hambre.

Son, empero, de tanto sustento cuando están de sazón que muchos hombres y mujeres se pasan, en el tiempo que ellas están sazonadas, sin comer, algunos nada en algunos días y otros muy poco, que con ellas se sustentan. Y si dijera que tal vez sirven de leche para criar los niños, lo dijera con verdad, porque en un pueblo de Samar, llamado Calvigan,¹⁴ me mostró una mujer principal una hijuela suya de seis a siete años, y otro niño que tendría dos, a los cuales había sustentado y criado (como ella misma me dijo, que era mujer de verdad y de razón) con la caña dulce, unas veces exprimiéndolas en la boca, otras dándoles un poco de zumo de ellas, y la causa fue porque no la acudía la leche, como suele a las demás mujeres (ni padecía los flujos menstruos, ordinarios en ellas cuando no estaba preñada), y, por no tener con qué pagar “chichiguas” que los amantasen, los crió de esta manera, que parece cosa increíble y no lo dudo. Lo más que hacía, cuando tenía nueve o diez meses, [era] hacerles un poco de *linugua*¹⁵ [sic] con dicho zumo de la caña dulce (que

¹⁴ *Calvigan*. Vide *Calbiga*. A town in the island of Samar, today the province of Western Samar, south of the capital of the province, Catbalogan. Important center during the period of the Jesuits in Samar (1595-1768). According to Buzeta-Bravo it had a permanent priest and a *gobernadorcillo* or local mayor. It had a big, strong church, convent and town hall, all constructed of solid materials. There was an elementary school. It had a spacious and well-ventilated cemetery. Travel had to be done by sea and mail arrived from the capital irregularly.

The mountains abounded in all kinds of hard wood, wild life, bees, wax, honey and other articles. Fishing was a major trade. Agriculture was the main employment of the people, with rice, abaca, coconuts and cocoa as the principle ones (Manuel Buzeta-Felipe Bravo, *Diccionario geográfico, estadístico, histórico de las Islas Filipinas*, Madrid, 1850,

species which is somewhat flat, similar to the arm of the monkey and deep gray in color. Thus there are fifteen or sixteen varieties of sugar cane that I have counted here; some will have evade me, so great is their variety.

The use which these natives make of these canes is not very great, because they do not make sugar of them due to their meager resources, because the natives do not have enough money to be able to buy the articles and instruments and containers which are necessary for it. Thus most of the cane is used by eating it at all hours when they have it, and many have it because they plant it frequently. However, in the rainy season, which is like winter here, the canes lack sweetness because of the quantity of watery humor that they absorb from the ground. They are a diversion for all and especially for children and poor people who, by this means, occupy themselves and assuage their hunger.

They are, however, of such nourishment when they are in season that many men and women live through the period during which they are mature without eating. Some eat nothing for a number of days, and others very little. With the canes they sustain themselves, and if it should be said that perhaps they are used instead of milk for nursing children it would be the truth, because in a village of Samar called Calviga, a woman of the chief class showed me a little daughter of hers of six or seven years and another child, who was two, whom she had sustained and reared as she told me (and she was a woman of truth and good sense) with sweet cane. Sometimes she squeezed it out with her mouth, at others she gave them a little of the juice from the canes. The reason was that she did not produce milk like the other women (nor did she suffer the menstrual flow common among them when they were not pregnant) and because she did not have the money to pay for a wet nurse to give the children milk. She raised them in this manner, which seems an incredible thing, and I do not doubt it. The most that she did was, when they were nine or ten months old, to make for them a little *linugao*,

I, 463). For more information vide también the entry *Calbiga* (other spellings *Calbigan*, *Calviga*, *Caluiga*, *Calwigan*) in E.H. Blair-J.A. Robertson, *op. cit.*, LIV, 150).

¹⁵ *Linugua*. Vide *lugao*. Something with plenty of water, like rice, camote or similar things, when boiled or mixed with lime and sand to mix it with greater facility. A rice soup, very liquid, without lard and salt. Boiled liquid rice. To boil rice with abundance of liquid or water. I guess this is what *linugua* stands for. *Lugao*, still today is a most common soup dish highly appreciated by Filipinos.

es arroz cocido, muy ralo) y con eso tomaban alguna más fuerza hasta que comían.

Y, si esto es verdad, como lo es (que no dudo de ello por el abono de la persona y el mucho conocimiento que de ella y sus padres yo tenía y haberla yo casado), pueden los filósofos y médicos buscar otro sustento para las criaturas en los vientres de sus madres más limpio y más sustancial que el de la sangre menstrua, pues los hijos de esta mujer, que entonces había ya parido tres veces (no sé si después acá más) sin dicha materia los sustentó, y sin leche, los crió como consta. Y añadido que, ni para la leche que dicen se forma de ella es necesario, pues en el mismo pueblo vi yo a una mujer vieja, de más de setenta años, libre ya de semejantes “illuvies,” que criaba a sus pechos una criatura, su nieta, a la cual, por habérsela muerto la madre, para entretenerla, la aplicaba a sus pechos, y, con el uso del mamar de dicha criatura, aunque al principio sin provecho, después llamó la leche, y yo la vi (aunque no lo había querido creer cuando me lo contaron) exprimiendo ella delante de mi el pecho y sacando leche, y con ella acabó de criar a su nieto o nieta, aunque también le entretenía con caña dulce; pero la otra, aunque concibió y parió, como dijimos, jamás tuvo leche, ni poca ni mucha.

Volvamos a los otros útiles de la caña dulce. El mayor que estos indios tienen es hacer con el zumo de ellas, que hierven con una corteza de un árbol que llaman *cabaravan*¹⁶ (y les da mucha fuerza) una bebida que llaman *intus*,¹⁷ y toma el nombre de lo muy subido de punto que en su lengua se llama *itus*, que es “mermar o ir a menos con el fuego”. Es bebida regalada entre ellos y que también emborracha, aunque dulce; y, para prueba de su bondad, diré lo que yo y otros hemos experimentado tocante a esta bebida. Lllaman ellos *intus* (y los españoles la llaman con el mismo nombre, o *dequilan*, que así se llama por acá) al zumo de la caña dulce subido de punto antes que se le dé el de azúcar.

En un pueblo de Samar, llamado Palanas,¹⁸ se hace mejor que en

¹⁶ *Cabaravan*. Vide *Cabarauan*. A tree whose wood gives a pleasant smell when burned. Also a drink made by boiling the bark of the said tree. When the water has been reduced to half its content, they mix the water left with the same amount of honey. It becomes a strong drink, of a mix taste (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 72, Bisayan Part).

¹⁷ *Intus*. The juice of the sugar cane, extracted by pressing or by milling. A drink prepared by the Bisayans from the boiled juice of the sugar (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 169, Bisayan Part). *Itus* in Alcina's text.

¹⁸ *Palanas*. Vide *Paranas* (Today Wright). At the time of Alcina, a small mission

with juice of the sweet cane (this is a very thin cooked rice) and after this they took some thicker until they were eating.

If this is the truth, as it is, and I have no doubt about it because of the good reputation of the person and the long acquaintance that I had with her and her parents, having performed her marriage, then the philosophers and doctors can seek another food for the infants in the womb of their mothers cleaner and more substantial than that of the menstrual blood. For the children of this woman, who had up to that time delivered three times (I do not know if after this there were more) without this substance, were sustained, and without milk they were brought up, as is evident. I add that even the milk which they say is formed from her body is not necessary, for in the same village I saw an old woman, of more than seventy years, freed from similar effluvia who was nursing an infant, her grandchild, at her breasts because her mother died. To divert her she had placed her at her own breasts. By means of the nursing, this infant, although without effect at first, afterwards brought forth milk and I saw it (although I had not wished to believe it when they told me about it) as she pressed her breast before me to draw out the milk. With it she finished nursing her grandchild, boy or girl, although she also diverted him with sweet cane. But the other woman, although she conceived and delivered, as we have seen, never had milk in any amount whatever.

We turn to other uses of the sweet cane. The most important that these natives have is to make with its sap, which they boil with the bark of a tree they call *cabaravan* (which gives it great strength) a drink which they call *intus*. This takes its name from that which is the highest point (in their language this is called *intus* and it is to diminish or reduce the burning). It is a drink that is prized among them and also causes drunkenness, although sweet. As proof of its goodness I shall relate what I and others have experienced regarding this drink. They call it *intus* (while the Spaniards call it by the same name or *dequilan* as it is called here) which is a syrup of the sweet cane heated to the point just before it becomes sugar.

In a town of Samar called *Paranas* it is made better than in

of the Jesuits. Buzeta-Bravo say that it was a visita of Jiabong/Hiabong. The land was flat and fertile and the climate not too hot (*op. cit.*, D-Z, 393). At the beginning of the American regime it was given the name of Wright, as it is known today in honor of Governor Genral Luke Wright. In 1911 its population was 9834 people (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, map between pages 430 and 431).

ningún otro, por la calidad de la caña dulce que en aquel terruño lo es más y se sazona mejor. El modo es que, después de sacado el zumo, que lo hacen con harta facilidad entre dos palos (que por no alargar no pinto, siendo una como prensa, muy fácil y muy buena, y en que no han dado los europeos por tener instrumentos más a propósito). Este zumo lo cuecen o en *baones*,¹⁹ que son unos peroles o calderas de hierro grandes, o en ollas, también grandes.

La medida del bueno es que, de doce gantas de zumo como sale de las cañas, se saquen, cuando cocido, tres o cuatro; y de esta manera lo sacan para nosotros (que entre ellos a la mitad, no más, que llaman *sinubao*). En medio de dicha caldera, u olla, ponen un hacecillo de cortezas del árbol (que ya dijimos se llama *cabaravan*) en pie, y de allí comunica su virtud y eficacia al dicho *intus*, que, teniendo ya su punto, guardan en vasijas, aunque no llenándolas, porque hierve después, y así se les da resguardo.

Después de haber hervido y se vuelve a su ser, viene a quedar como arropé²⁰ de España y con el mismo sabor y color. Se suele guardar en tinajas buenas de China y bien tapadas. Cuanto más añejo es mejor, y se va purificando tanto que muchos (y yo he hecho la experiencia con no pocos) piensan que es vino de Castilla que, como el que se trae acá, viene tan arropado, como saben los que acá le han bebido, no se diferencia de dicho *intus*. Y en una ocasion me contó una persona de todo crédito, de Manila que, habiendo por olvido dejado algunos años una tinaja de este *intus* de palmas, sacada después y dudando todos (excepto ella que se acordó lo que era) si era vino de Castilla, se hizo la prueba, y, para ella, sacando tres frascos, uno de vino de Castilla y bueno, otro de vino de champurrado con el de cocos, y adobado, que se tiene por igual sino mejor por acá, y otro de este *intus* de palmas, para que se escogiese y calificase cuál era el más puro de Castilla y mejor, todos los que probaron, y los más gente granada y de España, dieron un voto al dicho *intus*, con no tener mezcla chica ni grande sino como en dicho pueblo se hace, y, curado con

¹⁹ *Baones*. Hispanized and pluralized form of *baong*. *Baong*: big, large cauldron. (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 36, Bisayan Part).

²⁰ *Arrope*. From the Arabic *ar-rubb*. The juice of boiled fruits. Boiled 'wine' until it becomes like syrup, in which some part of squash or other fruits may have been placed (*Diccionario de la lengua española, a-guzpatarra*, 132).

any other because of the quality of the sweet cane, which in that soil grows more plentiful and ripens better. The process is that, after drawing off the juice which they do with complete ease between two boards (I shall not paint this so as not to prolong all this; but they are like a press, very easy and very good, and which the Europeans have not taken over because they have better machines) they boil this juice either in *baones* (which are kind of kettles or large metal cauldrons) or in large pots.

The proportion of the useful content is that from twelve *gantas*²¹ of juice as it comes from the canes, they drive three or four when it is boiled. In this fashion they produce it for us. Among themselves no more than half way, which they call *sinubao*. In the middle of each kettle or pot they place a standing bunch of the bark of the tree (which we have said they call *cabaravan*). From then on it communicates its goodness and efficacy to the said *intus*. When this reaches the desired state, they store it in jars, although they do not fill them, because it ferments later and thus they are protected.

After having fermented, it returns to its nominal state and comes to be like boiled new wine of Spain, with the same taste and color. It is ordinarily kept in good earthen jars from China, well covered. The older it is the better and it continues to purify itself so much that many (and I have verified the fact with many) think that it is wine from Spain which does not differ from this *intus* because that which is brought here is very syrupy, as those who have drunk it here know. On one occasion a very reliable person of Manila told me that she had, through forgetfulness, overlooked a jar of this *intus* of palms for many years. Afterwards it was brought out and everyone was doubtful (except she who remembered what it was) whether it was Castilian wine and they arranged to try it. Three flasks were drawn by her, one of Castilian wine and good, another mixed with that of coco and reinforced, which is regarded as equally good if not better here, and another of *intus* of palms. They were to select and verify which was the completely pure wine of Castile and the better. All tried them and most of these, who were distinguished gentlemen of Spain, gave a vote to this *intus* that had not been mixed with anything great or small, but just as it is made in this town and cured with the

²¹ *Gantas*. Measure for liquids in the Philippines, equal to three liters (*Diccionario de la lengua española, a-guzpatarra*, 677).

los años, que se habían pasado más de seis u ocho según me dijo la misma persona. Y a este modo pudiera referir otros semejantes.

De lo cual se saca la bondad de dicha bebida y los efectos, pues nadie de cuantos lo probaron (aunque había muy buenos pilotos) descubrió el bajón.

Y con esto pasemos a otras matas que acá se semejan tanto a las cañas dulces que solo la boca y el hallarlas sin jugo las diferencian. Estas se llaman *tolibao*, que nace comúnmente a las orillas de los ríos y en partes húmedas, sin diferencia en hojas, cañutos, grandor, etc. A las dichas cañas sólo les falta la dureza y son género de carrizo.

Otro hay llamado *tigbao*²² que, aunque no tan parecido, basta a engañar a muchos. Este es más pequeño y más sólido, y sirve para lo mismo que las cañas de Castilla, y, cuando se coge de sazón, no dura menos que ellas.

Talaheb es tercera especie, que en hojas, talle exterior y aun en la caña, ya cogida y cortada, apenas se distingue²³ de las dulces, quizás, por ser todas silvestres, no alcanzaron su calidad y sustancia, aunque en los accidentes y figura extrínseca se semejan.

Todos estos, que son géneros de carrizo, tienen varias funciones y útiles para estos naturales.

Y, dejando esto de menos sustancia, pongamos acá las hortalizas que son de mayor útil, y unas son como las de España en todo, otras de acá solo, y tan buenas que sirven de pasto y sustento, y aun de regalo, a los que por acá estamos, que ya que dejamos por Dios todo aquello, nos holgamos de ver lo que se le semeja, si no es lo mismo y sirve en su lugar, con más o menos semejanza, aunque en calidad pocas veces llegan a las de allá las que piden climas más fríos que es éste de estas islas, aunque algunas prueban bien y casi como allá, como veremos.

Por estar estas Islas tan cerca de la Gran China y de Japón y otros muchos reinos, participan de muchas hortalizas, fuera de las naturales

²² *Tigbao*. A very tall plant called *antistiria* in Botany (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 353, Bisayan Part).

²³ In Alcina's text *distinguen*.

years. In this case this had been done for six or eight years, as the same lady told me. In this same vein I could relate other similar instances.

From this, one may infer the excellence of this drink and its effects, for no one of those who tried it (although they were very fine connoisseurs) found any lowering of quality.

With this we will pass on to the other shrubs which here resemble very much the sweet canes. Only the taste and discovery that they are without juice makes them different. These are called *tolibao*. Ordinarily they grow on the banks of streams and in humid areas without any difference in leaves, cane sections, size, etc., from those canes except that they lack firmness and are a kind of reed grass.

There is another called *tigbao* which, although not entirely similar, is sufficiently so to deceive many. This is similar and harder; it is used the same way as those canes of Spain, and when it is gathered ripe it does not last less than them.

A third kind is the *talaheb*,²⁴ which in leaves, sprouting, external appearance and even as cane resembles the cane and after being gathered and cut, can scarcely be distinguished from the sweet canes. Perhaps because they are all wild, they did not attain the quality and substance of the sweet cane, although in the external and outward shape they do resemble them.

All these, which are a kind of reed grass, have various functions and uses for these natives.

Placing this aside as of minor importance, we shall speak here of the garden plants that are of greater use. Some are entirely like those of Spain, others from here only and they are so good that they serve as food and nourishment and even as delicacies to those of us who are here. Since we left all this for the love of God, we take delight in seeing what is in more or less similitude. In quality those that demand cooler climates than the one of these islands cannot be compared with those of Spain. Yet some do well and almost like over there, as we shall see.

Since these Islands are so near to China and Japan and many other realms, they share many garden plants besides those native to the

²⁴ *Talaheb*. Vide *talahid*. A plant of this name (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 334, Bisayan Part).

de la tierra, y de las traídas de Nueva España; y así hay un conjunto más vario que en otras partes: y, como de suyo son tan fértiles, todo cuanto se planta se logra, aunque en unas partes mejor que en otras.

Las calabazas, que son tan ordinarias en todas partes, acá lo son muchas más, porque se hallan (aunque no grandes como en España las coloradas e invernizas) algunas que se les quieren parecer en lo grande, redondo o chato, y en el color verdisco y en todas las calidades que allá. Y, fuera de eso hay variedad de especies, todas buenas, porque las hay largas y casi blancas la corteza y la carne amarilla, que son muy sabrosas. Háylas ovadas y pecosas y de mediano tamaño que, asadas, son muy dulces, y se puede decir de ellas que sirven de pan y de condumio y sustentan bien, pues muchos de estos naturales, en algunas partes, se pasan con solas ellas, y, cuando mucho, con algún pescadillo, muchos días; de modo que de las calabazas coloradas, las que yo he contado, son cinco o seis diferencias, todas buenas.

De las blancas hay también variedad. Hállanse acá las ordinarias de España, y totalmente como aquellas; otras mucho más largas y de color más verde, y algunas lo son tanto que yo las he visto de casi braza y media de largo, y es necesario hacerlas los andamios, en que se extienden, mucho más altos, porque si no arrastran por el suelo. Otra prueba hice yo en este género, y fue que cada día se le quitaba un pedazo para la olla, y duró muchos días sin acedar ni gastarse, antes iba creciendo siempre.

Tercera especie es de otras, que llaman *condol*²⁵ o *tabiayon*.²⁶ Es su carne más sólida, el color muy verde, aunque cría una tez que las pone blancas, como si las hubieran dado con harina. Sirven para muchos guisados y para conserva es mejor que otras. Es género traído de China a estas Islas y suelen ser mucho mayores algunas que los melones de España, aunque en lo largo comúnmente imitan a las calabazas.

Tabaiag llaman acá los naturales a las que se endurecen, y sirven para vino y otros ministerios semejantes. Esta especie no se puede comer, siendo verde, porque amarga mucho, pero es la cáscara tan sólida y no sé si diga más, como las vinaderas de España. Y las hay por acá muy

²⁵ *Condol*. A squash of this name. The skin is hard and the flower yellow. Its flesh is eaten boiled and it can be made into preserves (Sánchez, *op.cit.*, 93, Bisayan Part).

²⁶ *Tabiayon (tabiyaiong)*. Vide *tabayayong*. A kind of small and wild squash.

soil and those brought from New Spain. Thus there is an accumulation more varied than in other places. Since it is naturally so fertile here, everything that is planted matures, although in some places better than others.

The squashes (gourds) which are so common in all places are more plentiful here, for there are found (although the red and the winter variety are not large as in Spain) some which appear somewhat like them in size, round or flat and light-green in color and in all qualities like those over there. Besides these, there is a variety of kinds, all good. There are the long ones and with skin almost white, the flesh yellow, which are very delicious. There are rounded and speckled ones of medium size which are very sweet when roasted. One can say of them that they serve as bread and meat and are very sustaining. Many of these natives in some places get along for many days with only these, and at best with some little fish. Thus, of the red squash that I have counted, there are five or six different varieties, all good.

There is also a variety of the white ones. The ordinary ones of Spain are found here and exactly like them; others much longer and of a greener color. Some are so long that I have seen them almost an arm and a half in length. It is necessary to make trellises for them in which they extend themselves much higher, because otherwise they would creep along the ground. I made another observation about this variety; it was that each day a piece was cut off for the pot and it lasted for many days without becoming acid or rotten; rather it went on growing always.

A third kind is what is called *condol* or *tabiyaion*. Its flesh is more solid, its color very green, although it grows a skin which becomes white as if it were sprinkled with flour. It is used for many stews, and for preserves it is better than others. It is a variety brought from China to these islands and some are ordinarily much better than the melons of Spain, even though by and large they look like gourds.

Tabaiag is what the natives call these that are hardened and are used for wine containers and other similar purposes. These species cannot be eaten while green because it is very bitter, but its shell is as solid, even I would dare say more than the *vinaderas* of Spain. They are

It is not eatable (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 321, Bisayan Part). This description does not fit well with Alcina's meaning.

grandes, y de varias hechuras y formas, unas redondas, otras chatas, otras ovadas y algunas con sus cuellos largos, y les sirven para varios ministerios a estos naturales, y entre otros para guardar sus semillas, que, colgándolas al humo dentro de ellas, las conservan de la humedad.

Hay otras también muy pequeñas y de corteza tan sólida que sirven acá ordinariamente de ventosas²⁷ en lugar de las de vidrio y con el mismo efecto. Y solemos tener los Padres cantidad de estas ventosas de calabazillas para prestarles en sus necesidades, porque su providencia muchas veces no llega a tanto.

De pepinos y cohombros hay tanta variedad como de calabazas, porque, además de los pecosos de España, que los tenían acá y llaman *tibor*,²⁸ hay tres o cuatro diferencias traídas de China y de otras partes, todas buenas y que en sabor se parecen.

Daré cuenta de una especie (a mi ver traída de China, por lo particular). La hoja es muy semejante a la que llaman balsamina, y tan medicinal como ella. La fruta suele ser mayor que nuestros pepinos o igual a ellos; pecosa también, pero no pecas redondas sino larguillas y que se van asiendo unas a otras. Es algo amargo cuando verde. Cocido se le quita el amargor. Y es tan medicinal que en las enfermedades de más riesgo suelen por acá (enseñados de los chinos, sin duda) echar uno de estos pepinos en la olla, con una gallina, y vino en lugar de agua, y con ella, y beben del dicho caldo, que dicen es de mucha sustancia y quita calenturas, o fiebres malignas, empachos o ahítos, quebrantahuesos y otros dolores, y las alaban mucho los chinos, que usan mucho de este remedio.

Cuando se madura este género se pone muy amarillo, y él mismo se abre en tres o cuatro partes, como una flor grande, y dentro tiene unas pepitas como de melón, pero redondas y chatas, rodeadas de una carne tan colorada y más suave que las mandrágoras de España. Es muy dulce y pectoral en particular por las mañanas. A mi me han sabido a muy dulces y sabrosas guindas todas las veces que las he comido. Y gustaba yo de plantarlas en abundancia, porque son unas enredaderas muy hermosas que trepan mucho; muy copadas y medicinales, hojas y fruta, y la flor tiene su olorcillo suave, al modo de violeta amarilla, y se le parece

²⁷ *Ventosas*. Glass container in the form of a bell or a vase. Here Alcina uses the word to signify containers, made of this special squash, that had the same use as the *ventosas* in Spain.

very large here and of various shapes and forms; some round, others flat, still others oval and some with long necks. They serve for various useful purposes to these natives. By placing the seeds inside them and hanging them to the smoke, they are preserved from humidity.

There are others also, very small, and with a shell so hard that they are used here commonly as containers in place of those of glass, and with the same effect. We the Fathers are accustomed to having a supply of these containers made from gourds in order to loan them in their necessities, because many times their foresight is lacking.

Of cucumbers and snake cucumbers there is as large a variety as of squash, because in addition to the freckled ones of Spain which they have here and called *tibor*,²⁸ there are three or four different kinds brought from China and other places, all good and similar in taste.

I shall speak about one species which in my opinion was brought from China because of its peculiarity. The leaf is similar to that which they call balsam apple and as medicinal. The fruit is usually larger than our freckled ones, or equal to them; spotted also but not with round spots but elongated ones, each one following the other. When green it is somewhat bitter; when cooked it loses the bitterness. It is so healthful that in sicknesses that are most serious, they are accustomed here (taught without doubt by the Chinese) to put one of the cucumbers in the pot with a hen and with wine in place of water, or with it. They drink this broth which they say is very nourishing and stops temperatures or malignant fevers, constipation and indigestion, bone diseases and other ailments. The Chinese praise it highly and use this remedy frequently.

When this variety ripens, it becomes very yellow. It opens up into three or four sections like a big flower. Within, it has some seeds like those of the melon but round and flat, surrounded by a flesh as red, but softer, than the mandrakes of Spain. It is very sweet and healthful to the chest especially in the mornings. To me they have tasted like very sweet and delicious cherries every time I have eaten them. I used to like to plant them in abundance because they are very beautiful variety of climbing plant which branches frequently, with dense foliage and healthful both in leaves and fruit. The flower has its mild little

²⁸ *Tibor*. Big clay vase or container from China or Japan, usually in the form of a jar, although they may have many sizes and shapes, usually decorated (*Diccionario de la española*, h-zuzon, 1306).

en la figura, aunque es cuatro veces mayor que las violetas de este color.

Los melones de acá, aunque comúnmente son mucho más pequeños (porque los de Castilla no se dan buenos, sino con semilla traída de allá, pero con ella los he cogido yo tan dulces, olorosos y grandes como en España), son de mejores calidades que los de Castilla.

Dicen que vino su semilla de Japón. Son poco mayores que el puño, aunque tal vez crecen dos y tres veces más en tierras fértiles (y de esta especie los he cogido yo poco menores que los de España). En el sabor y olor no les son inferiores, superiores sí en la calidad, y no suelen hacer mal éstos, aunque se coman muchos; y exceden en otra propiedad a los nuestros, que duran estos quince y veinte y más días sin pudrirse ni gastárseles la carne (cuando mucho se arrugan un poco) y siempre con la carne tiesa y sabrosa, que es particular calidad muy considerable.

Los indios tienen también sus melones, naturales de esta tierra, que llaman *timon*, y se parecen en el color y tamaño a los invernizos de España. Unos son verdes, otros amarillos y otros blancos, y otros con vetas de verde y amarillo; en el sabor se semejan a las “abadeas” que llaman en Castilla, y en Valencia “albudegues”,²⁹ si bien no son tan enjutos como aquellas; y a alguna especie de estas, que son los blancos, en algunas partes la he comido yo casi tan buena como los melones de Castilla; y, cogidos, se guardan muchos días, y aun meses, si no los golpean.

Produce también la tierra de suyo un género de meloncillos, que llaman *timonay* o *damurlao*, pintados. No son mayores que manzanas, pero enteros se conservan y son muy buenos. Cóménlos los indios con gusto cuando están maduros.

Las sandías, que acá llaman *candol* los indios, en Castilla “melón de agua”, y en Valencia “melo de alcher”, se dan muy bien, y tan grandes algunas como las ordinarias de España. Háylas acá de carne blanca con pepitas coloradas, y estas son más sólidas y de más meollo, aunque menos dulces. Las más son de carne muy colorada y pepitas negras,

²⁹ *Albudegues*. Vide *albudeca*. From the Arabic *al-butaija*: watermelon. A kind of a watermelon of poor quality (*Diccionario de la lengua española, a-guzpatarra*, 56).

fragrance, like the yellow violet. It resembles this in shape, although it is four times larger than the violets of this color.

The melons here, although are ordinarily much smaller than those of Castile, they are of better qualities. Those from Spain do not grow well except with seed brought from there. But with this I have gotten them as sweet, fragrant and large as in Spain.

They say that their seed came from Japan. They are a little larger than a fist, although they may grow two or three times as large in fertile soil. Of this species I have raised few smaller than those of Spain; in taste and smell, they were not inferior; definitely much superior in quality. They ordinarily do not cause sickness, even when one eats a great deal. They exceed ours in another quality; they last fifteen, twenty or more days, without becoming rotten nor the flesh deteriorating. After a time they wrinkle a bit but always retain a tender and savory flesh, which is a very special quality.

The natives also have their melons, native to this land, which they call *timon*. They resemble in color and in size to the winter variety in Spain. Some are green, others are yellow, others white and still others with green and yellow stripes. In taste they resemble the *abadeas*, as they are called in Castile and in Valencia *albudegues*. However they are not so dry as they and similar to one species of these which is white. In some places that I have eaten them they were almost as good as the melons of Spain. After picking they can be kept for many days and even months, if they are not bruised.

The land here also produces a kind of little painted melon which is called *timonay* or *damurlao*. They are no bigger than apples but when whole they are well preserved and are very good. The natives eat them with relish when they are ripe.

The watermelons which the natives here call *condol* and in Castile watermelon, and in Valencia "*melo de alcher*"³⁰ grow very well and almost as large as the ordinary ones in Spain. Here there are some with white flesh and with reddish seeds; these are harder and with more pulp, although not so sweet. The majority are of very red flesh and black seeds, like over there; with the same characteristics because they are

³⁰ *Melo de alcher*. This is the way how watermelon is called in Valencia (Spain). We must never forget that Alcina was from the kingdom of Aragon-Cataluña-Valencia and, not rarely, he gives the local names for things and objects.

como por allá y de las mismas calidades, porque son enfermizas y suelen relajar los estómagos y las barrigas a los que las comen en demasía.

Los coles acá, aunque se dan bien, y tal vez en estas islas de Bisayas (mejor que en la de Manila) con su modo de grumo duro y tieso (aunque no de mucho como en España), no dan empero semilla, sino que de los botones que echan, cortando el cogollo, se plantan y en breve crecen y sirven de lo mismo que allá, aunque acá no hay más que una especie, como las peores de allá; que las demás, con las calores de acá, no prueban tanto.

De habas, aunque las de España no dan acá, hay muchas diferencias, y todas buenas. Algunas tres veces mayores que las de allá. Y hay un género de habas (no sé si es natural o advenedizo) que tienen más de un buen palmo de largo la vaina, y dos dedos y más de ancho, y el sabor propio de habas.

Hay otras redondas y pintadas, que llaman *patani*, por ser morenas de color. Háylas totalmente negras, aunque más chatas y menores; y otra diferencia, venida de China, media entre habas y arbejas, o pésoles³¹ o bisaltos,³² que llaman en otras partes. Verdes se comen como estos, y secas como las otras, y de un modo y otro es muy gustoso condumio. Y son en dos o tres diferencias, y todas han menester andamios por crecer mucho y enredarse mucho, y duran también algunos años, que con ellos viene a hacerse el pie (que al principio es como un cordel harto delgado) mayor que el brazo, y con muchas ramas y brazos.

Acabo esto de las legumbres (que ya de los fríjoles y sus diferencias tratamos arriba) con unas habas que se dan acá, aunque silvestres, y que no las comen algunos, otros sí, y son tan anchas como la palma de la mano, y de largo una vara y más, con sus habas chatas y tan duras, cuando están maduras, que sirven de coquillos para los que usan

³¹ *Pésoles*. Vide *pésol*. From the Catalan *pésol* and this from the Latin *pisulum*. A kind of a pea (*Diccionario de la lengua española, h-zuzon*, 1052).

³² *Bisaltos*. Perhaps from the Latin *pisum sapidum*. In Aragon and Navarra pea (*guisante*) (*Diccionario de la lengua española, a-guzpatarra*, 195).

unhealthy in effect and loosen the bowels and intestines of those who eat them to excess.

The cawlfowers here, although they grow well and perhaps in these islands of the Bisayas better than in that of Manila, with their manner of coming to a hard solid head, they do not yield as much as in Spain. They never produce seeds, but from the buds that they throw out, the center is cut and planted and in a short time it grows. They are used the same way as over there, although here there is no more than one species that is like the poorer ones over there. The rest, because of the heat here, do not prove to be so good.

Concerning beans, although those from Spain do not grow here, there are many different kinds and all fine. Some are three times as large as those from there. There is one kind of bean, I do not know whether it is native or imported, that has a pod of more than a *palmo* in length and two fingers and more of width, with the usual taste of beans.

There are others that are round and mottled which they call *patani*³³ because they are brown in color. There are those that are totally black, although more flat and small. Another kind comes from China, half way between beans and vetches, either French beans or peas, as they call them in their places. When green, they are eaten like the latter and dry like the former. Either way it is a very tasty dish. There are two or three different ones and all of them need trellises because they grow so much and become entangled. They last also for some years and with time the stalk comes to be larger than the arm and with many branches and boughs. In the beginning it is somewhat like a thin string.

I shall bring to a close this part about the vegetables, for we already discussed the kidney beans and their varieties above, with some beans which grow here even in the forests. Some do not eat them, others do. They are as wide as the palm of a hand and

³³ *Patani*. An ivy plant of this name. The fruit is not eatable. (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 242, Bisayan Part). Also a kind of hen, with black flesh (*Ibidem*). The meaning of Alcina does not fit well with the kind of bean described by him, unless we were to think of the black color as the reason why this kind of black beans were called *patani*.

polvos de tabaco; tan lucidos como el azabache, aunque de color de castañas.

Llámanlas los indios *cabay*³⁴ a la vaina, y de las habas, o granos, hacen varios juguetes, como allá de nueces para los niños. Guardan en ellas oro en polvo y otras cosillas menudas, y son de varias especies, mayores o menores, aunque todas muy sólidas, y la carne a modo de castañas de España, si bien más dura y menos jugosa; pero en tiempo de necesidad se valen de ella para sustentarse.

Con ésto, dejando de propósito varias frutas que, traídas de la Nueva España acá, se dan también como en ella, en estas Islas, como son las anonas³⁵ o chirimoyas,³⁶ ates,³⁷ zapotes,³⁸ chico zapotes³⁹ y manenies, etc, de que los escritores de allá tratan como de cosas propias, sólo las guayabas⁴⁰ acá son sin comparación mejores que las de allá, por faltarles el mal olor de chiques que allá las apoca. Y las que llaman acá peruleras⁴¹ (porque vino de allá su semilla) son grandes, blancas o coloradas, dulces, y tales que se pueden comparar con las manzanas invernizas, o heladas de España, y más si están asadas. A los membrillos las comparan otros, aunque no con tanta semejanza, a mi ver.

Pasaremos a tratar de los animales, peces y aves, etc., de que nos dará noticia el siguiente Libro que las recopila. [*]

* [END OF BOOK I, PART I]

³⁴ *Cabay*. Wild eatable bean. It grows along the seashore. *Baga nalalaga na nga cabay*. It is said of the blind people, because their eyes turn white, like the *cabay* bean which becomes white when boiled (Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 72, Bisayan Part).

³⁵ *Anonas*. Vide *annonas* (Webster).

³⁶ *Chirimoyas*. Also *cherimoya* (Webster).

³⁷ *Ates*. Also *atis*. A kind of fruit of the genus *annonas*. Vide *sweetsop* (Webster).

³⁸ *Zapotes*. Also *sapote* (Webster).

³⁹ *Chico zapote*. Also *chicozapote* (Webster).

⁴⁰ *Guayabas*. Plural of *guayaba*. More commonly known as *guava*, which is an alteration of *guayaba*. (Webster).

⁴¹ *Peruleras*. Referring to Peru or things of Peru.

a *vara*⁴² in length or more, with flat pods and so hard when ripe that they are used like small coconut for those who use tobacco powder. They shine like jet although it is the color of chestnuts.

The natives call them *cabay* in the pod, and from the beans or seeds they make various toys for children, as they make over there from nuts. In them they keep gold-dust and other little things of various kinds both larger and smaller. Yet all these gourds are very solid and their flesh like the chestnuts from Spain, although harder and less juicy. But in times of necessity they use them to sustain themselves.

With this, we purposely omit fruits brought here from New Spain which grow in these islands similarly to there, as do the annoonas or cherimoyas, ates, sapotes, chicosapotes and *manenies* etc. The writers from there [Spain] treat them as indigenous. Only the guayabas from here are incomparably better than those there, because they lack the bad odor of chiques, which there lessen their value. Those which they call here Peruvian, because their seed comes from there, are large white or red; sweet and such that they can be compared with winter or frozen apples from Spain, especially if they are baked. Others compare them to quinces, although in my opinion, they are not so much alike.

We shall pass on to treat of the animals, fish, birds, etc., of which the next book will discuss them.

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October 7, 1994

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June 1, 1997

⁴² *Vara*. A measure of longitude, divided into three feet or four palms. It is almost 385 milimeters and 9 tenths. For practical reasons we can speak of a *vara* as a little less than a meter (*Diccionario de la lengua española, h-zuzon*, 1367).

N.B. Other words, like *Sagao*, *timultug*, *babug*, *bugug*, *bulilao*, *salagi*, *linuia*, *ata*, *quilan*, *sinubao*, *tolibao*, *timon*, *timonay*, *damurlao* are not found in Sanchez' *Diccionario*. On the other hand, *chichiguas*, *illuvies*, *abadeas*, *vinaderas*, *arbejas*, which seem to be Spanish words, are not found in the *Diccionario de la lengua española*. The same is true of the words *manenies* and *chiques*, which sound Hispanic-American. They might be regional words used by Alcina.

