

# **Missionary Literature in 1890: The Writings of Father Campa, O.P.**

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**Abstract:** When Spain was on the verge of losing its last colonies, the Dominicans were still carrying out very actively their missionary work in Central and Northern Luzon and trying to preach the Gospel to isolated ethnic groups reluctant to be resettled down in newly formed Christian villages. This paper presents two relatively unknown travel reports written by Father Buenaventura Campa (1852-1916), describing his journeys on foot to territories inhabited by the Ilongot and Mayoyao people. It then analyzes the missionary strategies performed to convince the natives and the “civilizational” narrative of the religious orders as well as screens the several strategies carried out by the natives in order to better avoid Spanish intrusion in their lands.

**Keywords:** *XIXth Century Philippines, Buenaventura Campa, O.P., Missionary Literature, Mayoyao, Ilongots*

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## Introduction

**D**ominican missionaries had been present in Central and Northern Luzon since the beginning of the 17th century and by the end of the 19th century, when Spain was on the verge of losing its last colonies, their missionary work was still far from being completed.<sup>1</sup> While Dominicans were successful in the conversion of the natives in the northern coastal areas along the valleys of the Chico and Magat rivers and in the planes of Ituy and Paniqui (today's Nueva Vizcaya), the task was more difficult when they had to approach the people living in the mountainous areas of Cordillera and Sierra Madre. Many attempts were made to open missions among the people living in the territory of what is today Kalinga, Apayao, and Ifugao, people who were naturally reluctant to change their lifestyle and their beliefs, unwilling to surrender their freedom. But these missions were consistently abandoned after a short period. According to the sources, the relative failure of the Dominicans to evangelize people living in the mountains was not just due to the fact that they were more war-like people and they loved their freedom more than anything else, but also because the terrain made it more difficult for the missionaries and soldiers to penetrate those areas; there was a permanent scarcity of personnel among missionaries, and when some of them were finally able to open a mission, like Father Pedro Ximénez in Fitol<sup>2</sup> or Father José Tomás Vilanova in Mayoyao,<sup>3</sup> they lived in almost complete isolation, trying to adapt and learn the customs, manners, and language of the natives, and frequently ran away when they felt that their lives were threatened.<sup>4</sup> Their missions were always in a very precarious and weak situation.

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<sup>1</sup> The best source is William H. Scott, *The Discovery of the Igorots*. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2006, although the posthumous work of Felix Keesing, *The Ethnohistory of Northern Luzon*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962, is very valuable too.

<sup>2</sup> Fitol or Fottol (today's Pudtol) is located in Apayao. His adventures have been partially narrated by Dominican chronicler Vicente de Salazar, OP, *Historia del Santísimo Rosario de Philipinas, China, y Tunking, de el Sagrado Orden de Predicadores Tercera Parte, en que se narran los sucesos de dicha provincia desde 1669, hasta el de 1700...*, (Manila: Imprenta del Colegio y Universidad de Santo Tomás, 1742), 384-397. The original account was edited and translated –with an explanatory introduction – by William Henry Scott, “Relación de la Misión de los Mandayas, 1685, hecha Fr. Pedro Jiménez,” *Philippiniana Sacra*, X, 29 (1975), 351-386.

<sup>3</sup> Pablo Fernández, OP, “The Evangelization of the Mayoyaos (1849-1855) as Reflected in the Letters of their First Apostle, Father José Tomás Vilanova, O.P.,” *Philippiniana Sacra*, XXVII, 79, (1992), pp. 117-151.

<sup>4</sup> The official chronicles of the Dominicans are the best sources. However, the reading of the historical works of Julián Malumbres, with inclusion of several archival manuscripts, is essential: *Historia de Cagayán* (1918), *Historia de Isabela* (1918) and *Historia de Nueva Vizcaya y Provincia Montañosa* (1919), all of them published by Universidad de Santo Tomás. A good survey of Malumbres's works is Marya Svetlana Y. Camacho, “Apologia I: an attempt to recover the historical memory,” in *Lumina Pandit: A Continuum*, ed. Ángel Aparicio (Miguel de Benavides Library: Manila, 2015), 123-157.

## A life in the mission

Father Campa, therefore, accepted to carry out his duties as a missionary in an area that had been proven to be not only a historical challenge for the Dominicans, but also a real risk: several missionaries (Father Lázaro, Father Rubio) had been recently killed by the natives they intended to convert, and many more had died naturally due to the hardships of living in the mountain.<sup>5</sup> An experienced missionary as Father Malumbres recommended in March 1889 the creation of a new *Comandancia-Político Militar* in Quiangan in order to provide an authority for this difficult area, and it was created three months later. Juan Alfaro, as the first Commandant of the area, was given clear instructions by Valeriano Weyler: to exercise “his authority over pagans who do not know the benefits of good government and who, even when they do, may in many cases prefer the savage independence in which they have lived and have seen their ancestors live.”<sup>6</sup>

The biography of Buenaventura Campa could sound somehow exceptional today, but he followed the normal path of anyone feeling the missionary vocation in 19th century Spain.<sup>7</sup> He was born in a small village in the mountains of southern Cantabria in 1852. He joined the convent of Santo Domingo de Ocaña in 1867 and was sent to the Philippines in 1877, a long and hard trip that in those years usually meant not to see any his family and friends any more, as in fact occurred. Campa finished his studies in the University of Santo Tomás, and, although he showed a certain aptitude as a man of letters, he devoted himself to a nomadic and almost anonymous life as a priest in the province, particularly in San Carlos de Pangasinán, Cauayan (Isabela) and Bagabag (Nueva Vizcaya). He was transferred to Diadi in 1879, a town in Nueva Vizcaya besides Lagawe and Ifugao mountains where several missionaries had been killed during that century. There, the goal was to attract people from the mountains to settle so they could be more easily converted. The following year, a letter by Campa was published in *El Correo Sino-Annamita* (CSA) in which he announced that his mission was flourishing and asked for a permission to go to Manila accompanied by some local chiefs in order to strengthen peaceful relations. He lamented, too, that many people from the mountains were coming to settle down in Diadi, but he was feeling helpless, being alone and with so much work to do. In 1881, he published another letter in CSA where he described a personal view of the three phases every mission had to pass through in order to succeed:

<sup>5</sup> A curious statistical table indicates that Mayoyao people decapitated 289 Christian people between 1830 and 1847. See Francisco Gaínza, OP, *Memoria sobre Nueva Vizcaya*. (Manila, Universidad de Santo Tomás, 1849), 21.

<sup>6</sup> William Henry Scott, *The Discovery of the Igorots*, Quezon City, New Day Publishers, 2006, pp. 281-282.

<sup>7</sup> Biographical information has been taken from Hilario Ocio, OP & Julio Neira, OP, *Misioneros Dominicanos en el Extremo Oriente*, vol. II: 1836-1940. Manila: Life Today Publications, 2000.

The missionary has to provide food [to the new settlers] during the first year, he has to provide them with tools to work, he has to teach them how to plow the land because they do not know how to do it, he has to help to build small houses for them, he has to look after their vegetable gardens, so that they feel attached to the new place and slowly forget the mountains they have abandoned.

This letter is quite interesting because it allows the reader to imagine the sufferings, hardships, and dangers missionaries had decided to face voluntarily: “In order to lead a mission among these infidels, it is necessary, apart from economic resources –the remedy for all the needs– a robust health, an unbreakable strength of will and a superhuman spirit.”<sup>8</sup> These statements show a deep sense of responsibility for the work he was carrying out: a true conviction in the necessity of the missionary presence among mountain people despite all the struggles and sacrifices.

Father Campa stayed in Diadi until 1883, when he moved to Manila to work as the administrator and librarian of the convent of Santo Domingo. However, he was sent again to the missions in 1886, this time in Echagüe (Isabela), where he stayed for eight years. It was in this period that he published his travel reports to the lands of Ilongots and Mayoyaos in *CSA*, two of the finest pieces ever written for that journal, along with the letters and researches of Father Juan Villaverde (1841-1897).<sup>9</sup> He was appointed representative of the order in Manila in 1894 and he remained in that position until he passed away in 1916.

### ***El Correo Sino-Annamita***

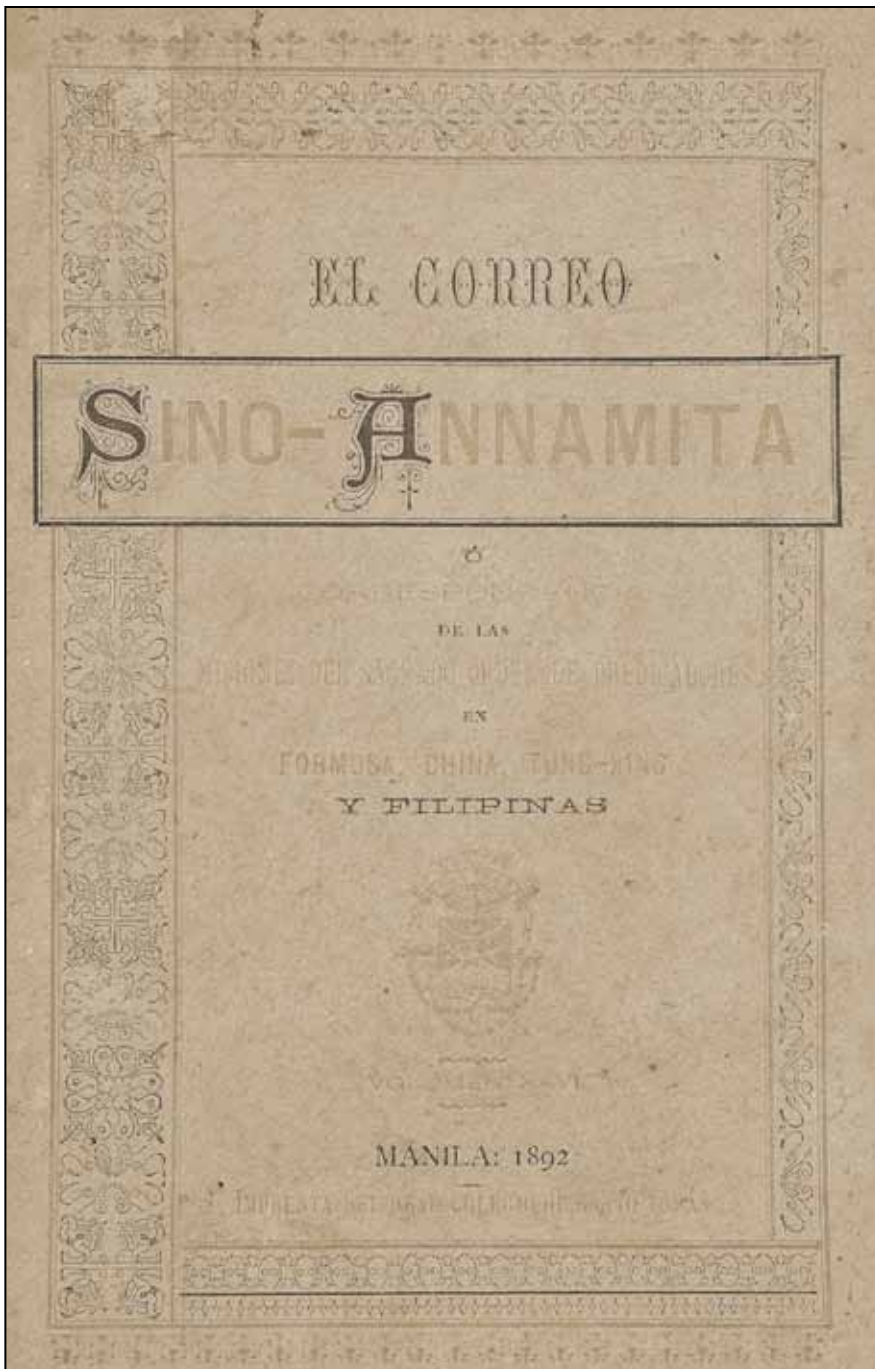
His travel to the land of Ilongots was published in the volume XXV of *El Correo Sino-Annamita* (1891) as a long appendix (pp. 561-646), including a detailed sketch of the trip, under the modest title “Una visita a las rancherías de Ilongotes,”<sup>10</sup> while his travel to Mayoyao was published in volumes XXVI (1892) and XXVII (1893) of the same publication under the title “Los Mayoyaos y la Raza Ifugao (apuntes para su estudio).”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Both quotations from *El Correo Sino-Annamita*, vol XV (1881), dated December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1880, Diadi. All translations are mine.

<sup>9</sup> See the excellent biography of Guillermo Tejón, OP. *Juan Villaverde, OP. Missionary and Road-Builders*. Manila: University of Santo Tomás, 1991.

<sup>10</sup> A parcial English translation can be found in *UST Journal of Graduate Research*, vol. 17 (2), March of 1966, pp. 67-82, under the title: “An exploratory trip to the Ilongots and the Negritos in 1891.”

<sup>11</sup> This text was published during the second semester of 1894 in the journal *La política de España en Filipinas* and republished as an independent book in Madrid in December of the same year by Wenceslao Retana. The text about the Ilongots and the book about the Mayoyao have been recently re-edited together with explanatory footnotes, a critical introduction and a bibliographical note in Buenaventura Campa: *Entre las Tribus del Luzón Central*, ed. Jorge Mojarro, Sevilla: Renacimiento, 2016.



Front page of volume XXVI of *El Correo-Sino Annamita* (Manila, 1892), where father Buenaventura Campa, OP, published the first part of "Los Mayoyaos y la raza Ifugao" [Courtesy of AUST].

Before analyzing those remarkable texts, a few words must be devoted to the publication where the field reports of Father Campa saw the light. *El Correo Sino-Annamita* began in 1866, as Dominican missionaries in Vietnam felt the need to write about the persecution they had been suffering since 1852.<sup>12</sup> It was initially intended to give information on the daily activities and adventures of the missionaries working in the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, China, and Japan in order to get public support for their missionary efforts. However, the volumes of CSA did not only contain letters dealing with missionary affairs. Rather, they covered a wide spectrum of topics: European colonial presence in South East Asia, ethnographies of indigenous peoples, political struggles, descriptions of social life in the provinces, translations of treatises, historical researches, among many others. It must be added that CSA has been neglected as a source of knowledge by most of historians and anthropologists supposing, maybe, that its contents could be purely missionary and only of interest to historians of Christianity in Asia. Missionaries, on the contrary, were exceptional witnesses and active agents in the historical events; therefore, their field reports should be known by historians working on that period.

### **Analysis of his travel writings**

The account of Campa's travel to the land of Ilongots is a report written in the first person where the events are narrated day by day after a very short introduction that deals with the origins of the Ilongot people, an ethnic group that Campa found extremely different from other Igorot people. The report finishes with a digression about the political misgovernment in the provinces and the possible places where it would be more promising to open a new mission for the Ilongots.

The text dealing with Campa's travel to the land of the Mayoyao people, divided in fourteen chapters, gives more pages to the history of the missions in Mayoyao (chapters I-VII) and a reflection on the best method to evangelize and civilize pagan tribes (chapters XII-XIV) than to the trip itself, which only takes up chapters VIII to XI.

Campa presented himself in both reports as a man with a mission, in the broadest sense of the term. He believed in his inalienable duty of saving the souls of those people for God, and of bringing them to the civilized life by becoming

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<sup>12</sup> The first volume of CSA was in fact preceded by separated volumes of compilations of letters published in 1858, 1860, 1862, 1863, and 1864. An historical survey and a commented index of the Philippine documents can be found in Jorge Mojarro Romero, "Literatura Epistolar Dominica de Filipinas en El Correo Sino-Annamita: Un Índice Comentado," *Philippiniana Sacra*, XLIX, 148 (2014), pp. 401-418.

subjects of mother Spain. Father Campa was never an arrogant and imposing leader, but a cautious one and willing to negotiate any single deal with his companions and the people he encountered along the way. He was even thankful whenever he was helped, especially by a certain Francisco Mangadap, 72 years old, who acted as an interpreter between him and the Ilongots. Campa expressed harsh criticisms towards the colonial government, since they collected taxes from the Christianized people but not from the pagan tribes, an issue that made their conversion even more difficult:

The infidel is, generally, a devoted criminal. He is an enemy of his peers and he is very harmful for society. He steals shamelessly, he kills with total impunity whenever he wants, he hampers the transit from one town to another; he is the owner of immense territories [...], whereas the Christian towns pay a bloody contribution and are taxed several times so that there is an armed force guarding the roads and defending their properties against the pillage and attacks of the savages. Is this fair? Is it at least equitable?<sup>13</sup>

Campa was equally convinced that the evangelization of the pagan peoples could be effectively carried out through peaceful means. This conviction was practiced in both expeditions, where he preferred to be accompanied by armed locals, not soldiers nor *guardias civiles*. For instance, while going to Mayoyao, already in the mountains, the expedition saw a group of Silipans passing very close by. It was Father Campa who prevented his small troop from shooting them as a revenge, since he firmly believed that nothing could be profited from the use of violence.

The most shocking fact for today's reader is the abuse of the word 'race' in the texts, something quite common among works on anthropology at the end of the 19th century. These works tended to overrate the importance of biology when describing non-Western people. Campa, therefore, believed pagan tribes are inferior races but at the same time thought that embracing the Catholic Church and a more Western lifestyle could effectively make them equal to Spaniards. In fact, Campa used the word 'race' in contexts where nowadays the word 'culture' would be more appropriate. He did not criticize the physical appearance of the Mayoyao nor Ilongot people; on the contrary, he sincerely admired their strength, endurance and skills when hunting or working the rice terraces.

Although Father Campa's point of view logically pervades the whole text, the different inhabitants of the Philippines play an essential role in both narrations. His companions during the expeditions deserve special attention. Campa chose to make the trip accompanied by a group of Moros residing in Echagüe, given that the

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<sup>13</sup> Translated from Campa, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

expedition had to be made going up through the waters of the Magat River and they were skillful handling the boats. Those Moros were consistently described as loyal, helpful, supportive and hardworking. They saved Campa's life once while he was being attacked by a crocodile, and they offered good advice while negotiating with the Negritos and Ilongots. However, there is a little anecdote that describes quite well both the problem of the simultaneous presence of a colonial religious authority and permanent interethnic wars. When Father Campa appointed his companions, these became initially reluctant and started to talk among themselves. Campa kept wondering about what the real problem was and allowed them to discuss the issue without interfering. After a while, one of those Moros approached Father Campa and said:

If you really trust us, Father, we will happily accompany you wherever, until the end of the Earth. But you know that the Ilongots are very brave and we are very few, and we are very afraid that, if something bad happens to you, we will be blamed for not having looked after you or not having defended you. People will say it was our fault. That's why we prefer that some Christians come with us.<sup>14</sup>

Both reports display a continuous dynamic of distrust among all the social groups configuring the social life of the province. It is actually Father Campa, whose many years of life in the region helped him to gain a good reputation among locals, who appears as the most reliable person. This dynamic of distrust is strong towards the Spanish soldiers and especially among the different ethnic groups, these being the Christianized Filipinos, the Negritos, the Ilongots, the Mayoyao, the Silipans, and so on, who tended to blame each other systematically every time there was a killing in the area.

A very entertaining part of the narrative deals with the accidental encounter with Aeta people along the Magat River. Father Campa did not miss the opportunity to preach to them the Gospel while trying to convince them to abandon their nomadic lifestyle. In response, the priest only got sarcastic comments and laughs. When he told them to settle in a place and work the land, one Aeta answered:

- Work? No, Father! We are Aeta, and we can't work because that's very sweaty and we would have pain in our bones, and then we get sick, and then we die. If we were indios we would work like them. Kastilas do not work either. Surely, because they would die too.

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<sup>14</sup> Translated from Campa, *op. cit.*, p. 42.



I offered myself to build their houses and clean and plow the land, and to teach them to sow and to harvest.

- No, Father, if we work and our children go to school, who is going to collect your wax for the church?<sup>15</sup>

When Campa, desperately, compared them with ravens, the Aetas reacted with laughter. The situation was such that the companions finally convinced Father Campa not to waste more time talking with the Aetas, since they were, according to them, “non rational people.”

When Father Campa arrived in the first Ilongot village –the still existing Dumabbatu–<sup>16</sup> he was not welcomed at all. The initial reaction of the villagers was one of mistrust and avoidance, especially from the men. It was only after a few days of insistence and giving presents, that he was finally able to put them together under a big tree and preached to them the Gospel with the help of a interpreter. Some Ilongots approached him afterwards and confessed that they needed basic things for everyday life, and that they were afraid to be blamed for the killing of Christians carried out by the Negritos. The Dominican did not trust them, but gave them certain tools in exchange for a promise to change their settlement to facilitate the foundation of a mission. Again, we see in this dialogue a mutual distrust in which both sides decide to behave with a certain diplomacy. A proof of this is that, before Campa left, the Ilongot men went fishing together in order to provide him food and thank him for his generosity.

Mayoyaos are depicted by Campa as a peaceful trustworthy group of people willing to have a priest live among themselves. This was not only a result of the positive experience they had enjoyed 35 years before with Father José Tomás Vilanova. It was also a strategic move in search of protection, because having a priest would allow them to live without the fear of being severely punished by the military, as they had been by General Mariano Oscáriz decades before.<sup>17</sup> Campa only made negatives remarks when it comes to certain local practices, like the abandonment of handicapped children, or their religious beliefs, which he called ‘superstitions’. However, the ethnographic chapter is a small survey of the Mayoyao people, dealing with clothing, gender roles, food, buildings, weapons, language, location of the villages, etc. Campa was guided through the Mayoyao territory by

<sup>15</sup> Translated from Campa, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>16</sup> This is the place where American anthropologist William Jones was killed in 1909.

<sup>17</sup> Francisco de Arce, *Noticias de la vida de don Francisco de Oscáriz*. Madrid: Establecimiento Tipográfico de Vicente, y Lavajos, 1864.

the gobernadorcillo, Mamigad, and he was always welcomed with joy and festivity where several pigs were roasted and abundant rice wine was served in his honor. The chief of Mayoyao expressed his concern about the attacks they were getting from the Silipans, and his will to admit a priest as long as there was not a *comandancia* of Spanish soldiers set up in the surrounding area.

### A philosophy of the missionary work

Both narratives of his expeditions do not only provide a testimony of his brave evangelical zeal and interesting outlines of ethnohistory. They also constitute two narratives about the fragility of the relations between the tireless missionaries, the peoples from the mountains who were avoiding them and the colonial misgovernment. These texts reflect, too, the honesty and the frankness of Father Campa, a man who appeared to be completely aware of the relevance of his missionary work as a philosophy of life and as a decisive vanguard of civilization. Campa wrote confidently about the positive consequences of the religious intervention and blamed ignorance for what he called the barbarism of the pagan tribes. Maybe the most outstanding feature is the possibility of finding in these reports, still at the end of 19th century, the continuity of the Lascasian<sup>18</sup> reflection towards the need for a peaceful method for the conversion of the natives and, at the same time, the conviction of the superiority of Western civilization, fully identified with Christianity, and its adoption as the only way to provide not only a divine salvation, but also a more decent, prosperous, free and human lifestyle.**PS**

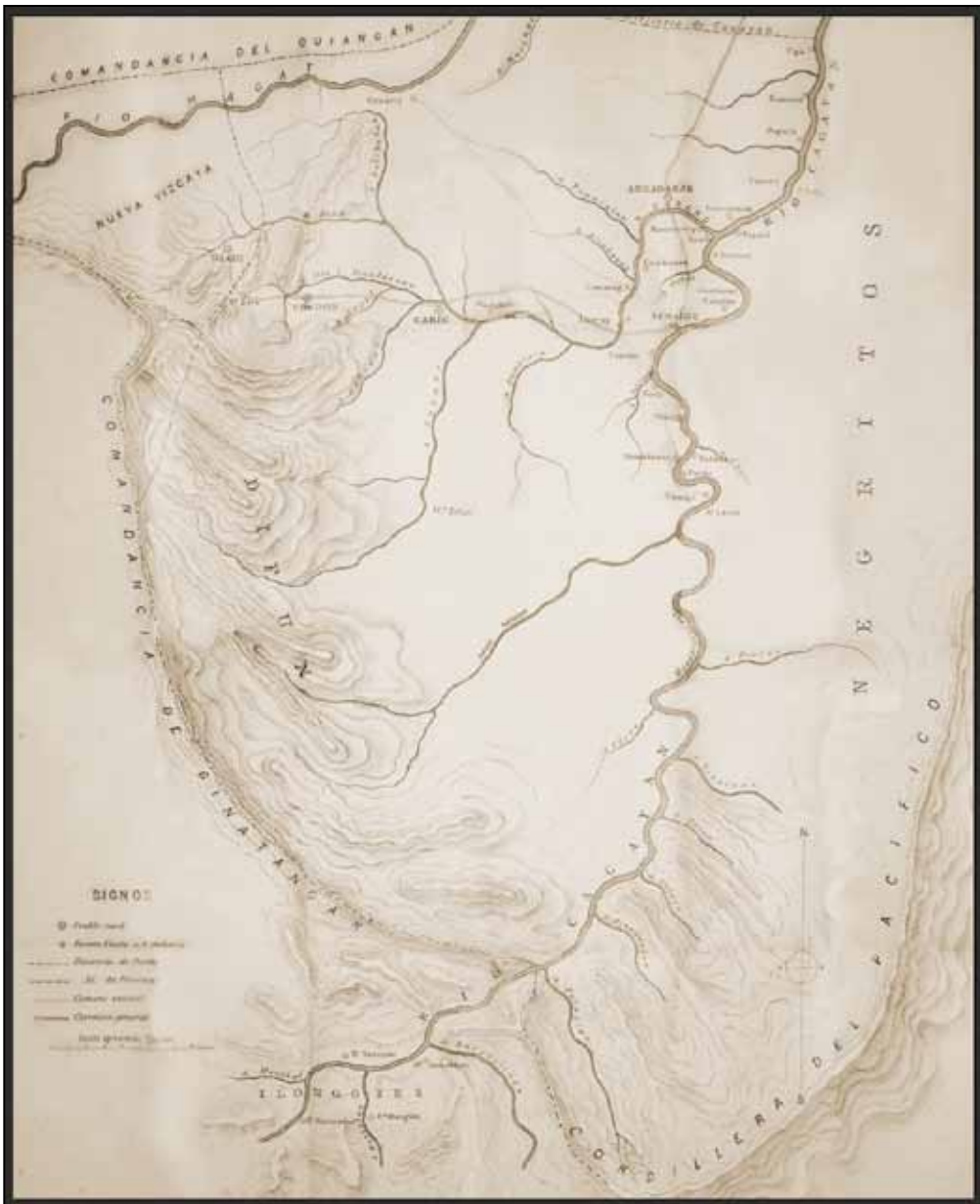
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<sup>18</sup> This adjective refers to the tireless defender of the American natives, Dominican father Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566), whose writings and ideas served as inspiration to Domingo de Salazar and Miguel de Benavides in the Philippines. See Lewis Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949.

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Detailed map authored by Father Buenaventura Campa, OP, showing the area he travelled from Echagüe to Dumabatu, where the Ilongot people lived, following the Magat river up. Folded in volume XXV of *El Correo Sino-Annamita* (Manila, 1891). [Courtesy of AUST]