

**ALCINA's *Historia de las Islas...* (1668)
[Part I, Book III, Chapter 24]**

**Concerning Other Illnesses which are Widespread
and Serious Here and about Others which are
Less so than in Other Regions**

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Capítulo 24 [y último]

De otras dolencias, que por acá son muy grandes y graves, y de otras que son menores que en otras partes

Nadie medianamente filósofo dudará que de los diferentes climas nacen diversas calidades o influjos, y de éstas que en lo sublunar tienen imperio como absoluto la diversidad de achaques, enfermedades y dolencias a que todas están expuestas, aunque no igualmente, predominando en unas partes unas más que otras, y aun en la misma unas dolencias – aun en un mismo individuo – más que otras.

Las tierras húmedas – dicen – comúnmente son malas para las dolencias de piernas, y no tanto para las de cabeza, y otras al contrario. Y así vemos en estas Islas tanta variedad y diferencia en ésto, aun en muy poca distancia, que quizás no la creerán los que no lo han visto, y lo dudarán aun oyéndolo a los experimentados.

No hablo en especial de todas, que fuera cosa larga. Trataré por remate en este capítulo, y de este Libro, de algunas que acá

Chapter 24 [and the last]

Concerning other illnesses which are widespread and serious here and about others which are less so than in other regions

No one, who is an average philosopher, can doubt that from different types of climate there spring diverse conditions or effects. Hence, from these, due to earthly influences, they seem to have an absolute control upon the multiplicity of ailments, sicknesses and diseases to which all people are exposed, although not to the same degree. In some places certain illnesses predominate over others and even in the same region and in a single individual more than in others.

The humid lands, they say, are as a rule harmful to those who have chronic illnesses in the limbs and not so much for those of the head; in others, just the opposite. So, we see in these Islands such a variety and diversity in this matter, even within very short distances. Those who have not experienced this, would not believe it. They would even doubt it if they heard it from those who did experience it.

I will not speak about them all in great detail, for it would prolong the narrative. I shall treat in this chapter, as a conclusion of this Book, some which are more common here and similar in

exceden, siendo las mismas en calidad, a las de Europa, y otras que son excedidas de las de allá que, aunque acá y allá sean cuanto al efecto las mismas, es cierto que nacen de diferentes causas por la distancia y diferencia de los temples, climas, constelaciones, influjos, vientos, serenos, vapores, etc.

Pongamos en primer lugar al asma que, como da en el pecho, le hace pagar aun a los más exceptos. Y es cierto que en estas Islas, aunque no igualmente, son pocos los que se escapan, o de asmáticos o de algún ramo de ella, que, por ser los romadizos tan ordinarios y frecuentes, ocasionados por la oposición de los vientos cálidos y fríos, que tal vez suelen correr uno tras otro, mudando extremos sin medio, vienen a hacer, casi habituales, y por el contrario toser, hacer parecer asmáticos. Y yo soy uno de ellos, a los que no lo son, sino ocasionalmente por la extension de las flemas, que se cuajan, o de las reumas que descienden de la cabeza, ocasionadas de las distints calidades de los vientos, lo cual en los asmáticos de fundamento es más continuo, más trabajoso y más peligroso.

Háylos por acá en tanto grado que suelen perder el resuello, y algunas veces morir de repente, y más cuando revienta en sangre la tos que es casi imposible; y así no son pocos los indios e indias, en los de mayor edad más ordinariamente, que se hallan muertos por la mañana, estando sin rastro de eso cuando se echaron a dormir; que, con el fresco de la noche unas veces, y otras con el calor demasiado, se les quita la respiración y con ella la vida.

Otros hay que suelen criar piedrecillas en el pecho y echarlas después por la boca, o morir por no poderlas echar. Yo vi en un pueblo que, por las muchas neblinas que suele tener todos los días, y en tiempo de secas, y, cuando no llueve, mayores, más espesas y húmedas, de modo que suelen gotear los techos de las casas como con lluvia moderada y quedar las tablas del suelo de las casas mojadas, como si las hubieran regado la tarde antes; y por esta causa es tenido por malsano, y de verdad lo es. Y lo experimentan casi todos los Padres ministros que viven en

character to those of Europe. Also, about others which surpass those over there; although here and there, as far as their effect goes, they are the same. It is certain that they spring from various causes because of the distance and difference of climate, temperature, influence of nature, constellations, winds, evening dews, moisture, etc.

In the first place, we place asthma which, since it afflicts the chest, attacks even the most healthy. It is certain that in these Islands there are a few who escape from asthmatic afflictions or some phases of them, but not with equal severity. Head colds are common and frequent, occasioned by the contrasting hot and cold winds that may perhaps follow, one after the other, changing from one extreme to the other without moderation, causing these to be almost chronic. On the other hand, the cough makes one appear asthmatic. I am one of these. Those who are not affected, except occasionally, by the spread of the phlegm which is formed or by the dripping which comes down from the head occasioned by the different temperature of winds. This symptom in the chronically asthmatic individuals is most continuous, most troublesome and most dangerous.

There are some over here in such a state that they lose their breathing and sometimes suddenly die, especially when the coughing bursts out in blood, which is almost hopeless. Hence, there is a considerable number of natives, men and women and ordinarily among those of mature age, who are found dead in the morning and who had no indication of this possibility when they went to sleep. Because of the coolness of the night sometimes, others because of the excessive heat, their breathing stops and with it their lives.

There are others who develop little stones in the breast and expel them afterwards through the mouth or die because they are unable to eliminate them. In one town I saw that because of the heavy mists which occur every day, even heavier, in the more dense and humid dry season and when it does not rain, the roofs of the houses are accustomed to drip as though with a moderate rainfall. The planks of the floor of the house become wet as if they had been drenched the previous afternoon. For this reason, the climate is regarded as bad for the health, and in truth it is. Almost all the Fathers who live here suffer from it, and I experienced it in no

él, y yo lo experimenté no poco en este pueblo, pues había un principal cabeza de barangay, que acá llaman, que viene a ser como los condes o marqueses de España – el cual padeció mucho, y no pocos años, de asma, y tanto que no podía estar echado.

A este le apretó tanto que me lo trajeron casi muerto para que le sacramentara, aunque apenas podía pronunciar palabra. Era hombre de buena vida y que frecuentaba sacramentos, dispuesto siempre para los aprietos de tal achaque.

Este, pues, habiéndole oleado ya, con una gran tos echó una piedra que la guardaron; y él mismo, cuando mejoró me la trajo para que la viera. Era de hechura, por la parte superior, de una conchilla rayada, como lo suelen ser las conchas por la inferior, y parecía era la que estaba asida o pegada al pecho, chata toda ella, sólida, la material blanca como piedra mármol y aun más dura, del ancho de un real sencillo, de los que llaman papalotes.

Salió envuelta de un flemón, más sólido que los ordinarios. Víla, y la consideré muy bien; y, a no ser la persona tan fidedigna, su mujer, que la cogió cuando le avisó el marido que viese lo que era, de toda satisfacción, y los demás testigos domésticos no pocos, se juzgara más, quitado que no era vacía sino sólida, por concha del mar, y de las muy sólidas, que por piedra nacida y crecida en un pecho humano.

De esta manera echan otros otras vascosidades, que tal vez dicen son animalillos a modo de ranas. Todo puede ser; que no son pocos los accidentes y alteraciones a que están expuestos los humanos humores.

He oído decir, y aun he visto usar a algunos indios tocados de este mal, que es su remedio una poca de hiel de las culebras que acá llaman savas¹ (ya dijimos cómo son y cuán grandes algunas), que, sacadas del buche, se guardan colgadas al humo donde se enjugan, y de aquella materia verdinegra sacan con una aguja, o cosa semejante, tan poco, porque es amarguísima, que sólo baste a enturbiar una poca de agua clara que tienen

slight way in this town. There was a principal head of the barangay, as they are called here, who is regarded to be like a count or a marquis of Spain, who suffered greatly and for many years from asthma. He could not even lie down.

He was so seriously distressed that they brought him to me half dead to administer the sacraments, although he was scarcely able to pronounce a word. He was a man of good life and who frequented the sacraments, disposed always to the stress of such a chronic illness.

This man when he had been anointed, then with a great cough expelled a stone. They kept it and he himself, when he got better, brought it for me to see. In shape, it was like the upper part of a little streaked shell, like the shells are apt to be on the lower side. It seemed that it was this, that had been attached or fastened flatly to the chest altogether compact. The material was white like a marble stone, and even harder, of the width of a 'real sencillo' that are called 'papalotes.'

It came out enveloped in tissue that was harder than the ordinary ones. I saw it and examined it carefully. Were it not for the fact that the person, the wife as faith-worthy and she took it when the husband called her to see it, and the other family witnesses testified one might have been led to believe that it might well be a seashell, one of the very solid ones, rather than a stone formed and grown in a human chest.

In this manner others expel different kinds of phlegm which they say at times are little creatures resembling frogs. It may be so, since the accidents and changes to which the human humors are subject are not a few.

I have heard it said, and I have even seen it used by some natives afflicted with this illness, that the remedy is a little of the venom of the snakes here called sawa;¹ we have already said what they look like and how large some of them are. They take out their stomachs and preserve them by hanging them and drying them out with smoke. Then, with a needle or a similar instrument they draw a very small amount of that half-green and half-black matter (it is extremely bitter). They add just enough of it to tint the heated water a little and drink it, with good results, they say. A

caliente, y, en tomando aquel colorcillo, se la beben – dicen que con buenos efectos – y con esta bebida me dijo a mi un principal, que padecía mucho de este achaque, que descansaba, echando mucha cantidad de flemas, que suelen ser comúnmente causa del asma.

También gastan de dicha hiel por remedio contra fríos y calenturas y otras enfermedades que nacen de muchos humores. Yo la probé una vez; pero, de verdad, que sólo por el inato apetito de conservar la vida se puede tomar tal medicina.

Sí exceden por acá las asmas, a mi ver, a las de España en ser más comunes y más peligrosas. Otras enfermedades hay por acá que entre estos naturales son mucho menos frecuentes y menores que allá.

Una de estas es la del mal de orina, que, aunque por acá pocos europeos hay, de cualquier estado y calidad que sean, que se escapen de este achaque, entre los naturales es rarísimo el que le padece; sólo de uno sé que muriese de este mal, y de muy pocos que le padezcan. La causa, suelen decir que es el que beben muchos cocos verdes, que son conocidamente remedio, más para las piedras que se crían en los riñones. Otros dicen que es por que no beben el agua fría sino caliente, sirviendoles comúnmente de taza para beberla, la olla con que cocieron la morisqueta²; aunque en ésto hay variedad. Y es cierto que gustan muchos de beber agua fresca y la buscan y guardan con cuidado.

A mi ver, la mayor causa es el que trabajan comúnmente, sudan y hacen ejercicio forzoso para buscar sus vidas. Y ésto es lo que les deshace los humores que habían de cuajarse en piedra, pues aun en España a pocos hombres de trabajo se verá que aflija este mal sino es que en algunas partes, como se dice de las del Ebro, y por acá de varios ríos, las aguas sean la causa, que, siéndolo, pocos se escaparán; pero en los que trabajan, aun entonces es sin duda que serán menos los humores que las causan.

Y de que ayudan mucho las aguas no la hay, pues yo tengo por mi parte la experiencia, que habiendo padecido casi treinta años este achaque y echado muchas piedras de buen tamaño y un sínnumero de arenas, en la parte donde escribo ésto, que ha un año que vivo en ella, por la bondad y delicadeza de las aguas

principal told me that he suffered a great deal from such an illness, expelling a great amount of phlegm, which is commonly the cause of asthma, and then he felt relieved.

They also take advantage of the said gall against colds and fevers and other diseases that spring from the many humors. I tried once, but to tell the truth it is only because of the innate tendency of preserving one's life that one can dare take such a medicine.

In my opinion, asthmatic illnesses here do exceed those of Spain since they are more common and more serious. There are other sicknesses here that among these natives are much less frequent and serious than there.

One of these is the urinary ailment. Although there are a few Europeans here, regardless of what quality and status they may enjoy, who escape this illness, it is most rare among these natives. Very few suffer from it. The reason is, they say, that they drink fresh coconut milk which is a remedy and more so for the stones that are formed in the kidneys. Others say, that the reason is that they do not drink cold water instead warmed which is used for cooking 'morisqueta.'² However, there is a difference of opinion about this; yet it is a fact that many like to drink fresh water and look for it and keep it diligently.

For me, the greatest reason is that they perspire as they are working and are obliged to exercise to seek their livelihood. This is what dissolves the humors which would otherwise form into stones. For even in Spain it will be seen that this illness afflicts few working men, unless the waters may be the cause in some places, as it is said of those regions of the Ebro River and over here by various rivers. This being so, few could escape. However, it is beyond doubt that the humors that produce them will be less effective in those who do heavy work.

There is no doubt that water helps a lot because as far as I am concerned, experience had taught me that, after having suffered from this ailment for almost thirty years, I ejected many stones of good size and numerous particles. Here, where I am writing this and where I have lived for a year, due to the goodness and fineness of the waters and other good prevailing conditions,

y otras calidades buenas, no he sentido, aunque sí algunos rastros, reliquias de lo pasado, dolor de consideración y echado, no digo piedras, pero ni aún arenas. Tanto como ésto va en las calidades del agua y en la bondad de este elemento, tan necesario para la humana vida.

Los dolores de costado, que a tantos tiene en España en la otra vida, por acá rara vez se ven entre estos indios, ni aun entre los europeos, sino son ocasionados de excesos. Pero entran acá en su lugar los pasmos, [que] aunque estos son raros en las islas de Bisayas, en otros de este Archipiélago Filipino lo son mucho, y no pocos los que mueren de él.

Pocos dias ha, (que, cuando escribo ésto, me lo acaban de contar) en Manila, dentro de tres, murieron marido y mujer, siendo moros indios Tagalos, uno tras otro, de pasmo ambos. Y no son pocos los que este año han muerto del mismo mal en dicha ciudad, y casi todos mueren muchos, y más cuando reinan los vientos nortes, que ya en otra parte lo apuntamos por sus malas calidades; más en dicha ciudad y en sus alrededores que en otras partes.

También son en Manila más frecuentes y mayores lo que llaman mal de corazón o “gota coral,” si es que no son distintos; que, aunque es verdad que entre los indios bisayas hay algunos que padecen este achaque, que ellos llaman buntog³, que quiere decir “causa de su estado,” que conforma con el nombre que tiene en Valencia dicho mal, donde lo llaman “mal de caure.” Con todo, no he visto yo por acá los excesos de espumarajos en la boca, ímpetus y extremecimientos de todo el cuerpo, y otros que se ven por allá. Acá, cuando mucho, se caen en el suelo, y patalean algo algunos, otros nada. Algunos echan espumas, otros no, y a poco rato les pasa.

La desgracia es, y sucede no raras veces, cuando les da a los tocados de este mal cuando van embarcados, como suelen acá comúnmente los bisayas, y más si van solos, que se suelen caer al agua y ahogarse sin remedio, porque, faltándoles, como suele, el sentido por aquel rato, primero mueren que sientan.

Tampoco he visto por acá la tiña que en algunas partes de España es tan perjudicial, y más a los muchachos. Algunas veces

I have not felt, – except for some traces which are remnants of what I suffered in the past – any considerable pain nor expelled anything. Hence the importance of the quality of the water and its goodness, so necessary for human life.

Pains in one's side, which in Spain have sent so many into the other life, are rarely experienced over here among these natives; not even among the Europeans unless they are motivated by excesses. Instead, here we have convulsions; although these are rare in the Bisayas, in other parts of the Philippine Archipelago there is a lot and not a few die from it.

A few days ago, they have reported to me as I am writing this, someone died in Manila before you can count up to three; there died husband and wife, one after the other, being native Tagalog Moros, from convulsions. A considerable number have died this year in that city and environs from the same malady, especially when the prevailing winds were from the north, because of the bad nature of the winds.

Also, in Manila, there occurs very frequently and more serious what they describe as a heart disease or 'gota coral'. Perhaps, it may be that these are not distinct. However, it is true that among these Bisayan natives there are some who suffer from this ailment, which they call buntug,³ which is to say the reason for your situation. It conforms with the name as in Valencia where such an ailment is known and where they call it 'mal de caure'. All in all, I have not seen here the excessive frothing at the mouth, the fits, the convulsions of the whole body and other symptoms which are seen over there. Here, at times some fall to the ground and at times kick about, others do not. Some foam at the mouth, others do not and in short while the illness leaves them.

The regrettable thing about this is, and it happens not rarely, that when they are overcome by this attack while aboard the vessels, as these Bisayans ordinarily travel, especially if they are alone, they fall into the water and drown helplessly. Since they are unconscious for a while, as the case is, they first die rather than regain consciousness.

I have never seen a ringworm here, which in many parts of Spain is a painful disease especially among the boys. Sometimes I

me he acordado de ésto, y la falta de este tan pegajoso mal por acá lo atribuyo a las gomas, o buti⁴, que ya dijimos padecen todos comúnmente cuanto niños, que debe ser el desague de los humores viscosos que allá la crían, pues acá por ser los calores tanto mayores que allá, parece había de ser más, como lo es la sarna, fruta muy ordinaria de estos indios, que raro es el que está sin ella de todas edades y sexos, y algunos cargados de la que llaman “perruna⁵,” que se quita con mucha dificultad y se pega con muy poca; y a la causa suelen estar llenas algunas casas de este mal entretenido, pues lo que tiene de penoso parece se suelda o paga con el gusto, que, como suelen decir, causa el rascarse.

Y en estos naturales, aunque se bañan mucho y muy ordinariamente, la falta de ropa, que mudarse juzgo que es la causa de estar más expuestos a estas y semejantes sabandijas, y más si es verdad lo que ellos dicen que son unos animalillos muy pequeños que se crían intercutáneos, y a estos llaman cagao⁶, y causa de la sarna. Y suelen ellos sacarlos cuando comienza, y con esto la atajan.

Una enfermedad, o contagio, hay nuevo entre estos bisayas, después acá que yo vivo entre ellos, y es una o lepra, o empeines que se le semejan; “cascado,” que llaman los españoles y los indios pintados; que, aunque en su antigüedad tuvieron ellos, y tienen, muchos empeines de los que llaman ellos boni⁷, y es ordinario por acá aun en los europeos, y en algunas partes más, que les cogen a no pocos lo más del cuerpo, pero no tenían este “cascado”; pues, a lo que yo reparé la primera vez que lo ví en estas islas de Bisayas fue el año de 63⁸ [sic] que había ya cuatro años que yo estaba en ellos, y se trajo de allende de las islas de Catanduanes⁹, donde dicen que todos en común lo son, hombre y mujeres.

Este es un género de lepra, aunque no tan asqueroso como la lepra verdadera, que vuelve blanco y como escamoso el cuerpo donde da; y, aunque comienza con poco y tal vez, según dicen, de solo el viento que pasó por uno que lo tenga y dió luego en otro que estaba sin él (aunque como veremos más es menester que ésto), cunde por todo el cuerpo; y, cuando ya está todo el cuerpo cubierto de este género de empeine, suele quitarse total-

have remembered this, and attribute the absence of this contagious disease over here to the gomias or buti,⁴ with which they call, as a rule, are afflicted in their childhood, that is due to the lesion of the viscous fluids which foster it over there. Here, since the heat is so much greater than over there, it seems there ought to be more, as there is of the scabies a very common affliction of these natives. Rare is an individual of any age or sex who escapes this. Some are infected by what they call canine⁵ scabies which is contracted readily but cured with great difficulty. Truly, some houses seem to be full of this 'funny' evil which causes so much discomfort and which seems to bring some relief by scratching the itch.

Among these natives, although they often bathe, I judge that their lack of change in clothing is the reason for their being more exposed to these and similar microscopic creatures that thrive beneath the epidermis. Such are called by them kagaw,⁶ and are the cause of scabies. They pluck these out at the start and thus prevent it.

There is an illness or a contagion that is new among these Bisayans since I have been living among them. It is a kind of leprosy or empeines which resembles it. The Spaniards and even the native Pintados call it cascado. For, although in their ancient times they had and still have many empeines of those they call buni⁷, this is a frequent occurrence here and even among the Europeans; in some regions even more so. Not a few of them are afflicted all over the body, yet it was not cascado. I first noticed it in these Islands in the year 63 [sic]⁸, I had been among them four years. It was brought from the other side, from Catanduanes Islands⁹ where they say all, both men and women, are infected.

This is a type of leprosy but not as loathsome as the true leprosy which turns white and is scaly where it breaks out. However, it begins slowly and perhaps, as they say, is carried by the air which has passed over one who has it, and infected another who did not have it (however, we shall see that more is necessary than this) and spreads over the whole body. When the entire body is covered with this, the flesh drops off and grows new again, as if it had never had such affliction. I have seen a number of these;

mente y renovarse el pellejo de nuevo, como si tal cosa no hubiera tenido. Y de estos he visto yo algunos. Pero lo más común es que, habiendo corrido todo el cuerpo, suele abrir grietas, por donde sale un humor malísimo y amarillo, y, en siendo muchas las aberturas, suelen morir. Y a la primera persona que yo ví con este mal y lo traje, como dije, de allende, y lo fue pegando a muchos otros, la enterré yo después de más de dos años, toda hinchada y llena de aberturas; tan hedionda que, aun cuando la sacramenté, parecía estar por la hediondez muerta.

Ha cundido tanto este contagio después acá que en los primeros pueblos donde yo estuve a los principios, sin que hubiese uno tan sólo con esta plaga, después de algunos años, volviendo a ellos o de asiento o de paso, reparaba que de las tres partes de los hombres y mujeres estaba más de la una tocada de él, y en algunos más de la mitad, y en algunos reparé con admiración; de donde se saca que, para pegarse, es menester disposición; que solía ser el marido “cascado” totalmente y la mujer nada, y en otros al revés. Y teniendo tres o cuatro o hijos, unos estaban totalmente limpios y otros totalmente “cascados”; que, viviendo, como viven estos y durmiendo como duermen, a montón, y cuando no, prestando la hermana al hermano la manta con que duerme, y la madre a los hijos, es mucho. Con todo vemos que a algunos no se les pega, y a otros sí, con grandísima facilidad, de donde se colige que obra según las disposiciones.

Muchos remedios se han probado para este mal, y ya hoy está tan cundido en estas Islas que le juzgo sin él. Algunos apunté ya en otro lugar, que lo atajan a los principios de los totalmente manchados; si rio es, como dije ya, que suele caerse y acabarse quizás porque se consumió el humor que lo causaba, no he visto a alguno que por remedios cure, aunque se han probado algunos bien ásperos y terribles, pero casi siempre en valde.

Acabemos con otras plagas, que es género de enfermedad de la tierra, de chinches, pulgas, piojos, mosquitos etc., que tanto cunde en casi todas las partes del mundo y en algunas con exceso muy penoso e irremediable.

but the most common is that when it has covered the entire body, flesh breaks open and through it issues the most foul yellow fluid. When the fissures become numerous such persons usually die. The first person that I saw with this disease had brought it from the other side, as I have said, and he was infecting many others. I buried him after more than two years, all swollen and full of lesions, so fetid that even when I gave him the sacraments, he seemed to be dead by reason of the stench.

This contagion has spread so much since then, that in the towns where I first stayed at the beginning, although there was not one with this plague, after some years when I returned to them, either for a stay or in passing, I discovered a third of the men and women were infected. In some places more than a half. In some I noticed with surprise how it was acquired. From this I infer that in order to contract the disease, one must have some disposition. I also observed that the husband was totally cascado and the wife not at all; in others, just the opposite, I noticed. Thus, having three or four or more children, some of these were totally unaffected while others completely cascados. This is worth bearing in mind, that these people living as they live, and sleeping as they sleep, all grouped together; if this does not take place, then a sister lends her blanket to her brother and the mother to her children, it can be seen that some are not infected. Others, are easily infected. Hence, we may conclude that it lies in the nature of one's disposition.

Many remedies have been tried against this disease. Yet, today it is widespread in these Islands which I believe were without it. Some remedies I have noted already in another place and how they cure it at the beginning among those completely infected. However, if it is as I have already said, then it declines and ends perhaps because the fluid that caused it, drained out. I have not seen anyone who is cured by these remedies, although some have been tried that are very harsh and terrible, but almost always in vain.

Let us bring this to a conclusion by reporting other plagues which are kinds of pestilence in the land, such as bedbugs, fleas, lice, mosquitoes, etc. Yet, these are also widespread in other parts of the world and in some regions to such an extent that there seems to be no remedy.

Dos géneros de chinches hay en esta tierra; y, a lo que he oído decir del uno, lo han traído los chinos a ella, que antes no se veían o no se advertían. Las unas son como las de España, que suelen criarse en las camas y paredes, y más cuando no hay limpieza y cuidado.

Cuando yo vine a estas Islas apenas se vería chinche ninguno; después acá han cundido tanto que en algunas partes, y más donde viven sangleyes, son insufribles. En bisayas suelen criarse muchas en las casas de los indios por su flojedad y poca limpieza, y tanto que las he visto yo no pocas veces chamuscar con paja los suelos (que, por ser de cañas hendidas, son receptaculo propio para ellas) para quemarlas. En nuestras casas que hay más limpieza, son pocas y tal vez ninguna.

Hay otras que vuelan; y éstas, aunque en el olor son chinches, no sabemos que piquen, y como son de gusarapillos cierto género, que viven en el monte, no son tan ofensivas ni ordinarias.

Las pulgas, que en algunas partes de Europa son sínnumero, y acá con los calores y humedad lo habría de ser, no lo son; antes comúnmente hay pocas, y en tantos años como yo he vivido entre indios nunca he advertido exceso de ellas; sólo en las iglesias (no sé si dejadas de los que van y vienen, o si producidas en ellas del polvo) suelen sentirse en tiempo de secas algunas, aunque no con exceso; en tiempo de aguas ninguna.

Y es señal que en esta tierra no las ha habido, saltem en cantidad, pues no tienen nombre propio. Solo las llaman coto san ayam, que quiere decir “piojo de perro,” porque en ellos se ven comunmente, en la gente no tanto. Y así poco dan en qué entender estos animalejos que en otras partes son molestísimos, y en particular en Barcelona los veranos tal vez parece que cubren el suelo y no se halla lugar libre de ellas.

De los piojos suele decirse que los europeos no les crían por acá; y así es verdad en los que tienen qué mudarse y vivir con limpieza; que, en los que no, es cierto que se cargan de ellos. Entre los indios es como plaga. Raros son los que no crían muchísimos por la razón dicha: que no se mudan ropa comúnmente, y los más no tienen que mudarse.

There are two types of bedbugs in this land. And judging from what I have heard about one of them, it was brought over by the Chinese here, since before they were not seen or were not noticed. Some are just like those in Spain that usually thrive in the beds and in the walls and more so when cleanliness and diligence are lacking.

When I came to these Islands, a bedbug was scarcely ever seen. Later they propagated so much that in some places, and especially where the Sangleys live, they are impossible. In the Bisayas, they propagate in great numbers in the homes of the natives, because of their indolence and little care for neatness. I have seen them scorch the floors with straw, because these are hollow bamboos and are suitable refuge for them. In our houses, where there is greater cleanliness, they are scarce and perhaps nonexistent.

There are others that fly; although these, judging from the way they smell, are bedbugs, yet we do not know if they bite. They are a kind of gusarapillo that live in the forests and are not so aggressive nor so common.

The fleas which in some parts of Europe are so numerous and here with the heat and the humidity, would have to abound, they are not numerous. Rather, as a rule, they are few; as many years as I have lived among the natives, I have never noted an excess of them. They are found only in the churches. I do not know if they are left by those who come and go or if they are produced in them from the dust. Some are felt during the time of drought, but not excessively; never during the rainy season.

This is a sign that in this land there has been none, at least in considerable numbers since they do not have a name of their own. They only call them kutum san ayam, which means 'dog louse' since these are found mostly on dogs and not so often on people. And so, these little creatures cause here little trouble, while elsewhere they are troublesome. In Barcelona, during the summer, they seem to cover the ground and no spot is free from them.

Concerning lice, it is said that the Europeans are not infected with them here. It is certainly true among those who change clothes and live in cleanliness; those who do not, surely carry them. Among the natives it is like a plague. It is rare to find one who is not completely infected for the reasons given; that is, that they do not change their clothing frequently.

Los que se tratan con limpieza, padecen menos; pero no he visto a nadie libre de ellos; y, aunque nosotros gracias a Dios, no los tenemos ni criamos por vivir con limpieza, con todo, y más en tiempo de confesiones – que es fuerza que se lleguen cerca para oírlos – salimos no pocas veces de los confesonarios no libres de ellos.

Lo que yo sé decir de la calidad de estos piojos de los indios es que son tan ponzoñosos – para mí en especial y que de los demás no sé aunque he oído a otros lo mismo – que no siento menos una picada suya que una de un alfiler; y en parte más, porque luego levantan una roncha que escuece muchísimo y dura muy buen rato, lo cual no veo en los indios, pues tal vez los vemos a estos animalejos cebados en sus carnes y a ellos sin movimiento, o por la dureza de su pellejo y frialdad de su sangre, o por el uso ordinario de sentirlos.

Lo que se puede llamar plaga en algunas partes son los mosquitos, que los hay muchos y de muchas maneras. De tres he reparado yo en algunas, y no dudo habrá más. Hay unos como los ordinarios de España, y de sus mismas calidades; hay otros zancudos, tres veces mayores, que así en la voz y zumbido como en lo crecido del cuerpo, cuando pican, montan por cuatro de los otros, pero no tengo aun a estos por los peores, que al fin avisan con su trompetilla.

Tengo por malísimos a unos que llaman tangnoc¹⁰, que son menores que pulgas pequeñas, que no se ven y pican tan tenazmente, que o por lo hondo o por lo venenoso, que es más cierto, dejan unas ronchas, aunque no muy grandes, muy penosas, pues ni con rascarse se alivian, antes se aumentan más; ni por lavarse con agua se refrigeran, antes parece se encienden más. Tal vez, si son muchas, hinchan la cara o manos a quien picaron.

Y con ésto, pues ya en otra parte dijimos algo de estos animalillos, concluyamos en ellos este Libro, para pasar al cuarto de sus costumbres y modo de vivir.■

Those who maintain cleanliness suffer less, but I have never found anyone free from them. However, we, thanks to God, do not have them nor are infected with them, because we live neatly. Notwithstanding, especially in the time of confessions, when it is necessary that they come close in order to be heard, we leave the confessionals sometimes carrying some of these.

What I can say about the characteristics of these lice that these natives carry is that they are very toxic, especially for me. I do not know about the others, although I have heard from them the same thing. I feel their biting, which is not less than a pinprick and in some instances even more so. Afterwards a welt erupts and stings well and lasts for a good period of time. I do not discover this among the natives. Sometimes we see these little creatures imbedded in their flesh and they do not even react; either because of the toughness of their skin and the coldness of their blood, or because they are accustomed to them.

What can be called a plague in some places is the mosquitoes; they are numerous and of different kinds. I have noted three kinds in some places and I have not doubt that there are more. There are some like the common ones in Spain and with the same characteristics. There are others with long proboscis, three times greater, both in their wound and buzzing as well as in the largeness of their body. When they bite, it is equal to four of the others. But I do not regard these as the worst of all since they at least give a warning with their trumpet.

I consider as extremely vicious a kind that is called tangnuk,¹⁰ which are smaller than little fleas. They are not seen but bite so tenaciously that either because of their deep biting or most probably because of its poisonous effect they cause welts. These are not very large but are very painful. They are not even relieved with scratching; rather this irritates it even more. Nor can it be soothed by washing with water; rather it seems that these become more inflamed. On occasion if there are many bites the face and hands of the person bitten swell up.

Since we have spoken about these little creatures elsewhere, we shall conclude with them in this Book and pass on to the Fourth, concerning native customs and ways of living.■

ANNOTATIONS

[1] *Sawa*. Or *Sasawahun*, *sasawhun*: A large snake or serpent. *Ginsaw*, to be eaten by the *sawa*, *sasawhun*, *dadawihun*, *sinasawa*, *dinawi*, *baga dinawi sin sawa*. Of the bite and hold one cannot escape because the *sawa* never releases the prey even if it has to die. Also, *sinawa*, a type of *ubi*. Sánchez [1711], op. cit.

A boa constrictor. A python: “one of the largest known, whose length at times reaches to more than thirty feet in length. Their color varies greatly, but always mixed with beautiful attractive colors. It is not poisonous, but with so much power, according to the natives that it can subdue a *karabaw*. Its excreta is medicinal.” De la Rosa-Alcázar [1914], op. cit., p. 293.

[2] *Morisqueta*. A Spanish word: unsalted boiled rice. Also means a Moorish trick; a mean trick. It is called *morisqueta* because it was the rice of the Moors in Spain and Northern Africa.

[3] *Buntug*. One of the meanings of this word is lunatic, *pagabutabutun*, *hindaratngan*. It is thus called because the person becomes stiff and like dead when the attack comes. Sánchez [1711], op. cit.

[4] *Buti*. See annotation # 4 in previous chapter 23.

[5] *Perruna*. Canine or something pertaining to a dog.

[6] *Kagaw*. A louse called *arador* or itch mite. p. 75.

[7] *Buni*. Tetters – *bunihun ka nga tawu*.

[8] The year should read 1636. Father Alcina arrived to the Bisayas in 1632, first to Cebu to complete his theological studies and after ordination was assigned to Borongan, Samar, in 1634.

[9] Catanduanes Islands. Situated far north of Samar and east of the Bicol

region or Camarines Norte. The capital of this province is Virac. It is also today a diocese.

[10] *Tangnuk*. Perhaps it should read tagnup: small mosquito. Sánchez [1711], op. cit.



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