

Capítulo 13

DEL MAR DE ESTAS ISLAS Y SUS CALIDADES NOTABLES: DE SU FLUJO Y REFLUJO, CORRIENTES, ETC.

Si en alguna parte del mundo, son maravillosos e investigables los secretos que este monstruo (llamémosle así) de portentos, el Océano, depositó Dios, inapelables al entendimiento humano, parece que en estas Islas son exceso. Y así al Filósofo (como quieren algunos) le costó la vida lo inapelable de sus flujos, y en lugar donde son mucho menos; acá, donde son sin comparación más, menos regulares y casi innumerables sus variaciones, con muchos filósofos acabarían. Y así no trataré de sus causas, de que tratan varios, aunque a ninguna de ellas tengo por adecuada, ni todas juntas (que al conjunto de cinco o seis lo atribuyo yo de ellos) son bastantes; y, aunque acá algunas personas muy entendidas en todo género de ciencias, en especial en Matemática y Astrología, se han cansado, hecho varios cómputos y medidas y no pocas observaciones, gastando muchos días, meses y aun años en averiguar lo regular o irregular de ellos, no he visto alguno que le halle salida, ni aun entrada, que con alguna probabilidad lo queda fijar.

Vi a un Padre de los nuestros, muy entendido en todas materias, gastar muchos días, pasos, meses y años, apuntando cada día y mes lo que en metas ó señales (eran ciertos palos fijos de la ribera, unos más otros menos, dentro del mar) que, para esto tenía fijados, iba anotando. Y, al cabo de muchos meses, me mostró cuanto había apuntado, y, discurrido (que vivimos muchos años juntos, o vecinos, en este ministerio). Y aunque no discurría mal en la materia, me dijo

Chapter 13

CONCERNING THE SEA OF THESE ISLANDS AND ITS NOTABLE QUALITIES; ABOUT ITS EBB AND RISING TIDE, CURRENTS, ETC.

If in any part of the world God placed mysterious things before the human understanding, through marvelous and incomprehensible secrets; in this monster, (we shall term it so), of portents, the Ocean, it seems that there is a great excess of them in these islands. Hence, the mystery of its ebbs and rising tides would cost the philosopher his life (as some wish), and in a place where they are of less magnitude. Here where they are incomparably greater, less regular and with almost countless variations, they will bring down many philosophers. And so, I shall not deal with their causes, which various others treat, although I told not one of them as adequate, nor all together – one of them attributes tides to the conjunction of five or six – are they satisfactory. However, some individuals here, very learned in all categories of sciences, especially in mathematics and astrology, have become wearied having made various computations and measurements and numerous observations spending many days, months and even years in determining what is regular or irregular about them. I have not seen anyone with whose conclusion I have agreed with, nor even his argument because in what it presumed proven there is some probability.

I saw one of our Fathers, who was very learned in all kinds of questions; he spent many steps, days, months and years noting each day and monthly, noting the data about the limits or boundaries, they were certain stakes fixed along the bank, some farther other less so into the waters of the sea, which he had placed for this purpose. At the end of many months, he showed me how much it had risen and fluctuated. He lived for many years together or as neighbors in this ministry.

últimamente: *stulto labore consumar*¹, porque nunca pudo regular la variedad de los dichos reflujos, sus crecientes y menguantes; porque, hecho el cómputo de los días del mes entre sí, y de los años unos con otros, nunca pudo hallar ni semejanza ni aun consonancia de unos con otros. Y así lo dejó, no como el Filósofo despechado, sino como santo (que es cierto lo era), maravillado de los profundos e inapelables juicios de Dios, que sólo sabe las causas de ello y las guarda en lo secreto de su divino conspecto, donde con un simple mirar se verán y sabrán estas y otras maravillas.

Es empero asentado entre todos, ya que lo vemos de continuo, que cada día hay creciente y menguante, y que no es siempre ni a un mismo tiempo ni con la misma pujanza. Dicen comúnmente que es mayor en las conjunciones y oposiciones, que es esto menstruo. Y aunque esto no se puede negar, también la experiencia muestra que algunas veces en el día inmediato al cuarto de la luna, o antes o después (no son pocos en que lo notó dicho Padre contra lo que se dice comúnmente, solía ser la creciente mayor que en la oposición, o conjunción, y en esos mismos días aun no correspondían los más de ellos la bajamar a la subida, siendo unas veces mayor la una, y a veces la otra.

También es constante acá que una vez al año, y esto sucede en algunas islas de estas en la oposición de la luna de Julio, en otras en la conjunción con la de agosto, son mucho mayores, y con notable diferencia, que las demás de todo el año, y ni aun esto es regular, pues no es común en todas partes.

Así que sería nunca acabar, querer dar razón de todo, ni aun de la tercera parte de ello, pues ni la luna sólo, ni el sol aun acompañado con ella, ni las cavernas que hay en la tierra, en cuyas profundidades dicen se explaya o retira, ni las calidades ígneas que sueñan algunos en lo profundo, que las rareface o condensa, ni tampoco el fuego subterráneo que allá fingen, es bastante para semejantes reflujos en todas partes. Y así diré sólo en esta lo que he visto, dejando a los entendidos que discurran si quisiesen cansarse en valde en sus causas.

Lo que he reparado en estas Islas (pues he corrido lo más de ellas donde está nuestro ministerio de Bisayas) es que en algunos parajes

Even though he did not make a wrong conclusion in the matter, he told me finally, *Stulto labore conſumar*; he was never able to determine what governs the variety of these tides, their waxing and ebbing. For having made the comparison among days of the month with each other, and of the years one with another, he was never able to find any similarity nor any conformity, one with the other. Thus, he dropped the matter, not like the despairing philosopher, but like a saint, which certainly he was, marveling at the profound and inexplicable mysteries of God who alone knows their causes and keeps them in the secrecy of His Divine presence, where with a simple glance these and other marvels will be seen and understood.

It is, however agreed among all, since we see it constantly, that each day there is a flood tide and an ebb tide and that they do not always occur even at the same time or with the same force. They say ordinarily that it is greater in the conjunctions and oppositions, that it is like a kind of menstruation. Even though this may not be denied, our experience also shows that sometimes on the day closest to the quarter of the moon, either before or afterward; the aforementioned Father noted many times, contrary to what is said ordinarily, that the flood tide was customarily greater than on the opposition or conjunction. On the same days, most of the ebbing did not correspond to the rising tide; sometimes the one was greater and at times the other.

Also, it is apparent here that once a year, and this happens in some of these islands in the opposition of the moon in July; in others that of August where they are much greater and are notably different from the rest of the year. Even this is not regular, for it is not common in all regions.

Thus, there would be no end in seeking to give a reason for all or even the third part of the phenomenon; neither the moon alone or the sun even accompanied by it or the hollows that there are in the earth, in whose depths they say the tide extends itself or retreats; or the fiery conditions that some people dream about as in the deep which rarify or condense it, or even the subterranean fire which they fancy is sufficient there for similar ebbing of the tides everywhere. Hence, I speak as regards the matter only what I have seen, leaving to the wise to discuss, if they desire, to wear themselves out in vain, concerning their causes.

What I have discovered in these islands, since I have traveled through most of those where our Bisayan missions are located, is that

parece que hay términos a las corrientes, y que en ellos parten jurisdicción. En la isla de Leyte, en la parte que mira a Caraga², hay una punta que llaman Cabalian³, y cerca de ella un pueblo del mismo nombre, donde con ser el mar harto ancho y la travesía hasta la costa de Caraga de algunas leguas, y ser aquel paraje limpio de isletas, se ve una como raya en medio del mar, donde se parte la corriente, yendo hacia al oriente la una y hacia al poniente la otra, de modo que la embarcación que venía del oriente con la corriente en favor, allí en lugar casi indivisible, por lo menos indeterminable, la halla opuesta, y lo mismo al contrario, y con tanta vehemencia a las veces, que es menester esperar tras de la punta a que descabece su furia.

Lo mismo se ve en el estrecho que hace la dicha isla con la de Samar, que llaman de San Juanillo⁴, que en la mitad de él se parten las corrientes, aunque con diferencia pues allí (que hay una islilla harto pequeña) se halla el mar al un lado crecido totalmente [y al otro menguado totalmente], comenzando a llenar el un lado cuando empieza a vaciar el otro, y esto se experimenta en otros parajes.

En medio del *Embocadero*⁵ grande y ordinario por donde entran y salen las naos que van y vienen desde estas Islas a la Nueva España (y tendrá desde la punta de Baliquatun⁶, que está en la isla de Ibabao, hasta la de Bulusan⁷, que lo es de la isla de Manila, más de tres o cuatro leguas de travesía, línea recta) hay una isleta algo más arrimada a la grande isla de Manila y que confronta con la otra, llamada de Capul⁸, de que luego hablaremos, la cual isleta (ha pocos meses que pasé por ella cuando escribo esto y se llama *Matontongan*⁹, que quiere decir “que está encima”), no tendrá de box doscientos pasos y es una como peña rodeada de arena blanca, con notable profundidad al uno y otro lado, y en ella se ve manifestamente cada día lo dicho, que a la parte del oriente está totalmente llena, llegando el agua a los piedras, y la del poniente totalmente sin agua, quedando toda la arena descubierta, y en breves horas se ve lo contrario, descubriéndose la parte oriental y cubriéndose su opuesta. ¿Quién señalará la causa de tanta variedad en tan corta distancia?

Vengamos a las corrientes de este mismo paraje que es el más peligroso, y aun temido, de todos los navegantes, tanto que, habiendo pasado por él, me dijo un hombre de mar levantisco, que había navegado todo el Mediterráneo, el Océano desde el estrecho de Gibraltar a

in some places, it seems, there are limits to the currents and in them they divide their jurisdiction. On the island of Leyte on the side that faces *Caraga*, there is a point which they call *Cabalian*, and near it a town of the same name, where the sea being quite deep and the passage to the coast of *Caraga* being a few leagues and that passage being free of islets, one can see a kind of line in the middle of the sea where the current is divided. One part goes toward the east and the other toward the west, so that the vessel which came from the east with a favorable current, there in a place that is without separation, or at least indeterminate, finds itself opposed by the current. It is necessary to wait behind the point until its fury abates.

The same thing is seen in the strait which this island forms with that of Samar, which they call *San Juanico*. In the middle of it, the currents divide, although with the difference that there, for there is a little island of rather small size, the sea is found to be at its highest point on one side and on the other at its very lowest, and the one side begins to fill up when the other begins to empty. This is discovered in other places too.

In the middle of the great and ordinary *embocadero*, by which the ships enter and leave these Islands for Nueva España (it stretches from the point of *Baliquatun*, which is between the island of Samar and that of *Bulusan* belonging to the Island of Manila, for more than three or four leagues in the line of crossing), there is an islet somewhat closer to the great island of Manila and which faces on the other side that of *Capul*, about which we shall speak next. It is called *Matontongan*, which is to say 'that which is above'. It is hardly two hundred *pasos* in circumference and is like a round rock covered with white sand with notable slopes on both sides. On it one can plainly see every day what has been described. While on the eastern side the water is at the highest point coming up to the rocks, the western side is completely without water with the sand showing. Then in a few hours the contrary may be seen: the eastern side being uncovered and the opposite side covered. Who can account for the cause of such a great variation in so short a distance?

We come to the currents of this passage which is the most dangerous and even most feared by all the navigators. So much so, that after a man with experience of rough seas he had passed through it, he told me that he had navigated the entire Mediterranean, the Ocean from the Straits of Gibraltar to Holland, to the land of the *Bacalao* or

Holanda, a la tierra del *Bacalao* o Nueva Zemblea¹⁰, todo el Mar del Norte hasta la Nueva España, y Brasil, el de la India *intra et extra Gangem* – ...la Persia, el Estrecho de Sincapura, donde está Malaca, las Malucas, y corrido el mundo todo, pero que en ninguna parte había visto las corrientes ni más arrebatadas y ni más opuestas entre sí mismas, ni había tenido tanto miedo al mar.

Es casi increíble a quien no lo ha experimentado. He pasado yo muchas veces y siempre embarcado (que algunos lo pasan por tierra para asegurarse, dejando la embarcación con los indios) el muy nombrado y más temido cabo, o punta, que llaman Baliquatun los indios, (que quiere decir que “hace retroceder y revolver de un lado a otro”). Y los españoles, confundido el vocabulo, *balicuatro*, donde además de partirse las corrientes, son tantos los remolinos y tan arrebatados que suelen sorberse (cuando no se pasa con sazón, que llaman los indios *tuig*¹¹) las embarcaciones, sin que algunas parezcan jamás, porque perecen para siempre.

Fatal punta para todos los que arrojadamente la quieren pasar y no siguen a los indios que, como diestros en aquel paraje, pasan con mucha facilidad y sin peligro, en llegando la sazón para ello, y ninguno que se haya dejado gobernar y seguido su disposición en pasarle, ha perecido jamás.

Sucede entre esta punta y la isla de Capul (que está casi en frente de ella, algo más al poniente, casi en medio de la misma isla de Ibabao y de la de Manila) venir una nao de Castilla, viento a popa y con todo el trapo¹², como dicen, y llegar un remolino de los muy ordinarios en este paraje y darle una vuelta en redondo, como si fuera una pelota de viento. Y esto es casi inevitable, porque es tan de repente que no se puede prevenir, y aunque con las naos, o galeones, de este comercio es menos peligroso por su grandeza, en embarcaciones menores lo es mucho.

No habrá dos años que a una embarcación en que iba un capitán de infantería español, y cabo de las centinelas (que para todos los años se ponen [en] estas costas) le sorbió con su embarcación y gente uno de estos remolinos (por no haber seguido el consejo del indio piloto). Y aunque, por gran misericordia de Dios, no se volcó la embarcación, que hubieran perecido todos sin remedio, se llenó de agua y, ayudada de los *cates*¹³ (que ya dijimos son como contrapesos o balanzas que la sustentan) anduvo dos días con sus noches, llevado de unas partes a otras de las

Nueva Zembla; all of the North Sea as far as New Spain and Brazil, that of India this side of and beyond the Ganges, Persia, the Strait of Singapore, where Malacca is, the Moluccas, and had crossed the world. In no place had he seen currents either more violent or more contrary, one to the other; nor had he experienced such fear of the sea!

It is almost unbelievable for one who has not experienced it! I have crossed it many times and always by ship (some cross by land to be sure of themselves, leaving the sailing to the natives). The very celebrated and greatly feared cape or point which the natives call *Baliquatun*, which means "to make a turn back and return from one side to the other." The Spaniards, confusing the word, called it '*Balicutro*'. In addition to the division of the currents, the whirlpools are so great and violent that they pull down (when one fails to pass in season which the natives call *tuig*) the vessels so that they are never seen again, for they are lost forever.

This is a disastrous point for those who daringly wish to pass and do not follow the directives of the natives. Since they are skillful in that passage, they cross with great ease and without danger when the season comes for it and no one who has been governed and followed their suggestion in passing has ever perished.

It happened that between this point and the island of *Capul*, which is almost opposite it, somewhat to the west, almost midway between the island of *Ibabao* and that of *Manila*, there came a ship from Castile with the wind astern and with '*todo el trapo*' as they say. It ran into one of these whirlpools of the very ordinary kind in this passage; it made a complete turn about, as if it were an inflated ball. This is almost unavoidable because it occurs so suddenly that it cannot be prevented. With ships or galleons, however, of this traffic, it is less dangerous because of their great size. But with small vessels it is very great.

Not more than two years ago a vessel in which was traveling a Spanish captain of infantry, and a chief of sentinels, who are stationed in these coasts every year, was pulled in with his vessel and crew by one of these whirlpools, because he had not followed the advice of the native pilot. However, by the great mercy of God, his boat was not capsized or all would have perished helplessly. It filled with water, and aided by the *catig*, we have already said that they are like counterweights or balances which sustain it, it traveled for two days and nights carried from one place to another by the furious currents arriving at

furiosas corrientes, llegando al cabo de ellos (sin fuerzas casi por no haber podido ni comer, ni beber, ni dormir, y estar sumergidos y mojados, que sólo las cabezas sacaban fuera) donde varó la dicha embarcación, cerca de una isletilla, con que pudieron hacer pie, desaguarla y sacar algo de lo que en ella había, aunque mojado, para refocilarse.

Vi, después de este suceso, al dicho Capitán, que me dijo que no daba por su vida entonces un real, y que fué gran providencia divina que algún hilo del corriente no los arrebatase la mar afuera, donde para siempre perecieran.

No solo los remolinos dichos son los peligrosos sino las corrientes, que se llevan una embarcación como una jara volando. Hay en la distancia de esta punta y lo continente de la isla de Ibabao, hasta la de Capul, legua y media, o dos cuando mucho, y en este conmedio tres corrientes opuestas, porque la de en medio comúnmente va con la creciente, o menguante. Las de los lados son *banos*¹⁴ que llaman los indios y es lo mismo que contrarias o opuestas (que llaman “revesas” la gente de mar) de modo que es imposible atravesar de una parte a otra sino es siguiendo su violencia.

Vi yo y admiré no pocas veces, estando en la isla de Capul, a los indios de ella (que como criados en aquel paraje saben el modo de navegarle) y que, queriendo venir de la isla de Ibabao, a donde van muy ordinariamente a buscar todo lo necesario para la vida (que en dicha isla de Capul, por ser menos fértil y más seca, les falta mucho), se dejaban llevar al principio de la primera corriente, muy hacia al poniente (por estar dicha isla atravesada al oriente), hasta que se encontraban con la corriente de en medio, que es la más arrebatada. Y los volvía como un cohete, y aun más veloz, hacia al oriente, y tan lejos que ya se perdían de vista las embarcacioncillas con que ellos van y vienen, y, cuando menos nos catábamos, estaban ya en el pueblo, porque, al llegar a la costa de la isla, los volvían con la misma violencia a llevar hacia al occidente, con que, sin cansarse en remar, antes teniendo fuertemente todos los remos (que acá llaman *bugseies*, y son de cuatro palmos, poco más o menos, la pala más ancha que los nuestros) sumergidos, arrimados al bordo, sirven como de timón que enderezan la embarcación, porque con la fuerza de las corrientes no se atreviese (que en esto está todo su peligro), con lo cual se dejan llevar guiando solo el timonel, que como

their end, almost without strength because they have not been able to eat or drink or sleep and being submerged and soaked with only their heads above water where the vessel ran aground near a little island. Thus, they were able to stand up in the water, bail out the boat and take out some of what had been in it, although soaked, in order to refresh themselves.

I saw this captain after the occurrence and he told me that he had given up his life and that it was the great Divine Providence that some thread of the current did not hurl them out into the sea where they would have perished.

Not only are the whirlpools dangerous, the currents which carry a ship like a flying arrow. The distance from this point and the solid ground of the island of Ibabao to the Island of Capul is a league and a half or two at the most. At right, at the middle of this space, there are three opposing currents, because the one in the middle commonly goes contrary to the rising or ebbing of that of the sides. They are *banos*, as the natives call them and this is the same as contrary or opposed (which people of the sea call cross-currents). And so, it is impossible to cross from one side to the other, unless passing through its turbulence.

I have very often seen and admired, while I was in the island of Capul, the natives of the island (as they were raised in that place they knew the method of navigating it), when they wished to come from the island of Ibabao where they went ordinarily to get everything necessary for their livelihood (and in the island of Capul, because it was less fertile and drier, they lacked many things). In the beginning they permitted themselves to be carried by the first current very far to the west (because the island is crossed to the east) until they encountered the current in the middle which is the most violent. It spun them like a rocket and even more swiftly towards the east, and so far that the little vessels on which they go and come were lost sight of. When they had been almost forgotten they were already in the town because on arriving at the coast of the island they were again carried to the west with the same violence. Thus, without tiring themselves out by rowing except for holding firmly all the oars (which they call *bugsay* and are about four *palmos* long with the blade narrower than ours) submerged against the sides so that they were like a rudder to direct the vessel along the route. This is because with the force of the currents, they could not cross. In this lay all the danger. And so, they allowed themselves to be carried with only the helmsman guiding. As all were born and raised there, they know very well how the body may escape from

criados todos y nacidos allí, saben muy bien huir el cuerpo al peligro de las corrientes, y con poco trabajo navegan mucho.

Además de las corrientes y remolinos dichos, son notables, y más peligrosos que uno y otro, los escarceos del mar que de uno y otro se fraguan, saltando a las veces unos borbotones y hervideros de agua (*carancan*¹⁵ les llaman los indios) que suelen, sin saberlo ni advertirlo muchos de los navegantes, llenar las embarcaciones de agua y hundirlas. Y tal vez levantan grandes peñas que arrebatan debajo con el remolino y escarceos.

Héme visto alguna vez de las que por allí he navegado, que no han sido pocas, con harto sobresalto en medio de uno de éstos; que subía el agua, o el borbotón de ella, más de dos palmos más alta que el bordo de la embarcación, que, si no se tiene firme, sin que se ladee, perecerá sin duda; pero, si saben cortar derechamente por el hervidero, salen sin peligro, porque las aguas, con el mismo ímpetu que suben derechas, se vuelven a bajar casi al mismo nivel, y con esto entran pocas veces en el casco, si sabe el piloto regir, como se ha dicho.

A un Padre de los nuestros le cogió en esta travesía de la isla de Capul a tierra firme (paso forzoso de los que van a visitar aquel puesto) uno de estos *carancan*, o hervidero, con poca prevención del piloto, y en un punto se hallaron con la embarcación boca abajo, quedando la quilla arriba, sobre la cual ayudaron los indios de boga (que son famosos nadadores) al Padre para que se asentase, amarrando por abajo una sogá grande en que se asiese. Y de esta manera estuvo un día y una noche llevado de unas partes a otras, hecho juguete de las corrientes, hasta que al amanecer del segundo, lo reconocieron los indios de dicha isla y salieron a recogerlos.

Con todo, el susto y frío, por haber estado tanto tiempo en el agua, le quedó al dicho Padre un peligroso achaque, de que murió dentro de breve tiempo. Que estos son los gages de estos mares, y los provechos y útiles temporales de los que los navegan, aunque no sin seguridad de muchos y grandes en la eternidad.

No pongo acá las mangas de agua¹⁶, que llaman los marineros, y por acá se ven muchas veces, a que llaman *buhaviestos*¹⁷ naturales, y son uno de los *pababaliu*¹⁸ que ellos más temen, y con razón, pues se suelen o sorber o zozobrar las embarcaciones, sin que perezcan.

the danger of the currents and with little effort, they sail a great distance.

Aside from the currents and the whirlpools which are remarkable, there are more dangerous than both the choppy waves of the sea which unite one with the other and send spurts and eruptions of water (the natives call them *karankan* which often fill the vessels with water and cause them to founder. Many of the navigators do not know or even take notice of them. At times, they bring up large rocks which they tear out from below in the whirlpools and rapids.

I have found myself once among the many times when I have traveled there, which have been a considerable number, with great surprise in the middle of one of these and the water or the surge rose more than two *palmos* higher than the side of the vessel. Unless one holds firm so that he does not trip, he will surely perish. But if they know how to keep the vessel straight through the boiling waters, it comes out without danger because the waters, with the same force that they rise straight up, come down again almost to the same level. Therefore, waves seldom get into the hull if the pilot knows how to manage it, as has been stated.

A Father of ours was caught in this crossing from the island of Capul to the mainland, a necessary passage for those who are coming to visit that post, by one of these *karankan* or fountains with little warning to the pilot. In an instant they found themselves with the boat upside down and the keel on top. The native rowers, who are famous swimmers, assisted the Father to the top of the keel so that he could be seated. They tied him down with a large rope so that he was secure. In this condition he remained for a day and night carried from place to place; a plaything of the currents, until on the dawn of the second day, the natives of that island recognized him and went out to rescue him.

With all the fright and cold for having been so long time in the water, the Father contracted a dangerous illness from which he died in a short time. These are the challenges of these seas and the temporal rewards and profits of those who navigate them; yet not without certainty of many and great rewards in eternity.

I do not set down here the waterspout as the mariners call them. They are seen here many times and the natives call them *buhawi*. They are one of the *pababaliw* which they fear most; with reason, for they are accustomed to pull up or capsize the vessels so that they perish.

Son estas mangas por acá en dos maneras: las unas chupan el agua de la mar, y la llevan para arriba a las nubes; otras la derraman y vacían, haciendo unas y otras ruido como de un gran hervidero de agua, y zozobrando las embarcaciones que se hallan en aquel paraje. Y por esta causa las temen mucho estos indios. Y son cierto de temer.

De modo que si en alguna parte del mundo se experimentan los reveses y azares del mar, es en estas Islas, y si en todas es verdad lo del Espíritu Santo que “*qui navigant mare enarrant pericula eius*”¹⁹, en estas tendrá uno tanto que contrar en pocos meses cuanto en otras partes en muchos años.

Si yo hubiera de contar en los que me he visto, y nos vemos todos los días los Padres misioneros que en continuo movimiento vamos visitando de unos pueblos a otros, en que nos hallamos cada día, fuera nunca acabar. Trataremos algo en la *Segunda Parte*, cuando de los ministerios que tenemos en estas Islas.

Para acabar la materia de este Capítulo basta decir que la inconstancia de los mares es tal que dudo la tenga igual ninguna parte del mundo, lo cual ocasionan las muchas canales, escollos, bajos, o bajíos, u otras cosas de que están llenas todas estas Islas, que, por ser tantas, hacen infinitos caminos para las aguas, encontrándose estas a cada paso, según la diferencia de los mayores con que corresponden, porque acá es cosa sabida que, cuando en las costas de Ibabao, que son las que miran al mar que viene de la Nueva España acá y Orientales, es plena mar y están las aguas en su mayor pujanza en la parte ulterior, y en la contra-costa, que llaman de Samar, y es parte occidental de dicha isla, están en su mayor menguante. Y por esta causa es tan difícil y peligrosa la punta que llamamos de Baliquatun, porque en ellas parten jurisdicción las aguas, sus corrientes y menguantes, y la fuerza de su corrientes, siendo necesario esperar diferente sazón y conyuntura para pasarla, cuando se ha de salir del embocadero para fuera, que es lo que se llama Ibabao, y la opuesta para entrar para dentro.

Y no ha muchos meses, cuando esto escribo, que me sucedió a mi llegar a dicha punta con viento en popa y harto tieso, y, al quererla torcer, vernos obligados a volver atrás porque era mayor la violencia de las aguas, o corrientes opuestas, que hallamos en ella. Y esto es mucho más cuando la corriente se opone al viento, como fue entonces, que, por hallar éste más resistencia y aquélla mayor oposición, levanten el

These waterspouts here are in two forms: one draws the water from the sea and carries it up the clouds; the others pour out and discharge themselves. Both make a noise like a great boiling of water and upset the vessels which are found in the passage. For this reason the natives fear them greatly and they are truly to be feared.

And so in this manner, if in any part of the world one experiences the misfortunes and disasters of the sea, it is in these islands. Thus, in all of them is true what the Holy Spirit urges, that *Qui navigant mare enarrant pericula eius*. In these Islands one will have as much to relate in a few months as in other places in many years.

If I should relate matters that I have seen and which we Father missionaries see everyday, as we go in continuous motion, visiting from one town to another, and in which we find ourselves everyday, I would never finish. We shall discuss some of this in the *Segunda Parte*, when we take up the duties which we have in these Islands.

In order to complete the material of this chapter, it is sufficient to say that the fickleness of the seas is such that I doubt that it has an equal in any part of the world. This is caused by the many channels, reefs, shoals or shallows or other things that these islands are filled with. Since there are so many islands, they make countless paths for the water which are encountered at every point, depending on the larger bodies with which they connect. For it is a known fact here, that when on the coast of *Ibabao*, which is that facing toward the sea that extends from *Nueva España* here, and is the eastern side, the sea is at high tide and the waters are at their greatest power, on the farther side and on the opposite coast which they call Samar, and is the western side of this island, the waters are at lowest ebb. For this reason the point which they call Baliquatun is so very difficult and dangerous, because on it the waters divide their boundaries, their currents, and tides and the force of their flow. It is necessary to await a different time and occasion in order to pass it: when it is possible to go out the mouth of the channel to the outside, which is what is called *Ibabao*; and the opposite side to enter within.

Not many months ago, as I write this, it happened that I arrived at this point with the wind astern and sufficiently strong. Wishing to turn the point, we saw ourselves obliged to go back because of the great violence of the waters or opposing currents that we found there. This is much greater when the current is opposed to the wind, as it then was. Due to the latter it encounters more resistance, and the former greater

escarceo más incontestable. Y así, dejando lo demás, me contento con apuntar lo dicho solo; de lo cual se colegirá en parte lo que pasa y corre por acá [en estos mares. Con esto tratatemos de las otras cosas que] en la dicha mar se hallan.

opposition; the choppiness of the waves becomes insurmountable. So omitting the rest, I shall be content with pointing out only what has been described. From this will be gathered in part what passes and transpires here in these seas. With this, we shall treat of the other matters that are found in this sea.

Chapter 13

ANNOTATIONS

¹ *Stulto labore consumar*. A Latin sentence, which means literally I shall be consumed by a polish work. It means in the context, I will waste my time in useless things.

² *Caraga* is situated on the northernmost tip of the second largest island belonging to the Philippine Archipelago, Mindanao. Today Caraga is a region comprising the provinces of Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur.

³ *Cabalian*. An ancient town situated in southern Leyte on a bay of the same name. Artigas y Cuerva explains that the name was derived from the root word *bali*, which means 'broken', with the common prefix 'ca-' and the suffix '-an'. The town was named so, after the volcano *Cantuktuk* erupted and split or broke apart.

The town is surrounded by five mountains: *Cantuktuk*, *Naba*, *Mapahu*, *Bubun* and *Tabunan*, with a lake, hot springs and thirteen rivers crossing it. This *pueblo* was established by the Jesuits in the year 1620. Since it is a coastal town it was pirated, plundered, sacked, destroyed and burned many, many times up until the late XVIIIth century, along with many captives including the ministers. Artigas y Cuerva, *Op.cit.*, pp. 291-294.

⁴ *San Juanico*. A very narrow channel between Samar and Leyte, in the vicinity of Basey, Samar and Tacloban, Leyte. In ancient times it was known as Sampuetan. Alcina refers to it *San Juanillo* in Book Four, Chapter 2 and speaks about an ancient settlement there in the cliffs called *Pait*. The term *pait*, in Bisayan, means: something bitter. *Pait sini nga bunga!*

Juanillo was the small service boat of the expeditions of Legazpi, used to cross the channel separative. Samar and Leyte, the one that bears its name, with the addition of *San* and the change to *Juanico*.

⁵ *Embocadero*. So-called by the Spaniards; it is the mouth or the entrance to the San Bernardino Straits; sometimes also called *Paseo de Acapulco*. The ancient Bisayan name is *Tagbaluran* meaning 'wavy'. This is an extremely difficult and dangerous strait to cross. William Lytle Shurz, stated: "...to get out to sea the galleon had to follow a tortuous channel which runs in a general southeasterly direction to the Strait of San Bernardino proper...as a rule, the time consumed in clearing from the straits was inordinately long. The galleon which carried Gemelli Carreri sailed from Cavite on the twenty-eight of June and it did not reach the open sea until the tenth of August. The *Santisima Trinidad* in 1755 was a month on the way and the *San Carlos Borromeo* in 1766 took three weeks to pass the straits. Gemelli describes this part of the route as a 'labyrinth of islands, eighty leagues in length, and very dangerous' ...driving squalls and fogs were frequent, while shifting tides and treacherous currents threw the galleon about in the winding channel, where shoals and rocks and low-lying islands menaced her safety." *The Manila Galleon*, (New York: Dutton, 1939), p. 221.

Numerous swirls and eddies are found in the channel between Capul and Luzon; the waters seeming boiling up from beneath... 'If the galleons reached the neighbor-

hood of the islands even in late June [from Acapulco] they might find the monsoon blowing across the entrance of the *Embocadero*. At such times to try to enter that labyrinth of islands and shoals with its swirling, shifting tides and currents, was to court destruction.' *Ibid.*, p. 280.

⁶ This is how the crossing on the San Bernardino Strait from northern Samar to southern Luzon is called. The term is derived from the Samarnon-Liñeyte Bisayan word *balikuat* or *salikuat*: something twisted, tortuous, misshapen, hideous, monstrous; something highly unreasonable. *Tibakli* or *tikuali*, means the same thing. *Balikuat ka mamulung*. *Di mu balikuatun an pulung mu, an buhat, an isip* etc. 'De aqui viene una punta difícil de montarse, navegarse llamada *balikuatun*'. Sanchez [1711], *op. cit.* Tramp gives this entry in his dictionary: *balikwat*: to evert; to unnaill; to pull nails; to upturn; to search; to explore; to turn inside out. Something crooked. *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

"*Balikuatun*: strait, embocadero of San Bernardino; it is extremely dangerous to small sea craft, especially at low or high tides. La corriente = *balikwat*: to unnaill, to tear wood off or other things. – To cross the strait of San Bernardino." de la Rosa-Alcazar [1914], *op. cit.*, p. 31. The name *San Bernardino* was given by the Spaniards to a small islet in the middle of the strait from where the Galleons were directed.

⁷ In Book One, Part One, Chapter five, Alcina makes a reference to *Bulusan* thus: "All these islands, large and small, are inhabited by Bisayan natives. In latitude they lie from fourteen up to nine degrees more or less from north to south for this is the distance from the mountains of *Bulusan*, which are very high and large. These, as we have said, are in the eastern part of the island of Manila and form the channel with *Ibabao* down to *Calagan* or *Caraga* and to the Cape of San Agustin." *Bulusan* is presently a very active volcano, situated in the Province of Sorsogon, near the eastern coast; it can be seen from great distances. It has a lake, part of a sunken part of the volcano, also called *Bulusan Lake*.

⁸ *Capul*. Its more ancient name is *Abak*. It is located off the northwestern coast of Samar and at the entrance to the San Bernardino Strait. It measures twelve square miles; eight miles north and south and three and a half miles east and west. It is a large over-shaped island and has two high peaks southernmost in the vicinity of the municipality and one of which is some 794 feet high. The terrain is rolling with the largest level areas along the northeastern coast.

The linguistics scholar, Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro, made a very interesting record of this seemingly unusual language spoken by the Capuleños: "Sailing from the Marianas towards the Philippines, just before coming near the Island of Luzon, which is the main one among them all, we encounter the Island of Capul, called *Abak* by the islanders. Their language is a Malayan dialect. Don Francisco Garcia de Torres, who was a missionary on the said island, had written a dictionary, a catechism and other works in the said Capuleño language. He understood well the Bisayan, Tagalog, Pampango and other languages which are spoken in the Philippines. He had written to me from the city of Rome, on January 18, 1784 thus: 'I agree with you that the language is Malayan, which is spoken in the region of Malacca, just like all the other languages of the Philippine Islands, who know perfectly the language of Capul or *Abak*, discussing with one from Borneo, noticed or observed the dialects to be identical, that is, that of Capul and Borneo, with some slight differences in words. On the Island of Capul or that of the *Abaknuns*, as its natives are called, there are three languages or dialects. One of these is spoken on the island which looks toward midday, and is known as *Inagta*,

which means to say *Negrito*, because on this island there are Negroes. In the portion facing the north is another language called *Inabaknun*. On the same islet, there is also another general language spoken in which we preach and administer the holy sacraments [i.e. Samarnon-Liñeyte]. I understand the three languages and composed a dictionary, catechism, etc., in the *Inabaknun* language.” Hervás y Panduro, Lorenzo, *Catálogo de las Lenguas de las Naciones Conocidas*, Madrid: Imprenta del Real Arbitrio de Beneficencia, 1800-1805) Seis tomos, in W.E. Retana, *Aparato Bibliográfico de la Historia General de Filipinas* (Madrid: Imprenta de la Sucesora de M. Minuesa de los Rios, 1906 (in offset at Manila, 1964), Vol. I, No. 442, p. 444.

It is gratifying to learn that in 1980, Marc R. and Suzanne Jacobson, of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, had resolved the seeming mystery of the *Capuleño* or *Inabaknun* language and its origin. This editor [Cantius J. Kobak] has visited Capul a number of times and had spoken with the Jacobsons; they wrote thus: The language of the people on Capul Island belongs to the Austronesian family of languages. Their language is a member of the *Samar Badjao* group which stretches from Indonesia, through Sabah, to the Sulu Archipelago of the southern Philippines.

Cognate percentages between Samar Abaknon and these southern relatives are in the mid to high sixties. (Walton 1979-87 with many of the differences due to the fact that Abaknon is the only Sama language which has not come under the influence of Arabic (via Islam). Heavy influence from Spanish, however, began in the late 16th century and continued until early in this century.

The *Abaknun* people of Capul have been separated from their nearest linguistic relatives for about 816 years (This is based on the cognate percentages and an estimated rate of language change (cf. Pallesen 1977).

The language is called *Inabaknon* by native speakers and *Capuleño* by the residents of mainland Samar. *Abaknun* has also been used, but is more appropriately the name of the people, meaning ‘one who comes from *Abak*, the pre-Spanish name of Capul Island.

The Sama Abaknon is noteworthy among Philippine languages because of its phonological interaction with Spanish, resulting in two distinct phonemic subsystems. Today, *Sama Abaknon* is spoken by approximately 20,000 speakers; 12, 000 of them live on the island municipality of Capul, located in the San Bernardino Strait between Sorsogon and Northern Samar. The remaining 8, 000 speakers are scattered throughout the country with large concentration living in the coastal towns of Northern Samar and in Manila. Most adult speakers are bilingual in one or more of the following languages: Waray-Waray, English, Cebuano, Bikolano, Pilipino and Masbateño. Marc. R. Jacobson and Suzanne N. Jacobson, “Sama Abaknon Phonology,” *Philippine Journal of Linguistics*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (June 1980), pp. 32ff.

⁹ *Matontongan*. The word is derived from the root *tunga*: ‘*Pagturungaun* or *pagturungan*, meaning half. *Matungan*, in between, halfway, esp. it is said of that things, neither too thick, nor too thin. *Katunganan*, in the middle, half, like half the way. *Katungatungan*, ‘In between *karigyan* y *kadacan*.’ *Tungun mo*, break it in the middle. *Tungatunga*, half the way or work. *Tumga*, something in between, neither old or new, middle age.

It means also to appear what was submerged in water. *Iton natunga*, or *tinumunga na*. Also metaphorically, to reveal a secret. *Waray kapulunganan nga diri tumunga*, ‘*Nihil occultum, quod non reveletur*.” (Nothing occult that will not be revealed). Sanchez [1711], *op. cit.*

¹⁰ *Nueva Zembla*. An island of Russia, near the Arctic Circle.

¹¹ The word means 'time'. *Tinutuigan*, ready for harvest. *Tinutuiga*, what has celebrated a year. Also, menstruation of women. *Tinuig*, or *tinutuig*, menstruated. *Ibid*.

"*Tuig*: year, time, season. – chance or opportunity to do something." de la Rosa-Alcazar [1914], *op. cit.*, p. 371.

¹² "*Todo el trapo*". We take here to mean with all the sails on. Also it could mean at full speed.

¹³ More properly *katig*. These are bamboos which are placed on both sides of the vessels, like wings which act as a balance and prevents the vessel from turning over. *Maraut itun kawayan katigun*, *kay basag na*, *maraut igkatig*; *kay lunud*, *libun gad*, It is not good as *catig*, because it is solid, heavy and it sinks. Sanchez [1711], *op. cit*.

"*Catig*: Logs or canes tied together in the small boats, over two long ones, to maintain the balance. They are also called *batangas*." de la Rosa-Alcazar [1914], *op. cit.*, p. 89.

¹⁴ *Banos*, or *Banusun*: to go two or three in the opposite direction, or to go against each other in business, etc. *Nagkabanus*, *nagkakabanus kami*. *Nahibanus*, *naghilibias*, *naghibalius*. To go in the opposite direction; to miss one along the way. It refers to a thorn because it goes in the opposite direction it is called *banus*. *Ibid*.

¹⁵ *Karankan*. Perhaps, it comes from the word *karankatan*: "To patch up; to some something to some, and other things to others." *Karankasan*. *Ayaw kamu mag-karankatan pagsabut*. *Ibid*.

¹⁶ '*Mangas de agua*'. Probably waterspout, or water jet.

¹⁷ Or *Buhawi*: A strong wind, a whirlwind. *Buhawian kita kay daku ana run*. *Ibid*. In *Part One, Book Two*, Chapter 29, Alcina dedicates an entire chapter to the four winds and the storms that occur on Samar. Tramp, describes it thus: *Buhawi*: a tornado; whirlwind; waterspout. *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

¹⁸ Derived from the word *baliw*: "A certain demon who inflicts evil on humans; when people are sick they prepare a *paganitu* for him to leave the house and let the man free from sickness." *Nagbaliw*. *Ginbaliwan an masakit*.

Also with this unusual spelling, *Baleu*: "To transform; to change one thing into another; *baliun ka sa diwata*, you shall become a heart, a stone, etc. *Baliun ka*, or *binaliw ka*, this is a curse. Of the witches who become invisible, it is said *binaliw*. Sanchez 1711, *op. cit*.

¹⁹ A Latin phrase which loosely means: "Those who travel the sea will describe its dangers."