

Capítulo 7

DESCRIBE LOS TELARES DE ESTOS NATURALES Y DA CUENTA DE OTRAS ARTES, COMO PLATEROS, QUE ACÁ LO SON DE ORO SOLO, ETC.

Antes de pasar a otros oficios mecánicos, quiero dejar dichos y descritos los telares que usan en esta tierra las indias bisayas que, como dijimos, son las tejedoras comúnmente, y ellos son tales que, si en su casa no tienen lugar suficiente para extender una mujer su tela, toma el telar y tela, y todos los ingredientes en dicho ministerio, de bajo del brazo y se va a otra casa, o debajo de un árbol sombrío, que son muchos al propósito, y allí tiende su tela hasta que se cansa o se le hace hora de volver a los ministerios domésticos. Y, volviendo a recoger su tela, se vuelve a su casa y la cuelga a un lado, sin que le sirva de estorbo ni impedimento. Tan poco bulto hace como esto.

*Habol*¹ llaman a las mantas que tejen acá; y al telar, *harablan*, que significa “lugar donde se hacen mantas,” aunque es verdad que ya en algunas partes, como en Zibu y Bool, están establecidos muchos telares a nuestro modo y se van aplicando a tejer muchos indios, enseñados de los españoles que sabían este oficio en su tierra; que, puestos acá, todos se vuelven caballeros, aunque fuesen allá aprendices de sastre o zapatero, etc., y, aunque tienen los telares a nuestro modo muchos más trastos, armatostes y andamios que los suyos, por ser más dispuestos para trabajar más en menos

Chapter 7

CONCERNING A DESCRIPTION OF THE LOOMS OF THESE NATIVES AND AN ACCOUNT OF OTHER ARTS LIKE THE WORKING OF PRECIOUS METALS WHICH HERE ARE OF GOLD ALONE, ETC.

Prior to passing on to other mechanical arts, I wish to complete the description of the looms which the Bisayan natives use in this land. As we have said, ordinarily the women are the weavers. Their situation is such that if these do not have sufficient room in their dwelling for stretching out their woven cloth, the woman takes the loom, the cloth and the implements of this process under her arm and goes to another house or into the shade of a tree where there are many suitable for this purpose. There she tends her loom until she tires or it becomes time to return to their house duties. Once again gathering up her loom she returns to her house and she hangs it up at one side so that it may not be a hindrance nor an impediment. This shows how little bulk it has.

*Habol*¹ is what they call blankets, which they weave here and [which word also means] "to weave". *Harablan* means the place where the cloth is made. However, it is true that now in some areas, as in Cebu and Bohol, many looms are established in our fashion and many natives are applying themselves to learn weaving from the Spaniards who knew this trade in their own land. Upon their arrival here all these become gentlemen even though over there they were apprentices of tailors or shoemakers, etc. Even though they have looms of our design, these are much more bulky in machinery and supports than their own because they were more capable of doing a greater amount of work in less

tiempo, y con facilidad y agilidad. Aunque les cuesta mucho más su hechura, los van haciendo ya, sirviéndose de ellos hombres y mujeres. Y aun yo, en varios pueblos, los he mandado hacer y ponerlos donde podían aprender a tejer, y acudir todos y todas, cuantas quisiesen; que en estas partes todo esto es menester para que se hagan, así por su pobreza como por su tibieza, y, con todo, son pocas las mujeres que se aplican a nuestro modo, porque se hallan mejor con el suyo. Y, a la verdad, solo tiene el ser prolijo y más espacioso que el nuestro, que en lo demás es más fácil, más liviano y de menos trastes, pues solos son los siguientes, y que cada cual se hace su telar sin gastar cosa. Cuando mucho, pagan un real al que les hace el peine; que no todos los saben hacer.

Es, pues, el telar de nuestros bisayas tal que con un peine, dos canutos de *bakakai*, dos varillas rollizas como el dedo y uno como machete de ébano o *bahi*,² que es palo o palma muy dura, se acaba todo él. Y, para mejor inteligencia, digo que el modo de urdir sus mantas, que, como dije ya arriba, lo hace una mujer sentada, sin menear más que el brazo, es notable, pues con nueve u once palillos, que algunas suelen tener clavados en una tabla y fijos, del tamaño del dedo mayor en lo rollizo y de pocos menos de dos palmos de largo, y muy lisos porque no se prendan en alguna astilla las hebras. Otras los clavan, cuando han de urdir, en un pie de plátano de los que cortaron para comer la fruta, que por ser blandos, lisos, y rollizos, y de casi lo grueso de un cuerpo humano, son al propósito.

Con las vueltas que en ellos dan, hacen su urdimbre, con su cruz y todo lo necesario, con menos cansancio que en los estantes que para ésto usan nuestras tejedoras.

El ordinario largor de las telas, que urden para pagar su tributo, es de nueve brazas, porque, aunque las mantas quedan de cuatro brazas de largo y cinco palmos de ancho, dánle más por lo que encoge tejiendo. Suelen, empero, alargarlas algunas a dies y doce brazas, según quieren. El modo no es a la larga, como nosotros, sino circular y redondo; de modo que, al extender

time and with greater facility and ease. Although their construction is much more costly, they are now building them and both men and women are operating them. Moreover, I have ordered them to be built and set up in various towns where [*these people*] would learn to weave and to bring together both men and women – whoever wished to come. In these lands all this is necessary to get them to do it both on account of their poverty and their lack of interest. Notwithstanding all this, there are very few women who apply themselves to our method because they are more at ease with their own. Truthfully, theirs is more tedious and slower than ours but easier, lighter and with less parts. Whoever does his own weaving spends nothing whatsoever. At most one pays a *real* to whoever makes the comb of the loom for him which not everyone knows how to do it.

Thus, the weaving of our Bisayans is such that with a comb, two sections of *bakakay*, two round rods about the size of a finger, one similar to the machete of ebony or *bahi*,² which is a very hard wood or palm the entire thing is done. For better understanding, I will state that the method of warping their blankets, as I have already said above, can be done by a single woman seated, without moving more than her arm. It is remarkable how some women ordinarily nail nine or eleven spikes, the size of the larger finger in circumference – a little less than two *palmos* in length and very smooth – so that the fibers do not get caught on some splinter. Others fasten these when they have to arrange the warp, on a trunk of banana, of the kind that they cut in order to eat the fruit. Since these are soft, smooth and round, and about the width of a human body, they are suitable.

Hence, with the turns taken on these, they make their warp with its cross [i.e. *woof?*]. All this is done with less fatigue than in the frames that our weavers use for this purpose.

The usual length of the cloth that they weave, in order to pay their tribute, is about nine *brazas* because, although the cloth stays at four *brazas* in length and five *palmos* in width, they make them larger by the amount they shrink in the weaving. They are accustomed, however, to lengthen some to ten and twelve *brazas* as they wish. The method is not lengthwise, as we do it, but in

la urdimbre, sale la manta doblada, y, al tejerla, acaban por donde comenzaron, y cortando lo poco que quedó, que no se acabó de tejer: y con ésto queda la manta larga de cuatro brazas, y en el telar era solo de dos por la causa dicha; y, para tenerla tirante, meten dos pedazos de *bacakai* que son lisos y rollizos moderadamente, y estos sirven de ejes y molinillos, donde la doblan cuando alzan la obra.

Otro pedazo de *bacakai* sirve para la cruz: porque, por liso y rollizo, corren bien los hilos, y, como es más grueso que el pulgar, es fácil hallar los hilos que quieren añudarlos, de modo que estos tres *bacacais* solos son en rigor el telar y los que tienen la urdimbre, sin más armatostes ni andamios.

La dificultad está en meter el peine, pues, siendo, como dijimos, redonda la urdimbre, no puede entrar, y, no habiendo de cortarse la manta hasta que se acaba de tejer, es más difícil, pero ninguna dificultad hay, porque el peine, que es de tres a cuatro dedos anchos y largo, cuanto ha de ser la manta de ancho, aunque está muy bien atado por la una parte, por la otra tiene todas las púas o rejillas, que acá son de caña de la gruesa, o de *bacakai*, o de otra mata que llaman *manban*,³ sueltas, con lo cual van metiendo cada púa en su hebra, y, estando metidas todas, le amarran la parte superior o inferior, y queda dentro de la urdimbre, y se recoge con ella, porque no tiene palos largos ni otra cosa de que penda, o en que estribe, sino en si misma y en las hebras, o hilos, que se han de tejer.

Tampoco tienen ni usan de lizos ni lanzaderas como nosotros. Son sus lizos un palillo tan largo como el peine, y redondo como una baqueta de arcabuz, o cuadrado si quieren, y en él con un cordelillo torcido van echando sus lazadas, que no cabrá el dedo por ellos; y, levantando dicho palillo que llaman *cohon*,⁴ y apartando un poco el peine, dividen las hebras y dan lugar a que entre lo que sirve de lanzadera, que es otro palo algo más grueso –

circular and round fashion. On extending the warp the blanket comes out double, and they finish weaving it where they commenced, cutting off the small amount that remains, which was not completely woven. As a result the cloth is about four *brazas* when long, and in the weaving becomes one that is only two, for the reason given. In order to hold it extended, they place it over two pieces of *bakakay* which are moderately smooth and round. These serve as axes and little mills where they fold it when they pickup the work.

Another piece of *bakakay* serves as the cross; because it is smooth and round, the threads run over it well. Since it is thicker than a thumb, it is easy to find the threads which break and to tie them together, as a result, these three pieces of *bakakay* alone are strictly speaking the loom and those which hold the warp without other unwieldy parts or frames.

The difficulty is in inserting the comb, for since the warp is round, as we have said, it cannot be put in at the beginning. Not having to cut the cloth [*blanket*] until the weaving is done, makes it harder. But there is no problem because the comb, which is three or four fingers wide and as long as the blanket is wide, even though it is very firmly attached on one hand, on the other it has all the points or prongs loose. Here, these are of heavy cane or *bakakay* or of another plant which they call *manban*.³ Consequently, they proceed by putting each point in its fiber and when all have been placed, they bind the upper or lower part and it stays within the warp and is enclosed in it because it does not have any long sticks or anything else from which it hangs or through which it is supported except itself by means of the fibers or threads which are being woven.

They neither have or make use of the warp threads or shuttles as we do. Their warp is a little stick as long as the comb and round like the ramrod of an arquebus, or square if they wish. On this they proceed to make their loops with a small twisted thread, the loops are too small to insert a finger. By raising the little stick, which they call *kuhon*,⁴ and moving the comb away, they spread out the fibers. This provides room for them to insert what serves here as the shuttle. It is another stick somewhat thicker, perhaps

será como el dedo –, y, hendidas o hechas las dos extremidades como horquillas, en éste que es tan largo como el peine, envuelven a lo largo la trama, y, sacando y metiendo éste que llaman *sicuon*,⁵ sin otra lanzadera ni cañutillos, dentro de ellas, tejen su manta, apretando con el peine cada hebra para que se junte parejo con lo ya tejido; y de cuando en cuando meten otro como machete, de palo duro, del mismo largor y de tres dedos de ancho, con uno como filo por ser más delgado por el un lado, dan sus golpes con que atiesan y tupen lo tejido. Cuando quiere tejer, la mujer se sienta en el suelo con algún petate, o esterilla, que ponen abajo; luego se pone por la cintura uno como cincho que llaman *atip*,⁶ atando las extremidades de él al pedazo de *bacacai* que está abajo y le viene a caer encima del vientre, que llaman *bulang*,⁷ y cerca de este tejen siempre, porque se va con la tela la parte opuesta, que llaman *sablayan*.⁸ Tiene otro *bacacai* que atan a una tabla, la cual tabla tiene en las espaldas dos medios cocos, o telas, que de hechura de tetas los hacen, que están como en el aire porque los vacían de la dicha tabla, a que están sólo asidos por la extremidad; y así, a cada golpe que da la mujer con la *balista*, corresponden los dos como tetas dan su golpe en la tabla, con que hacen ruido y se siente aun de harto lejos que tejen, y cuando tejen de noche – que algunas suelen – se oye más.

Y ya que llegamos a esto de tejer de noche, diré una cosa bien rara y que, a no haberla visto por mis ojos, no la dijera, pues parece increíble. En un pueblo de la residencia de *Palapag*, llamado *Bayug*,¹⁰ donde yo he escrito muchos de los materiales de esta *Historia*, está (que aun vive cuando ésto escribo) una mujer principal de lo mejor del lugar. Fue en su tiempo muy alabada de hermosa entre los indios y es tan blanca como cualquiera española, y así ha sido casada tres veces: porque, enviudando – que sucede a pocas –, hallaba quien se quería casar con ella, y todos tres maridos principales, y en los dos primeros tuvo cantidad de hijos.

A esta principal, más ha de veinticuatro años, estando yo en dichos pueblos otra vez, cuando ella estaba con toda su pujanza –

the size of a finger. It is forked at both ends like a fork. On this, which is as long as the comb, they wind the woof lengthwise and insert it and raw it out. They call this stick *sikuan*.⁵ Without any other shuttle, or small pieces of cane, they weave their cloth separating each fiber with the comb so that it is joined evenly with what has been woven. From time to time, they insert another piece like a machete, made of hard wood, of the same length and three fingers wide. It has something like an edge, being thinner on one side. On this they strike blows so as to give firmness and to press close what has been woven. When the woman wishes to weave she sits on the ground with a kind of *petate* or mat which she puts under her. Then she places around her waist a kind of belt which they call *atip*.⁶ They tie the ends of it to the piece of *bakakay* which is beneath and rests on her stomach, which they call it *bulang*.⁷ They always weave around this because it revolves the warp. The opposite end, which they call *sablayan*,⁸ has another piece of *bakakay* which they fasten to a board. This board has at the ends two coconut fibers made in the shape of teats. They are as though suspended in the air because they are clear of the board to which they are only attached by the ends. Thus with every blow which the woman gives with the *balina*,⁹ the two teat-like fibers correspondingly strike a blow upon the board making a noise which is plainly heard even by those who are far. When they weave at night, as some do, it can be heard better.

Now that we have come to this matter of weaving at night, I shall tell of a very unusual matter. If I had not seen it with my own eyes, I would not speak of it because it seems incredible. In a town of the *Residencia* of Palapag called *Bayug*,¹⁰ where I have written a substantial portion of this history (where she still lives as I write this), there was a woman of the nobility, the most prominent in the area. In her time she was greatly praised for her beauty among the natives. She is as white as any Spanish lady and as a result was married three times when widowed. She always found someone who wanted to marry her as soon as she became a widow, something rare here. All her three husbands were chiefs; by the first two she had a large number of children.

This *principala* more than twenty-four years ago, when I came to that town again, and she was there with all her puissance:

que siempre tuvo muchos esclavos y oro, y vivía, que es lo más bien y honestamente —, procuré inducir a que se hiciese esclava o congregante de la Virgen nuestra Señora para asegurar sus dichas temporales y más la eterna. No tuvo gusto de serlo por entonces.

Salí yo de aquel partido y estuve en otro hasta que volví a él después de dieciseis años o dieciocho desde la segunda vez. Desde la primera había estado e insistídola a ser congregante. Luego que supo de mi llegada, vino a verme en pies ajenos, porque estaba totalmente ciega, y los dos ojos sin rastro chico ni grande de niñitas y sólo con lo blanco de ellos.

Estaba ya casada con otro marido y en muy diferente estado, porque se le habían muerto los esclavos, o dádolos a sus hijos cuando se habían casado, de modo que estaba pobrísima, y, si no tuviera marido que era el tercero estuviera mucho más.

Lloró sus desdichas, y me dijo que era castigo de Dios porque no me había querido creer cuando la exhortaba a que fuese de la Congregación; y que así, a pocos meses que yo había faltado del pueblo, le cayó un corrimiento a los ojos que se los quitó ambos, quedando, aunque con ellos abiertos, tan blancos como la cáscara de un huevo, sin ver, ni aun por vislumbre, cosa chica ni grande; y a la verdad yo lo miré con cuidado y no tenía rastro de potencia visiva ni de niñeta en los ojos.

Pidióme quería hacer entonces lo que no había hecho cuando buena, pues la falta de ojos en el cuerpo le había abierto los del alma, etc. Animéla a ello y enderecéla para llevar adelante sus intentos. Dispúsose despacio para una confesión general de toda su vida, que hizo con mucha distinción y claridad, gastando algunos días en ésto, con satisfacción — a mi ver — disposición más que ordinaria. Hizo su ofrecimiento a la Virgen públicamente y a voces delante de casi todo el pueblo; y después acá, aunque ciega, es la que atrae a muchos y muchas a la frecuencia de los sacramentos, pues, a todos cuantos van y vienen a su casa a verla, que son no pocos, les predica y exhorta a que se confiesen bien y que crean de veras en Dios, contándoles las misericordias

always many slaves and gold and lived, what is more, in a good and an upright manner, I tried to get her to become a member of the religious Confraternity of the Virgin, our Lady, in order to ensure her temporal well being and even more, her eternal welfare. She had no desire to do so for the time being.

I left that region and lived in another until I returned to it after sixteen or eighteen years and saw her for the second time. From the first time I urged here that she become a member of the confraternity. As soon as she knew of my arrival now, she came to see me guided by someone else because she was totally blind, without any trace of a pupil either large or small and only with the whites in her eyes showing.

She was now married to a husband in very different circumstances because her slaves had either died or she had given them to her children when they had married. As a result she was very poor but for a fact that she had a husband, who was her third, she would have been more so.

She cried over her misfortunes and told me that it was the punishment of God, because she had not wanted to believe me when I begged her to join the Confraternity.¹¹ Thus, a few months after I had departed from the town she contracted a watery humor in her eyes, leaving them both, although they were open, as white as the shell of an egg without being able to see even faintly anything small or large. In fact, I examined them carefully and she had no trace of the power of vision nor of a pupil in her eyes.

She pleaded that she desired to do now what she had not done well, for the loss of the eyes in her body had opened those of her soul, etc. I encouraged her in this and arranged to further her intention. I disposed her little by little to make a general confession of her entire life. She did this with much attention and clarity, spending some days in it with contrition. In my opinion, better than usual dispositions. She made her promise to the Virgin publicly and aloud before the entire town. Afterwards, although blind, she attracts many men and women to frequent the sacraments. She preaches to as many as may come and go to her house to see her and they are numerous. She exhorts them to make good confessions, believe faithfully in God and relates to

que Dios ha hecho en ella, y con especial lo que diré luego, de que todos quedan admirados; y, como ella conoce sus costumbres y oye sus cosas, y aun sus tropiezos – que a nosotros nos los encubren más – les dice lo que sabe. Y afea sus pecados; y es cierto que la experiencia me ha mostrado que no son pocos los que por su medio se han confesado bien, que muchos nunca lo habían hecho como debieran, y han mejorado sus vidas diciéndome cuando vienen a confesarse: “Padre, vengo enseñado de *Tapihan*” – que es su nombre – que, como es cuña del mismo palo, encaja mejor lo que ella cuenta a todos a voces, y a mí me lo ha repetido muchas veces, y es lo siguiente.

Que, viéndose ciega tantos años (había de ocho a diez que lo estaba totalmente cuando yo volvi a dichos pueblos, y después más de seis meses lo estuvo de la misma manera) y falta de todo lo necesario, así para su vestir como para comer, pues comía de limosna; y su marido siempre con poca salud y que no la podía acudir, ni su hijos o hijas por estar casados y con hijos apartados de ella, una noche, entre otras, rogó con muchas lágrimas a la Virgen que se apiadase de ella y la ayudase, pues era ya su esclava, y no tenía a quien volver los ojos, así por faltarle los del cuerpo como porque de los hombres no esperaba remedio suficiente: que a sólo Dios y a ella tenía de quien valerse y esperaba la ampararían; que sólo la pedía la diese lo que la bastase para poder pasar su vida, aunque fuese con el trabajo de sus manos, y con que cubrirse con alguna decencia; y que ésto, y otras cosas a este tenor, repitió muchas veces y con muchas lágrimas, salidas más de su corazón que destiladas de sus ojos.

No fue en vano su súplica ni se le desvaneció la esperanza, pues una noche – no está cierta qué noche fue la primera porque habían sido muchas las que repitió dicha súplica, sí que era *dulom*,¹² que llaman ellos, y es totalmente obscura y sin luna – comenzó a ver bultos y a distinguir en su casa poco a poco todos los trastos de ella, viendo cuanto habían en ella, aunque no con tanta claridad como solía ver de día cuando tenía los ojos buenos;

them the mercies that God has done for her, especially what I shall relate about next. With this all are totally astounded. Since she knows their habits and hears of their affairs, even their misdoings, which they are apt to hide from us, she tells them what she knows and condemns their sins. Certainly, experience has shown me that quite a few through her influence have made good confessions which many had never done as they should, and thus bettered their lives. They told me when they came to make their confession: "Father, I come instructed by *Tapihan*" (that is her name). What she tells all of them aloud is driven in like a wooden wedge itself. She has repeated it to me many times and is as follows.

Being blind for many years (it had been from eight to ten that she was totally so when I returned to these towns, and more than six months later she was in the same condition) she lacked everything she needed both for clothing as well as for food, for she ate by begging. Her husband, always in poor health, was not able to provide for her; nor were her sons and daughters because they were married and with children, living apart from her. One night, among others, she prayed to the Virgin with many tears to pity her and help her since she was now her handmaid and had no one to whom she could turn her eyes, both because she lacked bodily sight and because she could not expect sufficient help from people which only God and she could provide. She hoped that they would assist her. She only asked that she might give her what would be sufficient to enable her to live through her life, even though it should be by the labor of her hands and so that she might cover herself with some decency. This and other petitions in the same vein she repeated many times and with tears emanating more from her heart than dropping from her eyes.

Her plea was not in vain nor her hope dissipated. For one night, (it is not certain which one was the first because there had been many when she repeated her supplications; however, it was *dulom*,¹² as they call it, – that is totally dark and no moon) she began to notice shapes and to distinguish little by little all the furnishings in her house and could tell how much there was in it. But not with such clarity as she had been accustomed to do by day when she had good eyesight. She could see better, however,

pero sí con mayor que solía ver de noche en los tiempos pasados, de modo que distinguía muy bien todo lo que veía, y, aunque de rostro no conocía a persona alguna, por el aire y meneos, aun antes que hablasen, los conocía.

Esto lo sucedió algunas noches, estando de día tan ciega como siempre, sin ver cosa. Una de las noches sucesivas a ésto, como ella misma me contó, viendo que cuanto más obscura era la noche, veía mejor, se determinó bajar a la sementera de su marido, que era harto pequeña, por estar con poca salud, y bajó, y diferenciaba el arroz de las otras hierbas, y así se puso a escardar y limpiar un pedazo de ella todo el tiempo que fue obscuro hasta que viniendo la mañana no veía cosa.

Con esto se determinó a pedir *abacá* – de que son, como ya dijimos, las hebras con que tejen sus mantas – y comenzado a ir atando, como dijimos, y disponiendo lo necesario para hacer una manta con sus *tinagak* (ya dijimos cómo son), y son como las madejas, etc., urdió su tela, púsola en disposición de tejer y comenzó a hacerlo; y, la mañana siguiente a la noche en que había comenzado a tejer, vino y me refirió todo lo dicho, y, dudándolo yo, lo pregunté a una hija suya que la acompañaba, y me dijo ser así verdad.

Y añadió la ciega: “Padre, si por ser de noche, que vosotros no salís de vuestras casas, no puedes tú ir en persona a verlo cuando oigas el ruido del *sablayan* (ya dijimos lo que es) envía a tu fiscal mayor, o a tu criado, para que lo vea. Así lo hicimos; y no sólo los que habían ido por orden mio, pero otros muchos del pueblo, hombres, mujeres, porque ya habia corrido la voz, iban a verla tejer: y había de ser sin luz porque, en encendiendo los hachones de brea que ellos usan para alumbrarse, no veía; de modo que prosiguió su tela y la acabó, y otras muchas después de ella, pues en espacio de más de cinco años que yo he estado en dicho pueblo cuando escribo ésto, ha ido haciendo sus mantas, y, cuando quiere baja a la sementera a escardar o plantar algo todas las noches que no hay luna, porque habiéndola ve menos o nada.

than she used to be able to do at night in other days. In fact, she could distinguish very well everything she saw. Although she could not recognize anyone's face, by their manner and movement she knew them even before they spoke.

This happened to her for several nights following this, as she herself told me, she noticed that the darker the night, the better she saw. She decided to go down to her husband's field. This was especially small because he was in poor health. She went down and could differentiate between rice and the other grasses. So she put herself to weed and clean out a plot of it during the period that it was dark; as soon as the morning came she could not see a thing.

As a result, she decided to ask for abaca, from which as we have said come the fibers used to weave their cloth. She began to fix and to make ready what was necessary for making a blanket with her *tinangak* – we have already described what they are – which are like skeins, etc. She prepared the warp for her cloth and got into position for weaving and began to do it. The morning following the night when she had started weaving, she came and told me this. I doubted her and I questioned a daughter of hers who was accompanying her and she told me that it was true.

The blind woman added, "Father, it is so. Since you, Fathers, cannot go out of your house at night, you cannot go in person to see this. When you hear the noise of the *sablayan* (we have already described what it is), send your *Fiscal Mayor* or your servant to see it." This we did, and not only those who went by my orders but many others from the town, both men and women, since the story had already gotten around and they went to see her weave. She had to be without a light because, upon lighting the torches of tar which they use for illumination, she could not see. Therefore, she continued her weaving and finished it, and much more after that, for in the space of five years, that I have been in this town when I write this, she has gone on making her blankets. When she wishes, she descends to the field to weed or to plant something every night that there is no moon, because if there is one she sees little or not at all.

Y me trajo en una ocasión una manta de cinco brazas de largo que me dijo había tejido para mí, muy bien tejida, tan igual y tupida como de la mejor tejedora y de mejores ojos, la cual manta envié yo al Padre Rector de Manila, que era amigo y compañero desde España, para que la viese y mostrase a la Comunidad para que alabasen a Dios y vieses como era posible que una mujer vieja, pues tiene nietos de doce y más años, y ciega, sin ver poco ni mucho de día, podía tejer manta como aquella que acababa de tejer.

Esto es lo que pasó, y pasa hoy, con dicha mujer que, aunque puede ser no sea milagro, que ni lo confieso ni niego, es cierto ser cosa milagrosa, y que sin haber habido mudanza en lo exterior de los ojos, ni tener en ellos rastro alguno de potencia visiva, sino todos blancos como un papel, va ya para seis años que de noche ve al modo dicho, teje, escarda la tierra y hace todo cuanto los demás hacen de día, y aun puede coser su ropa y echar una vainilla llana, que es cosa a no haberla visto yo y tener a todo el pueblo por testigos, y aun a muchos de otros pueblos que han venido a verlo y la compran las mantas que hace con mucho gusto, y dan más por ellas que por las otras que tejen otras indias, porque dicen son mantas milagrosas, pareciera increíble, y los efectos que esta vista, aunque solo nocturna como hemos dicho, ha hecho en otros son muy buenos, porque son no pocos ni pocas los que han confesado generalmente, movidos de lo que a dicha mujer oyen, y algunos se han alistado en la Congregación, no siendo el último su marido, que, admirado de lo dicho como testigo de vista, se confesó generalmente de toda su vida muy despacio, es de la Congregación y vive como cristiano.

Y el motivo que tenía para ello fue decirme: “Padre, Dios ha hecho a mi casa y con mi mujer un tan gran milagro, que, siendo ciega y habiéndolo sido tantos años, ahora ve de noche y hace cuanto los demás de día, de que yo soy testigo; pues ¿cómo puedo yo dejar de dar gracias a Dios y confesar que El sólo lo es, que

On one occasion she brought me a blanket five *brazas* long which she told me she had woven for me. It was very well woven, as good and closely textured as that of the best weaver with much better eyes. I sent that blanket to the Father Rector at Manila, who was a friend and a companion of mine since we were in Spain, so that he might see it and show it to the community, so that they would give praise to God and so that they could see how it was possible for an elderly woman and a blind one (for she had grandchildren twelve or more years of age), who saw little if anything in the daytime, could weave blankets like those which she had just finished.

This is what has happened and is happening today with this woman. Although it may be that it is not a miracle, and I neither affirm or deny it; it is certainly a remarkable affair. For without having had any change in the appearance of her eyes and not having in them any trace of the power of sight (rather both are as white as paper) she continues for six years now since she began to see at night, in the manner described. She weaves, weeds the soil and does everything that the others do in the daytime. She is even able to sew her clothes and do a plain hemstich. This is something that I have not seen but have the entire village as witnesses, and even people from many other villages who have come to see her. They buy the blankets which she makes with great delight and give better prices for them than for those which the other native women weave, because they say that they are miraculous blankets. It might seem unbelievable and the impression which this sight, even though only by night, as we have said, has made on other is very salutary. Because quite a number, both men and women, have enrolled in the Confraternity, not the least of whom is her husband. He marveled at all this as an eyewitness and made a general confession of his whole life at great length. He is a member of the Confraternity and lives as a Christian.

The motive he had for this was, as he told me, "Father, God has performed in my house and to my wife such a great miracle that being blind, and having been so for many years, now she sees at night and does what the others do in the daytime. Of this I am a witness; how can I cease to give thanks to God and to confess that He alone is the one and no other can perform these marvels?

no otro no puede hacer estas maravillas? Y así, aunque algo tarde, quiero ser buen cristiano y vivir como tal, porque no me castigue Dios por incrédulo y desagradecido a este tan gran beneficio”.

Tuvo fama en su mocedad esta principal, de sacerdotisa – que las mayores lo eran de sus falsas supersticiones – y así es de mayor eficacia su ejemplo para todos. Esta digresión, que acaso tejieron los telares bisayas, se me perdone, que puede ser sirva a muchos para que alaben a Dios y vean cómo esta ciega sus favores.

Vengamos a los plateros, que acá llaman en su lengua *pandaisa bulayan*, que quiere decir “oficial o maestro de oro,” porque sólo oro era lo que labraban, y sabían labrar, en su antigüedad; porque acá no tuvieron plata, *saltem* en abundancia, como moneda, nunca hasta que han participado de la de los españoles, pues a ellos y al comercio de Nueva España se debe la mucha que en estas Islas y los reinos circunvecinos, y más que todos a la Gran China se ha esparcido, y se esparce así en moneda y barras como en otros vasos y vasijas que sirven para todos, y más para los templos y sus adornos, que todos ellos tienen, aun entre los más pobres indios bisayas, cada cual según sus fuerzas y poder.

Los oficiales, pues, de oro, aunque no fueron muchos en su antigüedad, háylos ahora en más abundancia y en casi todos los pueblos. Fueron algunos muy primos, como so ve hoy en las obras de su antigüedad que guardan en varias preseas de oro y de varias y primorosas hechuras; y, aunque hoy son muchos más los oficiales que labran oro – que su cantidad es ya mucho menos ahora que cuando recién llegados los españoles a estas Islas (ya dijimos la causa en otro lugar, y así no la vuelvo a repetir), aunque ella repetidamente obra, y durará mientras durare la codicia que trae acá a muchos, y traerá pues cada día crece ésta y las estorsiones con que se acaba aquél, a más y mejor.

La variedad de botones que usan ya ahora de oro, y mejor que ellos, las muchas diferencias de cuentas grandes y pequeñas, todas de labor de filigrana que llaman acá (si comunicada de los

Therefore, although somewhat tardily, I wish to be a good Christian and to live as such so that God will not punish me as unbelieving and ungrateful for this great blessing."

In her youth this noble woman had a reputation as a priestess, as were the superior ones in their superstitions. Hence, her example makes the greatest impression of all. For this digression, which perhaps the Bisayan looms have woven, I ask pardon. Possibly it may cause many to praise God and realize their blessings like this blind woman.

We come to the silversmiths who are here called in their language *panday san bulawan*, which means to say: "craftsman or master of gold". This is because only gold was what they worked on, and know how to work it in ancient times, because they did not have silver here. They never had silver, at least in abundance as money until they had learned about it from the Spaniards. To them and to the commerce with New Spain is owed whatever amount there is in these Islands and among the neighboring kingdoms. And more so, in Great China it appears both in money and bars as well as in vases and jars which are used by all, especially in temples and in their adornments. All of these, even the poorest Bisayan natives, possess them, each according to their strength and ability.

The goldsmiths, then, although they were few in number in ancient times, now are more numerous. In almost all the towns there were some very skillful ones, as can be seen today in their ancient skills which are preserved in various gold jewelry and elegant artifacts. Although today there are many more goldsmiths than in ancient times there is much less quantity of gold now than when the Spaniards had just arrived in these Islands. We have already dealt on the reason in another place and I shall not repeat it. However, it continues to be true and will do so while the cupidity lasts which drew many here and will draw them in the future. This greed grows greater every day and the extortions in which it usually ends become larger and wider.

The variety of gold buttons that they now wear and, more than these, the many different kinds of beads, large and small, all of filigree, as they call it here (whether communicated by Chinese

chinos a estos indios, o propia suya no lo sabré decir de cierto) es testigo cierto de que sabían su labor curioso, prolijo y vistoso mejor aun en su antigüedad que ahora, pues todo el oro labrado de su antigüedad, que se ve hoy, es de mejores quilates y labores que el que se labra ahora, porque labraban antes con más fidelidad, y ahora todo lo labrado de los sangleyes está maleado, y aun muchos de los naturales lo saben malear; y, dándole famosísimo color que, cuando nueva la presea con el tiempo se deslustra y enblanquece, mostrando la mucha mezcla que estos le echan y lo mucho que adulteran su fineza.

De este mismo labor hacían muchas de las arracadas (ya dijimos su variedad y hechura arriba en el *Libro Primero*, y así no repito) de que usaban, y usan hoy, las mujeres, y otras preseas.

Los *camagis*,¹⁴ que ellos llaman, y es un género de cadena, rollizo y redondo, propio suyo y de su antigüedad, pues raro es hoy el que los sabe labrar, es de mucha curiosidad y prolijidad en el labrarlos. Suélenlos tener, o tenían (algunos he visto yo), de su antigüedad de dos y más brazas de largo, aun doblados, y tanto que, estando en pié, los arrastra por el suelo; y solían (hoy ya menos) darse muchas vueltas a la garganta y cuello con uno de ellos.

Su hechura es toda de escaques, u óvalos, totalmente redondos o esféricos, pero cada uno de ellos ondeado y labrado a modo de una coronita con altibajos, y son como unas hebras de hilo en lo grueso.

Hay más y menos anchos. Los ordinarios son como un cordón, o torzal, mayor que un grano de pimienta; los mayores como lentejas grandes o algo más. Juntos, o ensartados, encajan también unos con otros que por acá todo el cordón es de una pieza, y sólo muy de cerca se conoce ser de infinitas piecicillas que, juntos hacen el dicho *camagi*, que por ser muy liso y bruñido, y más cuando es de oro de muchos quilates, parece muy bien y presea de más valor y curiosidad que se podía esperar de gente, al parecer, tan bozal e inculta.

to these natives or of their own origin, I do not know how to tell for certain) is sure evidence that they knew their curious, painstaking and artistic work better even in ancient times than today. For all the gold worked in ancient times that is seen today is of finer purity and workmanship than that which is fashioned today. This is because formerly they worked with more fidelity. Now everything that is made by the *Sangleys* is impure. Even many of the natives know how to debase it, and they give it the most remarkable color when the ornament is newly fashioned. In time it grows lusterless and becomes whitish showing the large mixture they have made and how much they have adulterated its fineness.

From this same work they made many of their *earrings*¹³ (as we have already spoken of their variety and workmanship above in *Book One* and, so I will not repeat it) which the women wore and do today, and other ornaments.

The *kamagi*,¹⁴ as they call them, is a kind of circular chain. It is of their own origin, and comes down from ancient times. Today anyone who knows how to make one is hard to find. To make one is a very artistic and tedious process. They customarily possess them or had them (I have seen some) from ancient times. They are two or more *brazas* in length, although doubled, and so long that when standing, (a person) drags them on the ground. They used to twist one of these many times about the neck and shoulders – today less so.

It is fashioned completely of *escaques* or ovals entirely rounded or spherical; but each one of these is hollowed and fashioned like a small little crown with raised designs.

Some are like fibers of thread in thickness and some wider than others. The ordinary ones are like a twisted braid or thread larger than pepper grain. The larger one are like large lentils or somewhat bigger. Strung together, each one joins the other and for this reason the string is like of one piece. Only close up can one realize them to be of minutely small pieces joined together to make up this *kamagi*. Since it is very smooth and shiny, especially when it is of very pure gold, it has a very pleasant appearance; it is a piece of jewelry of greater value and rarity than one could expect from people so seemingly crude and primitive in appearance.

Hacían en su antigüedad muchos de estos *camagi* de un oro que llaman *tunga*,¹⁵ que quiere decir “mitad oro y mitad *tumbaga*,” que es cierto género de cobre muy colorado y de tanta estima como el oro, no por lo rico sino por lo medicinal, porque de este mixto decían, y dicen hoy, que es contra malos vientos que suelen pasmar, y contra ponzonas. Y por esta causa se estiman tanto los anillos y ajorcas que usan hoy aun los españoles y españolas, preservativos de dichos males, lo cual tenían los *kamagi* dichos en su antigüedad, que por ser de la hechura y óvalos tan delicados y labrados, como hemos dicho, no se podían labrar sino de muy fino oro o de dicha mezcla por ser más correosa y quebrarse menos; que de otras mezclas era imposible hacerse.

Otro torzal usan, de otra hechura también antigua suya y prolija, que llaman *pinarugmok*.¹⁶ Este le hacen de hilos de oro, tan delgados como un hilo ordinario, que los entretejen tan apretados – cada uno hace su labor – y unidos que vienen a hacer un cordón de tantas esquinas como hilos lo forman, que son muchos y tan bien ordenados que, aunque se corte el dicho cordón – que tal vez suelen por alguna necesidad – quedan tan bien unidos que nunca se deshacen de suyo, y aun es muy difícil el deshacerlos si no quien lo sabe porque antes se enredan más.

Ya no se hacen ahora de estos *pinarugmok*, sino que en lo que labran de nuevo se acomodan a las cadenas de nuestro uso y a las que llaman bejuquillos, aunque éstos también los he visto yo de su antigüedad. Y es un modo de cadenilla muy espesa que parece redonda o sólida, aunque es de esclavones ovados y por ésto la llaman de “bejuquillo”, por los bejucos de acá – que los hay muy pequeños –, si bien el *kamagi*, que decimos, lo parece más.

In ancient times, they made many of these *kamagi* of a gold which they call *tunga*,¹⁵ which means "half gold and half *tumbaga*", and a certain kind of very red copper. It is valued as highly as gold, not for its richness but for medicinal properties because by it they are protected from airs which cause spasms and from infections. For this reason the rings and bracelets which even the Spaniards, both men and women, wear today as preventatives against these illnesses, are so highly valued. That is why they had these *kamagi* in ancient times. Because they are of oval shape and of such delicate workmanship, they cannot be made except from very fine gold or from this alloy because there are more ductile and less breakable and could not be made from other mixtures.

They wear another braided cord of another workmanship also of antiquity and intricate which they call *pinarugmok*.¹⁶ This is made of gold threads as thin as an ordinary thread which they weave in so tightly that each one requires separate work. Altogether they finally result in a braid of as many ends as there are threads which form it. There are a great number of these and they are so well arranged that even though the cord should be cut, which sometimes happens through some necessity, the threads remain so well joined that they never unravel. It is very difficult even to unravel them except by one who knows how, because they will get even more tangled.

These *pinarugmok* are not made any more. Rather, what they make now, they accommodate to the requirements of our style and to what they call "*little rattans*". However, I have also seen these which were made in ancient times. It is a kind of a little chain, very heavy and which appears round. It has, however, oval links. For this reason they call it "*little rattan*" because of the *rattans* here which are very small. However, the *kamagi*, as we have stated, appears larger. □

Chapter 6

ANNOTATIONS

[1] *Habol*. This is a material or blanket of *lanote* or some other material; also, ordinarily it is taken from the *lanote*. It is also considered as the *habul* or vesture worn by women as a skirt and in which others sleep in, be it of any kind. *Nahabul*: to weave a blanket or cloth, *pag-hablun*, vel, *hablu*: what is going to be woven, or the material to be used for the blanket. *Naghabul*: to dress in such material or skirt; *nahabul*, to weave the blanket." Sánchez [1711], *op. cit.*

In the Borongan, Samar region, on the eastern islands and Pacific Ocean side, the word *habul* means 'to wound'.

[2] *Bahi*. *Baha*. "The outside or the first layer of the *palma brava* which is durable and has a certain consistency. – Tree, palm, bamboo, very hard and cured." De la Rosa-Alcázar [1914], *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[3] *Manban*. "A certain type or kind of shrub; *baga kiniris nga mamban*, said of who talk thinly but seem to shout; *itun matilis nga tingug kay con kirisun an mamban magirlis, mambanun an ika nga бага burisan*. Sánchez [1711], *op. cit.*

"*Manban*: A rush; the bark is used to sow the nipa palms." De la Rosa-Alcázar [1914], *op. cit.*, p. 203.

[4] *Kuhon*. Unable to locate the term *kuhon* anywhere.

[5] *Sikuan*. Unable to locate the cited *sikuan*; persistently determined and attempting every possibility and with some good fortune the editors located the meaning under the entry: *sikuhan*: a shuttle, an instrument which the weavers utilize to pass the thread, silk, cotton or other similar things in between the thread of the warp. – A shuttle where one places the thread or twine to make the net or the a hammock. De la Rosa-Alcázar, 1914, *op. cit.*

[6] *Atip*. Or "*Atipun*: To adjust or to compose." Also, to add to or increase the bank of a river. Sánchez [1711], *op. cit.*

[7] *Bulang*. "The branch of the leaf of the *pugahan* palm." Sánchez [1711], *op. cit.*

"*Pugahan*: Palm; the leaves are wider than those of the coconut leaves; the shoot is spicy and causes great itchiness. In between the leaves is found the flint called *baruk*. If the shoot of the *pugahan* is pounded and placed at

the hole where the eel is hiding its forces the animal to come out half-dead; in this way it is easy to catch it. De la Rosa-Alcázar, 1914, *op. cit.*

"*Pugahan*: n. Fishtail palm, *Gargota cumingii*, (Ludd). Reused for boat braces.' Tramp, 1995, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

"*Pugahan*: A kind of wild palm; from its heart they produce the red *arasip*, the *bahi* is thick and black; the *ubud* very good though a little bitter. The Bisayans eat it boiled; the fruit in bunches like dates is good only for *calaos* and to sow it. Sánchez, 1711, *op. cit.*

Bulang: means something wide like the house, ship or similar thing. De la Rosa-Alcázar [1914], *op. cit.*, p. 63.

[8] *Sablayan*. "A string or some other thing tied to two poles, etc., so as to hang or put out something to dry like clothing, nets, etc. *Ibid.*, p. 272.

[9] *Balina*. Seemingly some of these Alcina terms are so highly specialized that they are not found in the lexicons, such as this. There is a term, however, under the entry *balinas*: to slip; to slide... could this be it?

[10] *Bayug*. This is an ancient name for the present town of *Pambuhan*, in northern Samar and west of Palapag. This term *Bayug* is a name of a tree, *Pterospermum niveum*, *Pterospermum diversifolium*, a small tree whose bark is used for dye. Tramp, 1995, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

"*Bayug*: a hollow wooden piece used in the tribunals by striking it, in order to call/invite the chieftains and other important people. De la Rosa-Alcázar, 1914, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44. *Bayug* or *Bayugun* is a male who has feminine characteristics and dresses like a female. Other terms for this are: *Asuy*, *Bantut*. Sánchez, 1711, *op. cit.*

[11] *Confraternity*. This is the Confraternity of Our Lady where the more thoroughly evangelized and more dedicated Bisayans became members. Alcina dedicates an entire chapter to this confraternity in *Part Two, Book 2*, Chapter 17.

[12] *Dulom*. Total darkness, as a reference to the moon.

[13] *Arracadas*. Earrings.

[14] *Camagi*. *Kamagi*. This *kamagi* is one of the most exquisite of jewelry among the ancient Bisayans. Gold collar made of very small cuts and so close that it seems to be only one piece. *Kinamagi*: a work similar to the decorations of the *kamagi*." Sánchez [1711], *op. cit.*

In *Part One, Book I*, Chapter 3, Alcina treats the Bisayan jewelry descriptively and also in the chapter about gold. Cf. annotations # 3 in *Part One, Book 3*, Chapter 3 for an extensive treatment of this piece of gold jewelry.

[15] *Tunga*. Half, middle, each equal of which a whole is divided in some things. To divide or break something into two parts in the middle.

"Tumbaga: Copper, red-color metal, brilliant, ductile, the strongest after iron. Stronger than gold or silver to which this *tumbaga* communicates strength in coins and after alloys. De la Rosa-Alcázar [1914], *op. cit.*, p. 372.

[16] *Pinarugmok*. In Part One, Book 3, Chapter 3, where Alcina treats the Bisayan Jewelry, he speaks of the gold-chain called *pinarugmuk*: a square-like chain of solid gold threads called *pinarugmok* (about the one and the other, both of which are their own artistic creations, we will treat later when we speak about the arts and sciences they knew. This last is a reference to the above cited Part One, Book 3, chapter 7, cf. annotation #3 in the above cited chapter for lengthy details.