

## The contribution of the Basque men to the Philippines\*

Rodríguez, Eulogio B.

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*Filipinar deitura asko euskal jatorrikoak direla azaltzen digu Eulogio B. Rodríguez, Filipinetako Biblioteka Nazionaleko zuzendaria. Espainia nagusi zeneko aro kolonialean, itsas armadako ofizial gehienak euskaldunak ziren, eta herrialdeko probintzia batek Nueva Vizcaya du izena. Filipinar uharteetako historian partaidetza garrantzitsua izan zuten zenbait euskaldun aipatzen du: Miguel López de Legazpi, kolonizazioko pertsonaia nagusia; Simón de Anda y Salazar, Guido de Lavezares eta Gabriel de Curuzeleagui y Arriola gobernariak; edo Melchor Oyanguren frantziskotarra, erlijiozko testu batzuen egilea.*

*El director de la Biblioteca Nacional de Filipinas, Eulogio B. Rodríguez, señala que muchos apellidos filipinos son de origen vasco; en la época de dominio colonial español, la mayor parte de los oficiales de la marina eran vascos y una provincia del país se llama Nueva Vizcaya. Cita varios vascos que tuvieron una intervención importante en la historia de las islas filipinas: Miguel López de Legazpi, personaje principal en la colonización; los gobernadores Simón de Anda y Salazar, Guido de Lavezares y Gabriel de Curuzeleagui y Arriola; o el franciscano Melchor Oyanguren, autor de textos religiosos.*

*Le Directeur de la Bibliothèque Nationale des Philippines Eulogio B. Rodríguez indique que beaucoup de noms aux Philippines sont d'origine basque; à l'époque espagnole, la plupart des officiers de marine étaient Basques et une province des Philippines s'appelle Nueva Vizcaya. Il cite plusieurs Basques importants dans l'histoire des Iles Philippines: Miguel López de Legazpi, personnage notable de la colonisation; les gouverneurs Simón de Anda y Salazar, Guido de Lavezares et Gabriel de Curuzeleagui y Arriola; enfin, le Père Melchor Oyanguren, franciscain et auteur religieux.*

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\* Archives Manuel de Ynchausti. Ustaritz.

Many of the Spaniards who had resided in the Philippines were the Basques (vascuences of vascongados). Although they did not constitute the biggest group, they were given the smallest tie of racial knowledge; they were known more as Spaniards than as Basques. Persistence is the basis of their character. Literature has preserved this significant verse of Bretón de los Herreros:

"No aguarde a que tu comiences:  
Quédase el rencor odioso  
Entre enemigos vascuences:  
Yo te venci rencoroso;  
Tu generoso, me vences."

The tradition of the "Arbol de Guernica" is preserved here.

There are many Spanish surnames or names in the Philippines that sound Basques, like Inchausti and Co. which had formed the nucleus of the Basques here. It had extensive property; was a big shipping firm; possessed abaca plantations in Albay; established industries of paints and miscellaneous things, wine and liquor factory etc... in Manila.

It is interesting to know that during the Spanish regime, the captains and officials of the ships or boats of Spanish and Philippine registry were mostly Basque men. The marine profession was very common among the emigrants coming from mother Spain.

The Basques are a peculiar race of people who probably occupied the whole Iberian peninsula at a remote date. At present the Basques are confined to the Spanish provinces of Biscay, Alava, Guipuzcoa, and Navaree, and the departement of Basses-Pyrénées of France, the number in Spain and France makes an aggregate total of about 600.000. Their native tongue, the Basque language, has no close affinity with any European tongue. They claim to have descended from the original inhabitants of ancient Iberia. Their industries are chiefly agriculture, mining and fishing. They are fond of music and celebrate their holiday, Sunday, by singing and dancing.

Five of those who had been governors-general of the Philippines were natives of Navarre: Don Fausto Cruzat y Gongora (1690-1701), Don Jose Raon (1765-1770), Don Marcelino de Oraa (1841-1843), Don Juan de Lara (1865-1866), and Don Domingo Morrones y Murrillo (1877-1880).

It is quite interesting to note that the name *basque* is applied to a short-skirted dress-waist worn by ladies, which was probably copied from the Basque costume. Sanchez Barcaiztegui Street in the district of Sampaloc, bears a Basque name, as are also those of Gaztambide and Don Fernando de Norzagaray. We add also the names of Legaspi and Lavezares, the Zabalburu and Don Gabriel Curuzaleagui (1684-89), Aguirre, Beitia, Eizaguirre, Ezguerra, Goicuria, Goyochea, Goyena, Goitia, Inchausti, Irureta, Iparraguirre, Iturbe, Lardizabal, Larraga, Larrazabal, Lizarraga, Larrinaga, and others here who are very popular. And to top them all we have the province of Nueva Vizcaya (Bizcaya) so named in honor of the Basques.

### MIGUEL LOPEZ DE LEGASPI

First and foremost among Basque characters closely connected with the Philippines, was Don Miguel Lopez de Legaspi, known in the Spanish history of colonization as the greatest colonizer and administrator that Spain had ever produced. Through tact, blood compact and treaties of freindship, he was able to win the Filipinos to his side to

cooperate in the task of colonizing the Philippines. And within seven years (1565-1572), the whole archipelago except Sulu and the mountain regions were already Christianized at the time of his death.

Legaspi, the First Spanish Governor of the Philippines, was a native of Zumarraga, Guipuzcoa, Spain and he was born in the early part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He went to Mexico in 1545 and became clerk of the *Cabilde* or the Spanish seat of government there. At that time, King Felipe II of Spain wished the Islands to form part of the Kingdom of Spain, so he appointed Legaspi in 1561 to lead an expedition to conquer the western islands. This expedition which landed at Cebu on April 27, 1565, was the fifth Spanish fleet to come to the Philippines.

Upon his arrival, he took possession of Cebu and other neighboring islands and immediately proceeded to build the fort in the town of Cebu and thereby made the first Spanish settlement in the Philippines. The distrust and the hostile attitude of the inhabitants were subjugated by Legaspi's friendliness with them. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of July, 1565, the image of the Santo Niño de Cebu was found somewhere on the shore of Cebu Island by a Basque soldier named Juan de Camus.

In Bohol, Legaspi met two friendly chiefs, Datu Sikatuna and Datu Sigala whom he won over in no time and with them made a blood compact of friendship and alliance.

Soon after, on June 3, 1571, Legaspi took possession of Manila. The image of Our Lady of Guia was found on the beach in Ermita. Although Legaspi was opposed by Raja Soliman, Raja Lakan Dula was nevertheless very friendly to the Spaniards. Legaspi decided to stay in Manila. He built wide streets and strong houses besides a church and a convent for the priests. Under his brilliant leadership, the Philippines was occupied and Christianized. It was he who had introduced Spanish culture into these Islands. He was governor from February 13, 1565 to the time of his death, August 20, 1572. Besides holding this position, he was given the title of *Adelantado* or Governor of the Ladrones Islands. His conquest of the Philippines marked the permanent implantation in these Islands of the Christian religion and civilization, for which as a result, a central government had to be organized. Oriental commerce was developed by the galleon trade which made Manila the center of commerce in the Far East. It was Legaspi who had firmly laid down the foundations of the Spanish colony here which had lasted for three hundred thirty-three years. He was a valiant conqueror a wise administrator and a true pioneer in the dissemination of European civilization among the less advanced peoples of the Far East.

### ANDRES DE URDANETA

Andres de Urdaneta, a wise priest and a brave soldier, was one among Legaspi's companions who came to the Philippines to implant the sword and the cross on Philippine soil. He was Legaspi's "spiritual leader and chief navigator".

Urdaneta was an Augustinian priest, born in Villafranca, Guipuzcoa, Spain, in 1498. He had taken part in the wars of Italy and Flanders where he was made captain. Later he joined the expedition of Loaisa and came to Mindanao in 1526 after which he went to the Moluccas and finally returned to Spain and became a priest in 1553. King Filip II asked Father Urdaneta to join Legaspi's expedition to the Islands in 1564 to Christianize the Filipino people. So when he was in Cebu, he preached the gospel to the people and baptized them in the

name of Christ and for the glory of Spain. But in 1565, he sailed for Mexico from where he proceeded to Spain to inform the King of Spain of Legaspi's success in Cebu and to appraise him of the conversion to the Christian faith of the people of the Islands. He played an important role in the history of the Philippines.

### **DON GABRIEL DE CURUZELEAGUI Y ARRIOLA**

Don Gabriel de Curuzeleagui y Arriola was a knight of the Order of Santiago and a member of the "twenty-four" of Sevilla and of the Supreme Council of War. He had been commander of the Windward Fleet (Armada de Barlovento) and had held other responsible positions on sea and land. He was a Vizcayan, a native of Elgoibar, Spain. He arrived at Manila August 24, 1684 and promptly reinstated the archbishop and the exiled auditors.

When Don Juan De Vargas Hurtado was governor (1678-1684) it was the State and not the Church that triumphed. Those times were dark days for Manila. It was said that there were many lawsuits and imprisonments. Don Fray Felipe Pardo was then the archbishop and he and the governor were bitter enemies. The archbishop disobeyed twenty different royal decrees. The governor banished the archbishop to Lingayen where the Dominicans cared for him.

On the arrival of the new governor, Don Gabriel de Curuzeleagui, in Manila, there was no archbishop and the people were left without any spiritual guide. With firm purpose and heroic determination, he revoked the sentence of banishment against Archbishop Fray Felipe Pardo, and restored him. But very unfortunately, these acts together with the arbitrary measures against Vargas and his friends, far from quieting animosities, further enkindled them.

The year 1685; the entire country was visited by the epidemic of smallpox which raged not only in the Islands but in all the kingdoms of China and Eastern India. There was also a great loss of crops on account of superabundant rainfall.

Don Gabriel was one of the best governors that the Islands ever had affable, pious, magnanimous, and very liberal. His term as governor lasted from August 24, 1684 to April 17, 1689. Upon his death, the governorship was left vacant. The Audiencia took charge of political affairs under Auditor Alonso de Avila Fuertes, knight of the Order of Alcantara.

### **SIMON DE ANDA Y SALAZAR**

Simon de Anda y Salazar, one of the best Spanish governors the Philippines ever had, was born on October 28, 1701, in Subijana, Alava, Spain.

He was auditor and was appointed by the Audiencia as lieutenant of the governor and captain-general. But in 1762 when the English attacked Manila under the administration of Archbishop Rojo, Anda did not like to submit under the authority of the English because he believed that subjecting himself to them was tantamount to surrendering the sovereignty, prestige, honor and glory of Spain. So he moved to Bacolor, Pampanga, where he proclaimed himself governor and recruited men for his army. He stopped the sending of food to the city in order to starve the British in Manila.

Anda was valiant and persistent. Although he lost in his battles with the English, he continued to fight them for more than a year and a half. He gave the English so much trouble

until April, 1764 when they had to leave the Islands in accordance with the treaty of peace between England, France and Spain.

Then Simon de Anda y Salazar went to Spain where he was well received at court and made councilor of Castilla. He told the king about the injustices of the friars to the Filipinos emphasizing that the Islands needed better government and better rulers. Anda returned to the Philippines as governor in July, 1770.

In his second term as governor, he proceeded against his predecessor and others and stirred the opposition of the regulars. He repaired the walls of Manila and within a few months brought about the construction of several war vessels. He established business relations with Batavia. He reformed the army and engaged in the construction of other public works. In 1774, Anda opposed the king's order to secularize curacies held by regulars and the same was repealed. Anda's rule was characterized by his energy, foresight, honesty, and conflicts with the regulars, or religious orders. He died on October 30, 1776. A monument to his memory was erected on Bonifacio Avenue, Manila.

### **GUIDO DE LAVEZARES**

Lavezares was the second Spanish governor (August, 1572-August, 1575) in the Philippines. He was a Biscayan who accompanied Villalobos during the expedition of 1542 and was appointed royal treasurer of Legaspi's expedition in 1564 by the Mexico Audiencia through sealed instruction to succeed Legaspi in case of the latter's death.

It was through the order of Lavezares that Juan de Salcedo subdued Ilocos and founded the town of Fernandina or Vigan and also subjected Camarines in 1573. During his regime, Limahong, the famous Chinese Adventurer, arrived in the Philippines and attached Manila with the intention of founding a settlement. The arrival of Salcedo with about two hundred Filipino soldiers turned Manila's defeat into victory. Limahong went to Lingayen and later left, never to return.

Through the intervention of Governor Lavezares, the Chinese emperor opened a Chinese port to Spanish trade. And more Chinese ports were opened later because of mutual trade relations between the Islands and China.

Lavezares was allotted certain *encomienda*, or lands, which were seized by his successor Governor Francisco de Sande (1575-1580) but King Philip II gave him an appointment for life as Master-of-Camp and restored to him his lost *encomienda* on account of his good services.

### **JOSE OYANGUREN**

In 1847, a Spaniard by the name of Jose Oyanguren made an extraordinary achievement which had brought honor to his name the conquest of Davao.

Oyanguren was a native of Guipuzcoa. He came to the Philippines in 1825, a refugee from persecutions which he encountered in Spain on account of his close adherence to the constitutional regime. In 1830 he was in Caraga (now Surigao) engaged in commerce and navigation along the coasts of Mindanao.

In 1840 he was appointed judge of first instance for populous province of Tondo, but the following year he ceased

as such. Upon hearing of the cession of the region of Davao by virtue of a treaty negotiated by Brigadier Bocalan and Governor Figuerea of Zamboanga with the Sultan of Mindanao, Oyanguren planned to make effective the control of that region. He proposed to the Captain-General, D. Narciso Claveria (1844-1849) that he be provided with arms and munitions; that he be given the command of the territory for a period with exclusive privilege to trade; that in return he would, with men of his own choosing and provided for by himself, subjugate the whole region, from Cape San Agustin to Sarangani point; that he would expel or pacify the Moros inhabiting the region, found Christian communities, provide them with agricultural implements, and establish means of communication with the gentiles of the interior of the Island, converting them to a civilized life and making them submit to the Spanish authorities.

Governor Claveria received the proposal with much satisfaction, for it agreed so well with his plans regarding the reduction of the wild tribes and the extermination of piracy.

But before giving formal acceptance, Claveria referred the matter to the Audiencia, in accordance with the laws of the Indias. Here the project encountered some opposition, on account of the long period of control which Oyanguren demanded, as well as the exclusive privileges to trade, which were considered extraordinary and without precedent. The Audiencia, therefore, sanctioned the project, with the stipulation that the terms submitted by Oyanguren should not be considered as a contract with the Government, but merely as a concession granted to him for a limited period, with the usual limitations. Accordingly, Governor Claveria, by decree of February 27, 1847, granted Oyanguren for a period of ten years control of the territory he might conquer in the region of Davao, with exclusive right to trade therein during the first six years, furnished him with artillery, rifles and munitions, and authorized him to organize a company of soldiers of his own choosing. It was agreed that the capital of the new province was to be limited to the region of Davao which was to be

named Nueva Vergara, and that some of the towns of the province of Garaga which were far from its capital were to be incorporated with the new province to be formed.

At the beginning of 1849, Oyanguren was already in possession of the whole coast of the region, and had started a campaign in the interior. In view of these successes the region was, by decree of January 29, 1849, created into a province with the name of Nueva Guipuzcoa, in honor of Oyanguren's native province. In April of the same year, the *S.S. Elcano*, under the command of D. Manuel Quesada, arrived at Davao with a force of infantry. With the cooperation of this force, Oyanguren attacked and captured the strongly defended fort and Mohammedan town of Hyo which obstructed communication with Linao, a town of the province of Caraga. With this achievement, access to the latter place was made possible and open and free communication through the valley of the Agusan was established for a distance of 50 leagues.

#### **FATHER MELCHOR OYANGUREN**

Father Melchor Oyanguren de Santa Ines, Tagalist, Franciscan religious author, born in 1688 in Guipuzcoa, Spain, arrived in the Philippines in 1717 and became priest of Los Baños, Laguna. He was very versatile in Chinese and Japanese languages in spite of the fact that he never stayed in China nor in Japan. He died in Mexico in 1747, leaving his MS. of a trilingual dictionary in Tagalog-Spanish-Cantabrian. He was also the author of a Japanese grammar printed in Mexico in 1738.

From the foregoing account of actuaciones of these Basque men, who at different times had come to the Philippines as colonizers, rulers, ministers and adventurers, we can fairly see that the Basques have in a large measure contributed in sowing the western culture and religion and have thus played a great part in shaping our history as a people.

Manila, 14 August 1948