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Nineteenth-Century Spanish Bureaucracy: A Case Study

FRANCISCO MALLARI, S.J.

In Naga City, Camarines Sur, by the bank of the Naga river,¹ there is a short crooked street called Dinagâ (see Map 1) which is bounded on the west by Elias Angeles Street, on the northeast by Pangniban Street and on the south by the Naga River. It is a narrow thoroughfare clogged with jostling tricycles and baby buses, devoid of sidewalks and lined with nondescript buildings on both sides. Nothing about it catches attention except its name which is, indeed, intriguing, especially to non-Bicolanos. For in Pilipino, the root word "dagâ" means "rat." Transformed into "dinagâ," it denotes a place that was infested with or ravaged by rats. But in Bicol, "dagâ" means "soil, earth, land." Transformed into "dinagâ," it is meaningless. How did this street acquire its name? Not one of those whom I approached in Naga, however sincerely they wished to help, knew the answer.

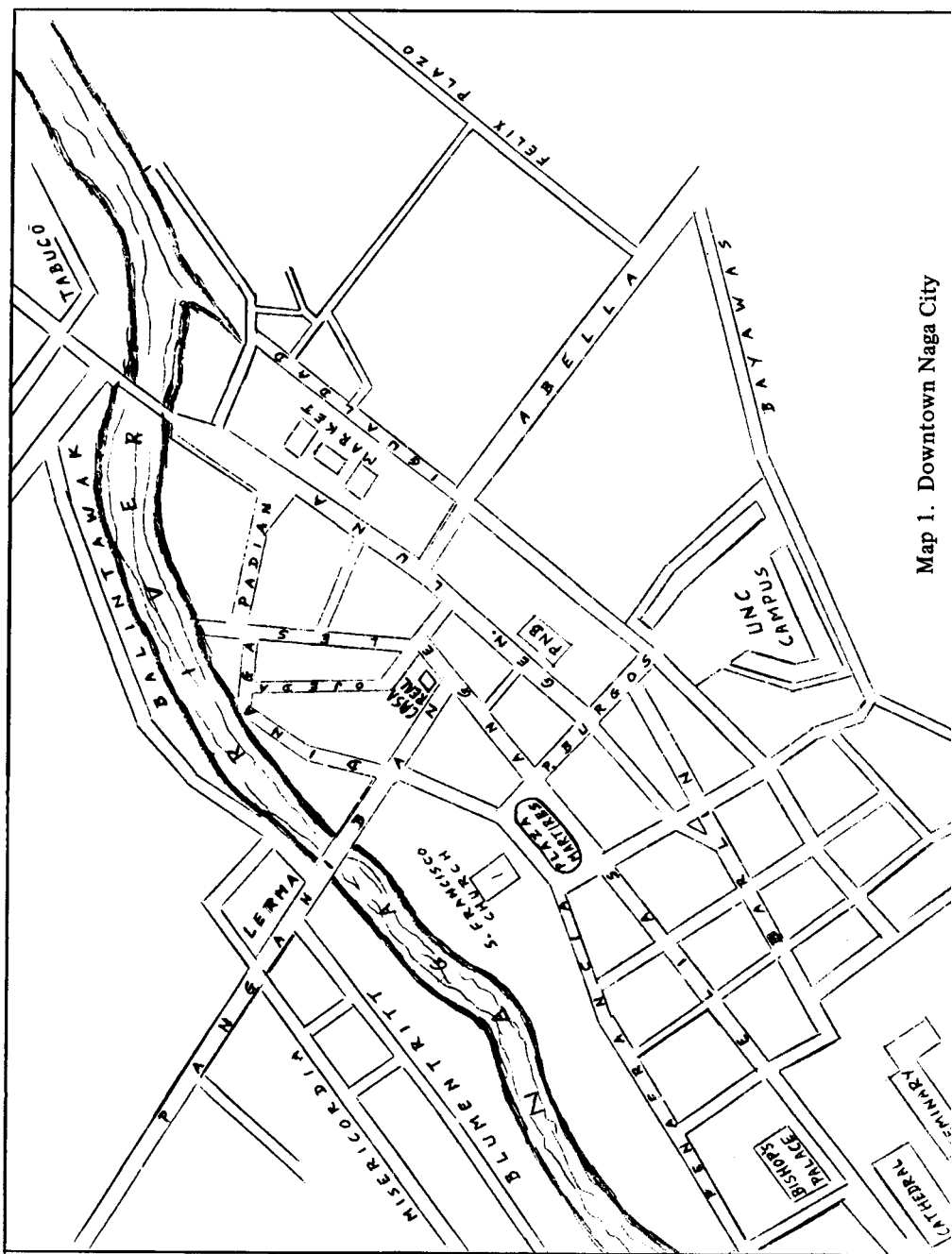
While doing research on another topic at the Museo Naval in Madrid, I chanced upon a good lead in one of the letters of Don Manuel Esquivel y Castañeda to Don Pascual Enrile, Governor General of the islands in 1830-35.² Its perusal rid me of any lingering suspicion of rodent infestation as the origin of the street name. Page five of the letter is a rough sketch of Esquivel's nineteenth century "canalization project to protect from floods the King's buildings in Nueva Cáceres."³ What this project was all about, and its possible connection to Dinagâ Street, I shall take up

For abbreviations used, see last page of the article.

1. This river was also known as Río de Francia and Río de San Felipe. AFIO D-10/22, fol. 10. Adolfo Puya Ruiz, *Camarines Sur: Descripción general de ésta provincia en Luzón acompañada de un plano del territorio que la provincia ocupa* (Manila: Establecimiento Tipográfico de la Oceanía Española, 1887), p. 107.

2. MN Ms. 1740, doc. 1, fols. iv-5.

3. Ibid., fol. 5. See Map 2.



Map 1. Downtown Naga City

in the succeeding pages after unfolding the events that led to the project's conception and realization.

PROJECT INITIATOR

First, Manuel Esquivel y Castañeda, the project initiator, was a Spaniard born of noble parentage in Spain in 1787. At an early age, he joined the navy as a cadet and was commissioned an ensign in 1804. Twelve years later, he retired from service due to poor health, but upon recovering his health, he joined the army as captain in 1830. Shortly afterwards, he left for the Philippines.

Not much is known about what happened upon his arrival except that, with royal approval, he was appointed *corregidor* of Camarines Sur, a province classified as a *corregimiento* (non-pacified) during his term of office. Before and even after his term, the mountains of Camarines, especially Mt. Isarog, were havens of *remontados* or *cimarrones* who occasionally came down to commit murders, highway robberies, arson, cattle rustling and other crimes that greatly disturbed the people's peaceful pursuit of their daily livelihood.⁴ Not even the inhabitants of the immediate environs of the capital, Nueva Cáceres, felt secure from their unlawful activities.

The present downtown Naga City was then known as Nueva Cáceres, the one-time settlement which captain Pedro de Chaves established in 1575 for the Spaniards at the confluence of the Naga and Bicol rivers.⁵ The original pueblo of Naga for the Indios was across the Naga river, the present Lerma and Balintawak dis-

4. PNA EP-CS, leg. 96, ex. 9, fols. 120-22v; ex. 11, fols. 150-52. *Remontados* or *cimarrones* were mostly Christianized natives who fled to the hills from established Christian towns, usually because they were dissenters to Spanish civil or religious policies or fugitives from justice. For a description of the distribution of *remontados* and *non-remontados* on the eastern side of Mt. Isarog and the disorders they created, see Manuel Crespo, *Memoria sobre la reducción de monteses del Isarog en Camarines Sur* (Manila: Establecimiento Tipográfico de Ramírez y Giraudier, 1881), pp. 25-26, 28-33. See also Francisco Mallari, "The Remontados of Mt. Isarog," *Kinaadman* 5 (1983): 117-30.

5. Pedro de Chaves, then the administrator of Camarines named the "city" after Governor Francisco de Sande's home province of Cáceres, Spain. Joaquín Martínez de Zuñiga, *Estadismo de las islas filipinas* (Madrid: Imprenta de la Viuda de M. Minuesa de los Rios, 1893), II: 44-45. Domingo Abella, *Bikol Annals* (Manila: n.p., 1954), I: 5-6. Its original name was "Ciudad de Cáceres." How it became "Nueva Cáceres" is explained in Abella, pp. 243-45. However, as early as 1691, it was called "Ciudad de Naga," and in 1804 it was referred to as "cabecera de Naga." *Reseña sobre el hospital diocesano de Nueva Cáceres* (Establecimiento Tipográfico de Santo Tomas, 1875), pp. 17, 27. It became "Naga City" officially when Republic Act No. 305 created Naga into a city in 1948.

tricts.⁶ (See Map 1) Chaves built Nueva Cáceres on a low-lying plain, swampy for the most part since it was easily flooded in rainy months by swollen streams cascading down Mt. Isarog, and by the Naga river which emptied into the copious Bicol river.

By the nineteenth century, signs of native restiveness and other European powers' interest in the Philippines finally jolted the Madrid government from her previous century's inactivity or counter-productive activity. A fresh movement for change swept through the islands. Some Spanish officials, both civil and religious, exerted real though often inadequate efforts to improve the economic, social and political life of the people, the better to realize a centralized control of the country, if they were not to lose it.⁷

Changes appeared in the Bicol region. Chaves would not have recognized the city he built. According to Joaquín Martínez de Zúñiga, in the nineteenth century, "there were no more traces of this city."⁸ Early in its establishment, it was designated as the residence of the province executive, the diocesan prelate and, later, the administrator of the tobacco revenue. However, through the years, it had been transformed into a conglomerate community consisting of the old towns of Naga, Tabuco and Sta. Cruz; the fourth, Camaligan, had separated in 1795 to become an independent municipality.⁹

The face of the city underwent further transformation when Fray Bernardo de la Concepción governed the diocesan see in 1816. Imbued with the century's progressive spirit, this prelate sought the alleviation of the poor, while erecting impressive religious edifices. Though Cáceres was called a city, he observed that

6. The separate existence of Naga from Nueva Cáceres is indicated in the following: "The Barefooted Franciscans of this province of San Gregorio have a convent within this See in the town of Naga beside the city of Nueva Cáceres." Juan Francisco de San Antonio, *The Philippine Chronicles of Fray San Antonio* (Manila: Casalinda and Historical Conservation Society, 1977), p. 217. I wish to thank Fr. John Schumacher, S.J., for his help in locating this quotation and his enlightening suggestions to improve this article.

7. Eliodoro G. Robles, *The Philippines in the Nineteenth Century* (Quezon City: Malaya Books, Inc., 1969), pp. 29-39.

8. Zúñiga, *Estadismo de las islas filipinas*, p. 416.

9. Félix de Huerta, *Estado geográfico, topográfico, estadístico, histórico, religioso de la santa y apostólica provincia de San Gregorio Magno* (Binondo: Imprenta de M. Sánchez, 1865), p. 215. Of the three, Naga had the largest population in 1811, but by 1829 Sta. Cruz and Tabuco's 6078 had surpassed Naga's 2637. AFIO 97/4. Puya, *Camarines Sur*, p. 247.

the seat of his see hardly qualified in appearance. Honorific names did little to dignify supposedly important buildings, for they were no more than crude wooden or bamboo and nipa structures. Such were the diocesan seminary and the bishop's palace which, in the words of exuberant Domingo Abella, "by no stretch of the imagination could be called a 'palace'."¹⁰ The cathedral church, another loose and rickety structure standing in the present public market site, a very swampy ground at that time, lay in ruins after the destructive earthquakes of 1811. Thus, this imaginative and energetic spiritual shepherd conceived and built a "consolidated religious centre" at the edge of the city, on higher ground, where he erected the new cathedral, seminary and episcopal residence, all planned to be of massive dimensions, in stone, brick and tile construction.

Twelve years after the work on the cathedral had started, on 1 October 1832, Manuel Esquivel y Castañeda took office.¹¹ As provincial executive, his main duties involved the civil, judicial and financial administration of his province, besides the defense against Muslim attacks, promotion of public works and other duties.¹² During his incumbency, he was responsible to Governor General Pascual Enrile, a hard-working public servant whose interest in the centralization of government in the islands led to efforts to develop the provinces. Soon in the Bicol region, a postal service between Manila and Kabikolan operated for the first time and, ten months before Esquivel assumed office, this governor general ordered Nicolás Enrile, a navy ensign, and José Ma. Peñaranda, a colonel from the Muslim wars, "to construct a fort in Camarines" and adopt other measures "to protect the coasts from the attack of Muslim pirates."¹³ He also ordered the latter to make a survey tour of a large part of Luzon, including the Bicol region, which "resulted in carefully prepared itinerary, plans and maps" which proved useful "in the construction of highways and

10. Abella, *Bikol Annals*, p. 147.

11. MN Ms. 1773, doc. 9, fol. 112. Manuel Esquivel was invariably referred to as *alcalde mayor*, *corregidor* and politico-military governor of Camarines Sur. *Ibid.*, fols. 101, 103, 104v; PNA EP-CS, leg. 67, ex. 17, fols. 329, 339b.

12. Luis Alvarez y Tejero, *De las islas filipinas* (Valencia: Imprenta de Cabrerizo, 1842), p. 14. Robles, *The Philippines*, p. 103.

13. Mariano Goyena del Prado, *Ibalon* (Manila: General Printing Press, 1940), p. 268. MN Ms. 1446, doc. 17, fol. 68. Sinibaldo de Mas, *Informe sobre el estado de las islas filipinas en 1842* (Madrid: n.p., 1843), I: 77. Jose Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la piratería malayo-mahometana en Mindanao, Joló y Borneo . . . hasta Junio de 1888* (Madrid: Imprenta y Fundación de Manuel Tello, 1888), I: 414.

bridges and the establishment of postal routes."¹⁴

Esquivel took up residence at the Casa Real. Unlike his predecessor who was a dilettante and a bureaucrat, a planner but not a doer, who must have profited from his three terms in office and license to trade,¹⁵ this young governor seemed to be a zealous official with a real concern for the welfare of the province as well as the city.¹⁶ Like Bishop de la Concepción, he decided that the city needed beautification, fire-prevention, public sanitation, preservation of public buildings and the like. He wrote to Governor Enrile on 20 December 1832, informing him of his great desire and determination to undertake important works and asking for his support, since there were bound to be opponents or critics. For instance, he thought of solving the problem of lack of communication by constructing a canal from Pamplona to Pasacao "to link the two seas" (Sibuyan Sea and San Miguel Bay); the problem of underpopulation in Burias island, southwest of Camarines Sur, he thought of solving by sending some unmarried women to that desolate place, but later desisted, when he realized the possibility of giving rise to a serious scandal. But it was the project to alter the course of the Naga river by digging a new channel and filling up the old river bend that he laid out for Enrile to see.¹⁷ (See Map 2)

NEED FOR PROJECT

As he sketched and explained it, this tributary of the Bicol river had swerved from its westerly course, meandered northwest, right-

14. Emma Blair and James A. Robertson, eds. *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1893* (Cleveland: Arthur A. Clarke, 1903), 51: 55.

15. In his 13 December 1831 letter to Pascual Enrile, José Ma. Peñaranda described how the alcalde mayor, his host in Nueva Caceres in the course of his survey tour, owned a schooner for use in trade. MN Ms. 2228, fol. 10, 25; Alvarez y Tejero, *De las islas filipinas*, p. 15. BN Ms. 20325, fols. 56-56v; Tomás de Comyn, *State of the Philippines in 1810*, trans. William Walton (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1969), pp. 95-96.

16. Governor Esquivel reported the crimes of Mt. Isarog *remontados* and the measures he intended to take. PNA EP-CS, leg. 96, ex. 9, fols. 120-21; ex. 17, fol. 207. For the welfare of the province, he gratuitously offered to take responsibility of the canalization project. PNA EP-CS, leg. 67, ex. 17, fols. 334, 337b.

17. MN Ms. 1740, doc. 1, fol. 1v, 2v. After Esquivel and he made an inspection tour of the ports of Cabusao, Pasacao and Pantaon in 1832, José Ma. Peñaranda wrote to Enrile that Esquivel was "very determined to open the [Pasacao] canal." MN Ms. 2228, fol. 29v. See F. Jagor, *Viajes por filipinas*, trad. del Alemán por Sebastian Vidal y Soler (Madrid: Aribau y Cía., 1875), p. 171. He started work on the canal before 13 June 1833 but met with financial difficulties which probably forced him to abandon the project later on. MN Ms. 1740, doc. 1, fol. 6.

ed itself, then plunged southwest and resumed its original course. Unless checked in its northwesterly divergence, the King's storehouse and the Casa Real would be in the erratic river's path. Worse yet, the river had swept up to the very edge of the shabby market stalls and the *Administración de Tabaco* which needed shoring up to prevent its toppling over when the strong floods came. However, with the proposed channeling, he believed these edifices would be out of the river's way and future expenses curtailed.¹⁸

It was unfortunate that the Naga river became an imminent threat, if not to life, at least to property. It was a convenient waterway with many uses besides the transport of market commodities and people. Downstream, the inhabitants brought their wash and took their baths, while upstream, past the present Peñafrancia bridge, they fetched their drinking water at low tide; the water was then bluishly clean and salubrious, flowing smoothly on a sandy bed.¹⁹

Esquivel further informed the governor of an existing *expediente* or dossier for the construction of a dike or embankment costing ₱2,000. He thought he could construct his proposed channel with ₱1,500, perhaps even less; but he needed the additional funds for relocating the houses from the affected site and for some other minor works.²⁰

He foresaw forthcoming benefits for the Royal Tobacco Revenue, a new market place at the bend to be filled in, the moving of decrepit huts farther away from the Casa Real, hence freeing that edifice from the constant hazard of fire which frequently occurred in Nueva Cáceres, for "the houses were very close to each other and most were entirely of *anajao* [a variety of Philippine palm]" and, lastly, a greatly enhanced face of the city arising from a "beautiful market square."

18. Esquivel's preoccupation with floods was well founded. Their frequency and the destruction wrought in the neighboring towns of Milaor, Minalabac, San Fernando, Gainza, Camaligan and other parts of the province till late nineteenth century are recorded. AFIO D-10/22, fols. 22-23; Puya, *Camarines Sur*, pp. 119, 122, 132, 135, 138, 154-57; Huerta, *Estado geográfico*, pp. 188, 192. MN Ms. 1740, doc. 1, fol. 1v.

19. Even after Esquivel's time, drinking water was fetched from Borabot, at the bank of the Naga river; families with servants had to make sure their slothful servants did not fetch it from the Bicol river where the water was dirty. Puya, *Camarines Sur*, p. 109; Huerta, *Estado geográfico*, p. 182; Crisanto Castro, Sr. (a septuagenarian residing near Dinagá Street), private interview held in his residence, Panganiban Street, Naga City, August 1982.

20. MN Ms. 1740, doc. 1, fols. 1v-2.

So far there were no constraints except the rumpus raised by some *principales* (leading citizens) who owned the market stalls fronting the Casa Real. They were fearful that "they would be left without their shops" and made to shoulder the cost of relocation. To forestall the *principales* from misleading Enrile, the judicious Esquivel wrote him a rather "lengthy explanation" including the above-mentioned rough sketch.²¹

The documents are silent on the definite time he started his work but as of 20 December 1832, he had not yet begun working, though the paper work was already completed. Meanwhile other projects of far-ranging significance took up his working hours. Although by 1830 the nightmarish Muslim raids in Kabikolan had already begun to decline, valiant and consistent measures for defense did not slacken.²² Esquivel was as absorbed in the construction of *faluas* (light armed vessels) as in the Pasacao canal which badgered him no end, for inadequate funds and poor supervision slowed down the work.

Definitely determined to push through with his Naga river project, he finally submitted his formal project proposal on 13 August 1833. In a letter two days later, he informed Enrile that the *junta superior* of the Royal Tobacco Revenue would be the body to deliberate on his proposal, and implored him to see to its favorable outcome.²³ This letter quickened the process.

Different agencies and knowledgeable persons were consulted. For their engineering knowledge and familiarity with Camarines Sur, military engineers José Ma. Peñaranda and Bonifacio del Corral were consulted. These two extolled the project. If *repartimiento* workers (natives obliged to devote a definite period of time in public services)²⁴ would be utilized, Peñaranda optimistically vouched for the sufficiency of ₱2,500 not only for the canalization but even for the relocation of the huts; and to lighten the

21. Ibid., fols. 2-2v.

22. Norman Goodner Owen, "Kabikolan in the Nineteenth Century: Socio-Economic Change in the Provincial Philippines" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976), pp. 44-45.

23. MN Ms. 1740, doc. 1, fols. 6-6v, 8, 9, 11-12, 13v-14.

24. PNA EP-CS, leg. 67, ex. 17, fol. 334. Even till late nineteenth century, the custom in the Bicol region of using *repartimiento* workers or *polistas* for religious or government works continued. Bishop Francisco Gainza is reported to have asked each province to send *polistas* to work in the construction of a lepers' hospital in Cáceres. *Reseña sobre*, p. 94. Travellers from Nueva Cáceres to nearby Milaor had to cross the Bicol river on rafts manned by *polistas*. Puya, *Camarines Sur*, p. 115.

workers' burden, he recommended a dole of rations and some *cuartos* every week for their tobacco and buyo.²⁵ But after studying the project and the Peñaranda-Corral report, the commandant of engineers, Don Mariano Goicoechea, expressed surprise at the boldness of the plan and withheld his opinion pending further clarifications. He simply could not understand how so small an appropriation could be sufficient to accomplish or even start so big an enterprise. The residents of Naga pueblo reacted favorably, even to the extent of presenting a supporting document.²⁶

Since the future benefits from the project were assured in the reports of Peñaranda, Corral and Goicoechea, the head office of the Royal Tobacco Revenue made known to the general superintendency of the treasury the "utility and convenience" of the project. Then on 2 September 1834, the junta superior of the Royal Ministry of Finance, fully supporting the project, directed the Royal Tobacco Revenue to contribute ₱2,500 toward the execution of the plan, and commissioned Esquivel to manage it. The Royal Tobacco Revenue was most willing to contribute the stated sum in order to avoid the greater expense of putting up a wall to protect the Administración de Tabaco building from floods.²⁷

COMPLETION OF PROJECT

Nothing is known about the time of the project's completion. Esquivel finished it at considerable financial sacrifice on his part. This is clear from an expediente dated "1838 y 1839," which he wrote as an ex-governor, petitioning Superintendent Luis Urrejola for the reimbursement of the ₱1,464, 7 reales, and 4-1/2 cuartos that he had spent for the project after he had exhausted the outlay of ₱2,500.²⁸ This was the unfelicitous outcome of his own miscal-

25. PNA EP-CS, leg. 67, ex. 17, fol. 330. Buyo is a wad of betel leaf (Chavica betel) with a piece of areca nut and slaked lime for mastication. Among the Bicolanos, it was a pastime for men and women to chew buyo and smoke tobacco – though often tobacco was also masticated like buyo. Footnote in Jagor, *Viajes*, p. 13. The much sought-after betel leaves used to be produced in barrio Duang-puro, Libmanan, Camarines Sur. Puya, *Camarines Sur*, p. 220. For the sufferings of the Bicolanos from obligatory services and the insufficiency of a ration of rice and a weekly *real* to sustain a family, see Fr. Diego Solís' letter to Pascual Enrile, 30 December 1830, MN Ms. 1662, doc. 64, fol. 217.

26. PNA EP-CS, leg. 67, ex. 17, fols. 330, 331b, 333b, 336b.

27. *Ibid.*, fols. 330, 332-332b, 334.

28. PNA EP-CS, leg. 67, ex. 17, fol. 330, 334b. The expense was suspected to be larger since Esquivel had already withdrawn the ₱2,500 when he was only half-way

culation together with his advisers, Peñaranda and del Corral, whom Miguel Velez y Cavo from the general auditing office of the Royal State Treasury condescendingly called "two army officers who were not experts," whose opinion "ought to be very fallible. . . like Esquivel's," "as is frequently the case with the opinion of engineers."²⁹

In spite of all Esquivel's efforts to cut expenses, the total cost amounted to ₱3,964, far above the approved operating expense. He presented his request to the general auditing office of the Royal Tobacco Revenue which rejected it until he could obtain the proper approval from the superintendent of the treasury. So, he directed this petition to Luis Urrejola.

Although Esquivel's arguments justifying his claim for repayment are few and brief, his line of reasoning sheds further light on his personality. He was not a good bureaucrat; rather he was a practical public official whose military orientation had shaped his thought structure and behavior patterns. In overseeing this project, he acted a number of times like an army officer exercising his initiative in a critical situation in the field. For instance, he told Urrejola in his letter that what was at issue was not work he had arbitrarily accomplished but a commission entrusted to him. When he had overspent the official appropriation, he claimed that it was impossible to observe proper procedures (i.e. suspend the work and send for fresh instructions) without wasting the expenditures already incurred in the digging of the new channel and filling of the river. In view of this, he requested Urrejola to reimburse him.

through in his work. Considering the salary received by a province head in Esquivel's time, the amount he wanted reimbursed must have been substantial to him. To give an idea of salaries, Manuel Bernaldez y Pizarro, an oidor of Manila, proposed in 1827 that a Camarines province executive should be given a fixed salary of ₱1000. BN Ms. 20325, fols. 57v-58. Around 1850, after Esquivel's term, the salary was only ₱600. Manuel Buzeta, *Diccionario geográfico estadístico histórico de las islas filipinas* (Madrid: Imprenta de la Peña, 1851), p. 102.

29. PNA EP-CS, leg. 67, ex. 17, fol. 334b. Jose Ma. Peñaranda might have committed an error in judgment but in fairness to the man, he acquitted himself so well as aide-de-camp, adjutant and military engineer under Pascual Enrile that he was appointed governor of Albay on 14 May 1834, and in that position, he transformed Albay from a backward province into one of the most progressive, with many roads, public buildings, bridges, industries and a well-developed agriculture. He was one of the few dedicated and honest governors before 1844. At his death, the grateful populace of Albay preserved his memory with a monument in the plaza of the provincial capital. Blair and Robertson, *The Philippines*, 51: 55-56. Robles, *The Philippines*, p. 122; Jagor, *Viajes*, p. 100. His meritorious services were cited and his appointment as corregidor of Albay was called a just reward in MN Ms. 2284, fols. 93-93v.

He ended with a tone of urgency by mentioning his necessary departure for Spain in a short while.³⁰

The government consulted pertinent agencies and officials on Esquivel's reimbursement case. Their opinions, though extremely concise, offer us a glimpse of the century's typical bureaucratic mentality. Worthy of note is the negative reply from the head office of the Royal Tobacco Revenue, dated 11 January 1840.³¹ This agency, it asserted, contributed the amount of ₱2,500 in expectation of the prospective benefits from the finished project but, since the Casa Real, King's storehouse and the city also benefited (extensively at that), the head office decided to turn down Esquivel's petition. It further asserted that Esquivel himself previously guaranteed the sufficiency of the initial appropriation of ₱2,500 and that, on 7 September 1833, the head office had anticipated in its recommendation to render null and void any future reimbursement claims such as Esquivel's, since "in place of other planned hydraulic works" it would have to contribute ₱2,500, no less no more.

In February 1840, a council headed by Luis Urrejola and composed of ranking officials Tomás Sánchez Quintanar (absent in the deliberations), Dionisio Vineres, Tiburcio de Gorostiza and Juan Manuel de la Matta, after having deliberated on the beneficial effects of the project and opinions of the fiscal or prosecuting attorney and the *assessor* or counsellor, approved petitioner Esquivel's over-expenditure. It obliged the Royal Ministry of Finance and the *Caja de Comunidad* of the province to reimburse, on a fifty-fifty basis, the amount sought by the petitioner.³²

PROFITABLE RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

Before Esquivel left for his native country in 1849, he had the pleasant experience of witnessing his work's profitable results which certainly far exceeded the invested money and labor. Besides the Casa Real and King's storehouse, the Administración de Tabaco was secured from the constant peril of destruction by flash floods in monsoon months. This stopped the drain on the finances

30. PNA EP-CS, leg. 67, ex. 17, fol. 330, 330b.

31. *Ibid.*, fols. 331-40b. All the succeeding data in this paragraph are taken from fols. 331-32b.

32. *Ibid.*, fols. 338b-40.

of the Royal Tobacco Revenue caused by the annual expensive repairs of the damages to the edifice and its auxiliary buildings occasioned by their proximity to water. The reclaimed land furnished a few more square meters of space for an attractive market square, ridding the former river bank opposite the Casa Real of its clusters of nipa and bamboo stalls which had been a perennial eyesore.³³ To sum up, a change in the river's course propitiously changed the city's appearance and saved valuable property.

Nueva Cáceres, moreover, was not the sole beneficiary. A cursory survey today of the reclaimed area enclosed by the Naga river, P. Burgos and General Luna streets (see Map 1) shows that twentieth century Naga City is also better off, thanks to former Governor Manuel Esquivel's imaginative canalization project.

But now what can be said about the derivation of Dinagâ Street's intriguing name? It seems reasonable to advance this opinion: a river bend was covered with or filled in with earth. By inference from this historical fact, "dinagâ" is a shortened form of the Bicol word "dinagaan" meaning "covered with or filled in with earth." Presumably, Dinagâ Street was so named, wittingly or unwittingly, to preserve the memory of an actual event — the filling in of a river bend — right in the vicinity where this unpretentious but historic side-street lies.

But interesting as the origin of Dinagâ Street's name may be, it has led us to a passing view of Nueva Cáceres: its establishment and inhabitants, its development and growth, under Spanish civil and religious administrators. (If their good works were an index to their integrity and efficiency, they deserve to be truly regarded as well-meaning and efficient officials. Without detracting from their devotion to Crown and Cross, they exhibited unprecedented qualities of inventiveness and independence in the discharge of their duties. Hence through their acts, we obtain quite a good look at the operations of the Spanish bureaucracy at the middle and higher level.)

The events we unfolded specifically brought into focus not only the performance of an inventive and independent provincial executive and his beneficent relations with higher authorities but also

33. Ibid., 336b-37, 339. Apparently by the 1850s there was a need for a bigger site. During the term of Alcalde José Olaguer Feliu, "thirty-two bamboos and nipa shops and others of stone" were constructed in the plaza in 1851, further improving the city market; Owen, "Kabikolan," p. 321.

the flexible and expeditious interaction among the middle and higher echelons of the Spanish colonial administration. To a student of history, these phenomena undoubtedly arouse more questions than they answer, for inventiveness and independence were frowned upon by the uniform-minded central government. Flexibility and speed in administrative procedures were not characteristics of the systematically organized colonial bureaucracy since the time of the paternalistic Hapsburg rulers. On the contrary, Spanish bureaucracy was notorious for its slow-grinding machinery which was an inevitable consequence of its deep distrust of subordinates who were required to faithfully perform their bounden duties and refrain from independent action or novelty.³⁴

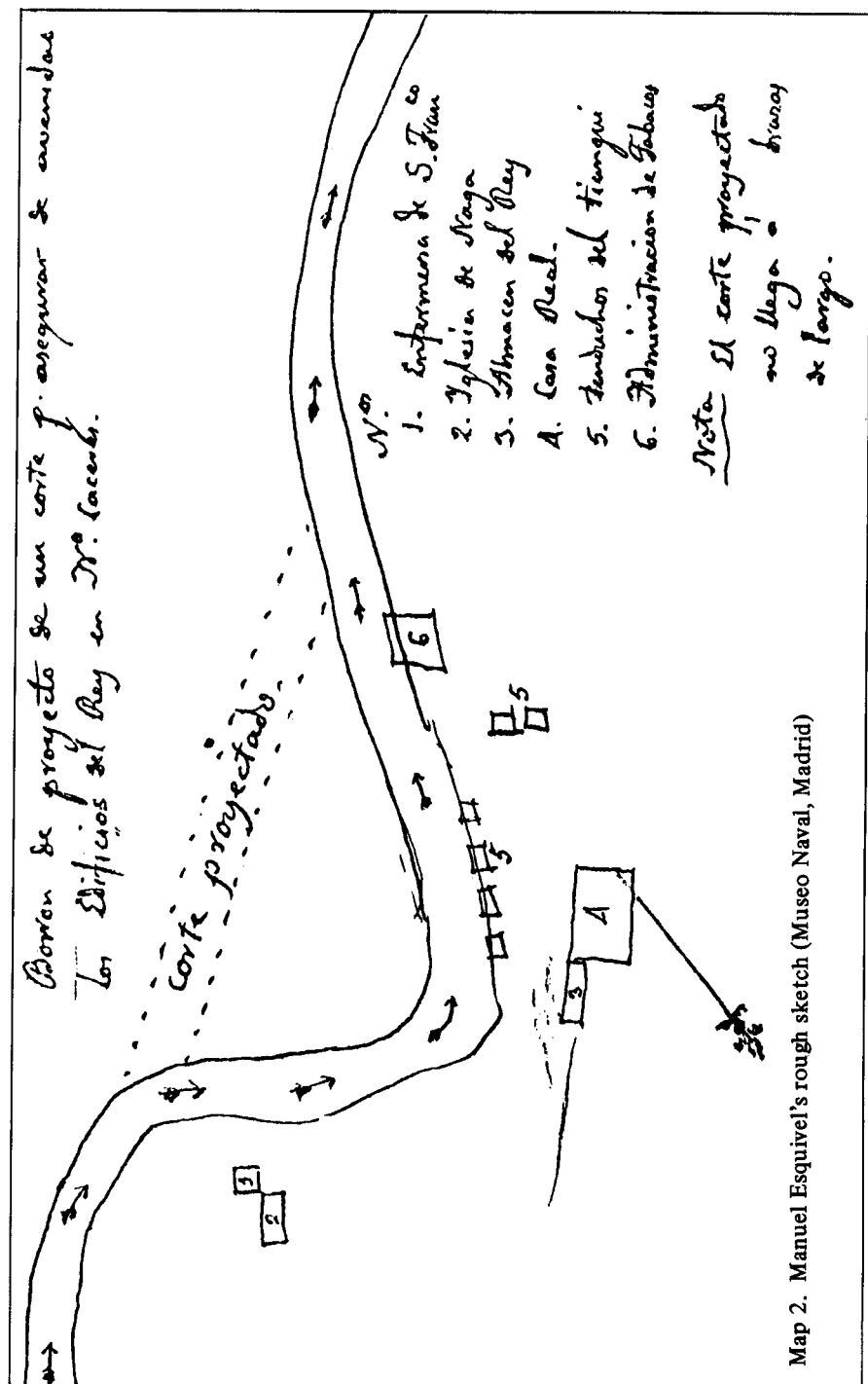
CONCLUSION

To a certain extent, this short study has presented a contrasting picture of a well-oiled bureaucratic mechanism that operated smoothly and effectively at the first half of the nineteenth century. Routinary references to central or higher authority and inter-departmental consultations were observed, but the unnecessary delays and procrastinations which were the bane of the colonial government even under the relatively liberal Bourbon monarchy were not evident. Instead we encountered thoughtful consideration and dispatch in the approval of Manuel Esquivel's project, and resolution of his reimbursement case.

But is this a true picture of the colonial bureaucracy — or merely one of the rare exceptions to its customary operations made possible by Manuel Esquivel's easy access to the corridors of power? After all, he was not only a relative of Governor Pascual Enrile but also a peninsular from a noble stock. And if Feodor Jagor, one of the foreign travellers who visited these islands shortly after Esquivel's term, is to be believed, provincial executives with enthusiasm for proposing development projects promptly lost their initiative and became apathetic on account of the crippling red tape.³⁵

34. Roger Bigelow Merriman, *The Rise of the Spanish Empire* (New York: 1918-34), III: 649, as cited in C. H. Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1963), p. 72.

35. Jagor, *Viajes*, p. 101.



Map 2. Manuel Esquivel's rough sketch (Museo Naval, Madrid)

To resolve this query many more in-depth studies of the Spanish colonial bureaucracy of that period in Philippine history are needed.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

AFIO – Archivo Franciscano Ibero-Oriental, Madrid, Manuscrito

BN Ms. – Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid

MN Ms. – Museo Naval, Madrid, Manuscrito

PNA EP-CS – Philippine National Archives, *Erección de Pueblos-Camarines Sur*