

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

---

## **Ill-Conceived Assistance: The Economic Development of Burma**

Review Author: Francisco Araneta

*Philippine Studies* vol. 6, no. 1 (1958): 128–131

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>

## V

There is a more fundamental defect of this book. The author of this otherwise excellent study does not seem to have taken into account certain basic principles of Jesuit pedagogy. We have ourselves, in several modest attempts, endeavored to define these principles. Father Matthew Fitzsimmons S.J. in a thorough review of Father Ganss' book (*Jesuit Educational Quarterly* New York XVII, 220 ff.) has done us the honor of quoting what we have said on the subject.

## VI

Father Ganss (on pp. 110-111) makes a brief remark that should be taken to heart by all educators: "A striking characteristic emerges from the correspondence of [the early Jesuits] and Ignatius about education: an energetic eagerness to experiment. They discussed and planned ceaselessly in their efforts both to devise a curriculum better adjusted to the emerging needs of their day and to improve their methods of teaching." *An eagerness to experiment*: that is a sign of youth and vitality. With it there is progress; without it there is stagnation.

That is of course only one side of the picture. The other side was Ignatius' certainty about the goal to be aimed at. The early Jesuits were eager to experiment with methods and with materials: but they always knew where they were going.

MIGUEL A. BERNAD

## ILL-CONCEIVED ASSISTANCE

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF BURMA. By Everett Hagen. Washington D.C. National Planning Association. 1956. Pp. 88. \$1.25.

THE thoughtful reader who leaves this booklet at the end of Chapter IV has learned an object lesson in sociology; that the foreigner who would help a retarded people must first understand the institutions he would like to change. If the reader decides to see the book through to the end, he begins to wonder whether the author has really learned the lesson he so aptly teaches in the early chapters.

During the period of Burmese independence, practically every Burmese boy used to receive sufficient elementary education to enable him at least to read. This was achieved through the monastery schools. When the British took Southern Burma, a great many of the people fled north to new villages where no monasteries existed. When the British finished their conquest of all Burma they offered help to such monasteries as would comply with British-set standards. Few of the monasteries cared to comply, and as the government was not willing to adjust its regulations to suit the existing schools, the end result was a gradual extinction of what had once been a very broad system of elementary education, a system of education which, in the beginning of the 19th century, had given Burma a literacy rate which was almost certainly higher than that of Western Europe, Britain or the U. S.

The Burmese had developed, previous to the coming of the British, a very simple and sensible land-tenure system that protected what we call the family-farm and prevented the formation of large landed estates. By that system, land could be "mortgaged" but not sold. Under this arrangement the creditor obtained the use of the land, but the land could always be reclaimed by payment of the principal and the interest. What made the arrangement effective was a further provision by which, no matter what the interest *rate* was, and the time elapsed before final redemption of the land, the total interest payments could not exceed the principal.

When the British completed the conquest of Burma, "In order to create clear records of land ownership quickly to establish a basis for taxation, early colonial administrators declared the man and wife who were cultivating land at the time of their survey to be the 'land holders.' This administrative decree not only destroyed the basis of family life in the village, it also wiped out the former ownership of land which happened to be lying fallow that year. Under it, the courts supported any unscrupulous individual who got his name on the land records as holder of such land or of village common land. Further, after making land alienable the administration enabled money-lenders to claim it on the basis of a document which appeared to be a transfer, but was, in fact, simply the customary acknowledgment of a loan. On the basis of such documents the courts evicted borrowers from their land" (pp. 23-24).

In place of the ancient and deeply respected customs of the people, the British introduced a fixed code of law which seemed to the Burmese capricious, arbitrary and corrupt. They abolished circle headmen and thus wiped out a precious system of local self-government. Finally they undermined the power and influence of Buddhism without at the same time substituting a comparable religious force. The net result of these thoughtless changes was a complete disruption of the bases of social order in Burma.

Having been deeply impressed by the positive harm caused Burma by the muddling British administrator, one reads with mis-giving on page 82 of this pamphlet: "The United States can provide assistance toward the solution of Burma's problems in economic development through technical advice in methods of education and training, *in the alteration of institutions* and procedures, and in production and management methods." (*Italics inserted*).

What can the author mean by "alteration of institutions"? On page 62 the author reports that in Burma one speaks deferentially to a considerably older man, using the title of address "U." Farther down the page he has no doubt that the behavior pattern that stems from this reverential attitude is one cause of ineffectiveness in government administration because it keeps them from changing procedures that are inefficient merely out of an exaggerated sense of respect for superiors! At this rate Mr. Hagen might try to improve Philippine government administration by changing our excessive respect for superiors which we manifest by the use of "opo" instead of "oo" when the younger ones among us talk to their elders.

The reviewer must hasten to point out that the shortcoming noted above should not be considered typical of the pamphlet. Substantially the work is both lucid and sober and should be read by anyone who would like some concrete basis of comparison to appraise our own effort at economic development.

This is No. 96 of the series of Planning Pamphlets put out by the National Planning Association, an association responsible for such publications as the fifteen case studies on the causes of industrial peace. After indicating the importance of Burma to the western world in the opening chapter, three succeeding chapters carry the reader through what proves to be the most significant and interesting part of the work, a brief socio-economic history of Burma. Chapter V reviews the present economy, Chapter VI presents the

problem of economic growth and offers policy solutions. Chapter VII reviews recent technical and economic aid to Burma and suggests briefly the objectives of such aid in the future.

FRANCISCO ARANETA

## SHAKESPEARE'S JESUIT COUSIN

THE LIFE OF ROBERT SOUTHWELL, POET AND MARTYR.

By Christopher Devlin. New York. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. 1956. Pp. x, 367.

THIS introduction of Southwell (1561-1595) to a greater public prominence is opportune. Southwell is a neglected man, somewhat as his fellow-Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins was a neglected poet a decade or two ago.

Although Southwell was not a prolific writer (his main pre-occupation being, in his own words, "to minister the Sacraments to those that seemed willing to receive them") his writings were regarded by his contemporaries as highly competent. Present-day critics rate them no less. His prose was understandably apologetic in nature, aimed at refuting anti-Catholic charges and false doctrinal tenets, or at giving spiritual advice to harrassed Catholics. Even here his control of the period's elegant diction is indisputable.

It is as a poet however that Southwell lays permanent claim to literary fame. There is in Southwell's verses that classic care of the Sonneteers, that vivid imagery characteristic of Crashaw and Marvell, and a resonance which is Miltonic. Edmund Bolton, his contemporary, wrote of his poem as "never-to-be-forgotten, the English whereof as it is most proper, so the sharpness and Light of Wit is very rare in them." To have written Southwell's *Burning Babe*, Ben Jonson said he would have destroyed many of his own poems. It is, as Devlin points out, a poem with the still-life color of a medieval emblem, yet flashing out with a living vision which perhaps suggested Shakespeare's "And pity like a naked new-born babe/Striding the blast..."

Southwell's connection with other Elizabethan writers is to be noted. Southwell literally rubbed elbows with the earlier