Island of Gold: A Visit to Mindoro and its Tumultuous Past

The island the Natives term Minolo, the Spaniards call Mindoro. That of Malindic, we call Marinduque; Cavit, Cavite; and so of many others.

Domingo de Navarrete, Travels (1675) (Hakluyt Translation)

Part I: Dangerous Crossing

Mindoro is only thirty-five minutes by air from Manila and only a few sea miles south of Luzon, but it is a mysterious island unknown to most Filipinos. What they hear of Mindoro either scares them or inflames their imagination: wild tamaraws, uncivilized Mangyans, unexplored forests, rugged mountains. Mindoro indeed has all of that: yet some of the towns on the Mindoro coast are among the oldest in the Philippines.

Long before the Europeans came to the East, Mindoro was already known to Chinese traders. The Europeans first discovered the island when Goiti and Salcedo, sailing north from Panay in 1570, anchored somewhere on the Mindoro coast. They found in the harbor two Chinese junks carrying precious cargo. On deck were large earthen jars and a good deal of crockery. And in the cabins were objects more precious: gilded porcelain bowls, gilded water-jugs, gold thread, cotton cloth, and silks both woven and in skeins. These articles were intended for barter with the natives in exchange for gold — for there was much gold in Mindoro, as Goiti’s chronicler informs us.

Goiti Finds Gold

Who that chronicler was we do not exactly know for his account is unsigned. Historians believe that he may have been Hernando Riquel who served Goiti as Notary. Whatever his name, he has left a vivid account of how the Spaniards stumbled upon Mindoro. Legazpi, who had arrived in Cebu in 1565 and had established a permanent settlement there, was curious to know what lay beyond that island. So he sent an expedition to explore the islands to the north. The explorers first went northward to Panay. From there, Martin de Goiti with Juan Sailcedo and ninety arquebusiers and twenty sailors set sail aboard seventeen vessels. Fifteen of these were praus manned by natives of Panay and Cebu. One was a frigate, called La Tortuga (which could not have been a flattering name). And one was a fifty-ton junk with three pieces of artillery, named the San Miguel. It was an appropriate name, for the expedition left Panay on the feast of the Apparition of Saint Michael the Archangel, the 8th of May, 1570.

They found Mindoro (or at least that part of the coast) in Muslim hands, though they also heard of “a naked people living inland called Chichemecos,” doubtless the same people whom we today call Mangyans. Turning from ethnography to the hard facts of life the chronicler wrote: “As far as could be seen, this island lacks provisions.”

Provisions it may have lacked, but it did not lack gold. The Muslim natives had plenty of it, as the Spaniards soon found out.

The two Chinese junks made the mistake of trying to scare the Spaniards — or rather the Visayans, for it was the smaller craft, manned by Visayans, that first sighted the Chinese vessels. The two Chinese ships made as if to attack the praus and started sending up rockets and firing culverins and in general were putting on a warlike show. The challenge was accepted. The Visayans and Spaniards attacked, and though the Chinese vessels were much larger than theirs, they managed to board the two junks and killed twenty of the eighty Chinese on board. The rest they captured. When Goiti came upon the scene he was very angry and apologized to the Chinese and consoled with them on their comrades’ death. He gave them their liberty and ordered a ship refitted to bring them back to their homeland. But the Spaniards had been impressed by the kind of cargo the Chinese vessels were carrying. And the chronicler records that in another harbor there were more Chinese junks at anchor.
The Mindoro natives on the shore who had witnessed the Chinese defeat offered to placate the Spaniards with 200 "taels" of gold, which the Spaniards reckoned as equivalent to 12,000 pesos de minas — a princely gift. There was an equally princely gift of gold from another quarter — a fortified village overlooking another harbor. The village was called Minolo, which the Spaniards mispronounced Mindoro: whence the island's name. The village was situated on a hilltop and was so difficult of access that (as the chronicler records) "were it not for two ladders, one would have to fly to enter it." From this coign of vantage the Muslim natives emerged in warlike array. Dressed in colorful costumes and turbans, they beat their drums and blew their horns made of sea-shells, and rang bells to scare away the Spaniards. But the Spaniards made overtures of peace, reinforced by the sound of artillery fired into the air. This double-barreled approach won the day, and the Muslims of Minolo made a peace offering — again a large sum in gold. Thus enriched, Goiti's expedition went on to Balayan and thence to Manila: and thus Mindoro became a second gateway (after Cebu) to Luzon and to the rest of the Philippines.

**The Flight of Romance**

From that first contact with the West in 1570, Mindoro has had a tumultuous history. For three centuries it was harassed by Muslim pirates. After 1855 when these attacks ceased, the island underwent attacks from other enemies: cholera, smallpox, fire, typhoons, wars. The people in the coastal towns rose against the Spaniards in 1898, only to be conquered by the Americans in 1901. They were conquered by the Japanese in 1942 and liberated in 1945. Twice in the past ten years the rescuers have swarmed up its mountains in a vain attempt to save the lives of passengers of aircraft that had crashed. But apart from these missions of mercy, most of the history of Mindoro affects only a few towns along the coast. The interior is almost virgin land, much of it unexplored or at least unsettled. The forests are dense and the mountains high — the highest being Mount Halcon.

All this gives to Mindoro a romantic aura not shared by other islands in the Philippines. There is a romantic flavor in the very names of its coastal towns: Puerto Galera (the Port of Galleys); Calapan (the Lumber Place); Naujan (the Place Where One Feels Thirsty);
Pinamalayan (the Place That Was Shown To Us). Indeed, the very name of the island is a touch of romance: Mindoro, \textit{mina de oro}, a gold mine.

Alas, romance is on its way out, even in Mindoro. One goes along the highway, savoring the music of the ancient names: Baco, Calapan, Naujan, Pinamalayan, Bongabon, Bulalacao, Mansalay — and then one is suddenly checked by a reminder of modern politics — a place renamed Roxas! Some day (Philippine politics being what they are) Naujan and Puerto Galera may lose their ancient names and take on the name of some local politician.

\textit{The Crowded Bus}

For us who live in Manila, there are three ways of getting to Mindoro. One is by air; another is by yacht (if one is fortunate enough to have a yacht). The third is the poor man's way: by bus to Batangas and by ferry to Mindoro. This was the way that my students and I took in October of 1957.

To get a seat in the crowded bus, one must go rather early to the Divisoria Market in Manila. If one is wise (or if one is traveling with young students) one should provide oneself with comestibles: we bought oranges at Divisoria and lanzones in Laguna, for it was the season of lanzones. The bus speeds along the south highway, stopping only at Calamba and Lipa, and arrives at the town of Batangas with an hour to spare before the 12:30 ferry.

It is remarkable what things can be discussed in a speeding bus, even in a crowded one. It was during that trip that we made two decisions: first, to revive the study of Greek; second, to organize a Walking Club. (Both were subsequently implemented, but after a few years both died away — though the Walking Club seemed more hardy as it outlasted the Greek seminar!)

At 12:30 the two-decked twin-engined ferry-boat backed out of the pier, turned around and sailed out of Batangas Bay. It was a glorious day for a cruise: bright sky, calm water, with every color on shore, mountain and promontory standing clear in the sunlight. An hour or so later we were passing dose to the mountain-island called Isla Verde (Green Isle), wooded with coconuts from crest to shore.
Isla Verde

Of Isla Verde the geographers have some interesting information. The island is about four miles long, made of rock but covered with vegetation. It rises to a respectable height, its two peaks visible many miles away. The island lies in a northwest-southeast direction, and on both sides the sea goes very deep. In places it is said to be 200 meters deep. The island thus dissects the sea between Mindoro and Luzon into two channels, both ideal for navigation. And since the shore is not shelving but goes straight down, ships can pass so close to the shore that one has the impression of being able to touch the trees.

The Pirates Attack

Our trip of course was uneventful; but there was a time when a crossing to Mindoro was accomplished at great peril, for these seas were infested with Muslim pirates. Sometimes it was possible to outwit the pirates. The Dominican historian, Domingo Fernandez Navarrete, tells us that while he was in Mindoro in 1654, he met a Chinese sailor who told him the following story: he was sailing (he said) from one of the Visayan Islands to Manila, carrying two passengers: a Jesuit priest and a Spanish layman. As they approached the coast of Mindoro, he sighted six hostile boats which were heading for him to attack him. Seeing no other means of escape he decided to bluff his way out. “He ran up his flag, sounded his gongs, summoning and inviting them to fight, and made for them.” The enemy, thinking that they had run into an armed vessel, took counsel among themselves and fled.

The Jesuit historian, Pedro Murillo Velarde, tells of a more harrowing experience that occurred to two Jesuit Fathers who were aboard a caracoa enroute to Mindoro. When not far from shore they were attacked by three joangas carrying “Borneans and Camucones.” The caracoa, in order to escape, ran ashore, and the Fathers, leaving everything behind (books, missals, and cloth intended for distribution among the natives) took to the woods. It took them twenty days to get to Naujan. It rained frequently along the trail. They had no change of clothing. They also had no food and no water: they ate the buds of wild palms and drank whatever water they saw in pools along the way. Their feet were covered with wounds. Finally, faint with hunger and fatigue, they reached Naujan.
But the worst experience was that which befell the Archbishop of Manila and his party when on one occasion he went to Mindoro for a pastoral visitation. The story is told by the Augustinian, fray Casimiro Diaz (whose book was written early in the 18th century, though not published till 1870). The Archbishop’s name was Hernando Guerrero, the surname meaning “warrior”. True to his name (says the chronicler) the Archbishop first made war upon the Governor, and when these battles were over he commenced a visitation of his vast diocese. This of course included Mindoro. When he went there (says the chronicler) “he found himself in another danger, no less than those he experienced on land.” During the crossing “he was attacked by six hostile galliots of the Mindanao enemy” (i.e. the Muslims) “which bore down upon the boat in which he was, near Naujan. Had not that boat been staunch and swift, the enemy would have captured and killed him.” The Archbishop escaped capture, but not the rest of his party. The pirates followed their boat ashore, seized it and captured many of the Archbishop’s followers. “They pillaged all the cargo, even the ornaments and the pontifical robe.” Worst of all, the disaster “caused great sorrow to that good prelate, for the Mindanaos killed most of the men whom they captured, and it was only after many difficulties that a few could be ransomed.”

Those were terrible times when the seas were not safe, nor even the towns. On one occasion pirates attacked the town of Baco and carried away 200 captives.

**Calapan**

But one does not think of these things when one is aboard a twin-engined vessel, cruising smoothly along the Verde Island Passage on a clear, sunny day. Soon we were passing close to three coral islands near the Mindoro shore. And then we were in the harbor of Calapan, protected by a circle of hills, with the houses strung along the shoreline. We docked at the concrete pier built in 1906, disembarked with our baggage and found ourselves being welcomed by one of the best hosts in a country that prides itself on its hospitality: Mr. Vicente Reyes, engineer and manager of the bus line in Mindoro, and uncle of Ephraim Caedo, the photographer of our party. Mr. Reyes and a young law graduate from the Ateneo, Mr. Honesto Asi, were our
guides during our stay in Mindoro, while Mrs. Reyes provided meals for a group of travelers who were perpetually hungry.

That afternoon we called at the rectory to pay our respects to the parish priests. And in the evening we swam in the sea, and then motored up a hill where the Hospital and the Weather Bureau Station are located, to the highest point from where all of Calapan could be seen. Calapan then was a quiet town, with no blaring horns or loud radios or glaring neon lights: a miniature city, its tiny lights looking like scattered grains of luminous sand. Farther out, in the sea, were the lights of the fishing boats. The weather-man came out to talk to us, and we talked about what was then the latest wonder — the Russian-launched Sputnik (which I had seen in Baguio, and which he had not seen at all). A man-made satellite with a canine passenger was then an incredible thing — though we have since become accustomed to greater marvels.

**Imprisoned Missionaries**

The history of Mindoro is intimately bound up with the history of its missionaries. The first to come were the Augustinians, who established their residence in the village of Baco. But the Augustinian mission in Mindoro did not last long. It ended when, in 1574, their two missionaries on the island were almost murdered. Word had somehow filtered to the natives of Mindoro that the Chinese pirate Limahong had “captured” Manila. They thought this a good opportunity to expel all the Spaniards from the island — soldiers as well as priests. Fray Juan de Medina (whose book was written in 1630, though published in 1893) says that the “Moros” of Mindoro seized the two Augustinian Fathers “and talked of killing them. However, they forebore to kill the Fathers immediately — I know not for what reason, since the Moros were setting out to execute that resolve.” The Governor in Manila, hearing of the imprisonment of the missionaries, sent for them and found them already released.

With the departure of the Augustinians, the Franciscans took over the missions in Mindoro, but they did not stay long. In 1588 Bishop Salazar of Manila informed the King of Spain by letter that the island of Mindoro “contains 5,000 families of whom 2,000 pay tribute and are pacified. The remainder, for lack of men to subdue them, neglect
to pay tribute. Augustinian and Franciscan missionaries have been in this district, but all have abandoned it. There is at present one ecclesiastic there" (i.e. secular priest) "who has the care of about 1,000 Christianized tributaries. All of the remainder of the inhabitants are infidels and without instruction." Fray Francisco de Ortega (who was one of the two Augustinian missionaries imprisoned in Mindoro but who had since risen to become Visitor General of his Order) also wrote to the King declaring that the one (secular) priest in Mindoro was not enough and that five more priests were needed.

Eventually, in 1679 the Augustinian Recollects took over Mindoro as "compensation" for the missions of Zambales which they were forced to cede to the Dominicans. The official history of the Recollect missions (published in Manila in 1879) has a terse comment on this exchange: "The Recollects resigned themselves to this disproportionate change, since the exertions to avoid it availed nothing."

But the Recoletos did an extremely fine job of administering this difficult mission for over a hundred years until 1784, when a shortage of men forced them to abandon it. But "they resumed their mission there in 1805 when the cause that occasioned their cession ceased to exist." And there they remained, for another 116 years, until the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) took over the Mindoro missions in 1921.

**Bishop On A Motor Bike**

Under the SVD Fathers the Mindoro missions were created into an Apostolic Prefecture a few years before the war, with Bishop William Finemann as Prefect. After the war it was elevated into an Apostolic Vicariate under Bishop William Duschak.

The first time I met Bishop Duschak, he was on a motor-bike. He consented to be photographed astride his vehicle, and we made arrangements for a longer visit when I could call on him at his residence.

At that time he did not yet have a cathedral (although he already had the bells for them) and he did not yet have a seminary for the training of his priests. (He has since built both.) But he told me that before he would think of building a cathedral or a seminary, he must first meet his most urgent problem, which was to provide every large Christian community on the island with a priest. The priest must live
among the people. To do that (he said) the priest must be provided with decent quarters. Therefore (he said) his most urgent problem was to build decent rectories in those communities where a priest must live.

That was in 1957. Bishop Duschak has since attracted world-wide attention as one of the “progressives” among the bishops of the Second Vatican Council. He was particularly strong in his fight for the vernacular liturgy. The Mass (he argued) must be said in the language that the people can understand — any language. It is pleasant to note that his efforts and those of his colleagues have been crowned with success. Today in the Philippines, Mass may be said in any of ten vernacular languages, including English, Spanish, Tagalog, Ilocano, Pampango, Pangasinan, Bicol, and the various dialects of the Visayan language.

**Part II: The Ancient Town of Naujan**

One of the places which one must visit in Mindoro is Naujan, a town with an interesting history and an interesting name.

The name has been variously spelled by historians. Juan de Medina writing in 1630 spelled it Nauhang, as did the King of Spain in a royal decree of 1639. Navarrete, who visited it in 1654, spelled it Nanhoan. But the Jesuit historian, Pedro Murillo Velarde, whose book was published in 1749, spelled it Naujan, (and also Nauhan, and in one place Naohan), and it is Naujan that has become the standard spelling.

Legend has it that the name comes from the Tagalog word *na-uhao* (thirsty). If so, it is an odd name for a place so well supplied with water. For Naujan is situated near a river which serves as outlet to a large lake. Both river and lake are called Naujan: and doubtless it was from them that the village took its name. It was this lake with its abundant aquatic life that induced Dean C. Worcester’s zoological expedition to visit Naujan in the 1890’s. And it was this lake (or more precisely, a very productive baklad or fish-trap at its outlet) that attracted President Magsaysay to Naujan half a century later. In a gesture of encouragement to local industries. President Magsaysay held a cabinet meeting at this fish trap — the first (it is said) which he held outside of Malacañang.
The Founding Of Naujan

It is surprising to read in the Catholic Directory of the Philippines that the town of Naujan was “founded in 1697.” Naujan is older than that. In 1697 the Augustinian Recollects inherited that parish from the secular priests, but the parish of Naujan goes back at least to 1631, if not earlier.

What seems to have happened is this. After the Augustinians and the Franciscans had left the island of Mindoro, one secular priest was assigned to take care of the Christians of the isiland. Obviously, one was not enough. More were needed. When these were not available, they turned to the Jesuits for help. Murillo Velarde explains the matter as follows: “In 1631 the cura of Mindoro who was a secular priest ceded that ministry to the Society of Jesus. The Superior lived at Naujan in Mindoro, and Ours [i. e. the Jesuits] undertook to preach and convert the Mangyans, heathen Indians of that island.” Did the Jesuits when they went to Naujan, find a village already in existence? It is not clear, and some historians say categorically that the Jesuits “founded” the town of Naujan.

In any case, nine years later, the King of Spain, hearing of that arrangement was displeased. He ordered the parish of Naujan (he spelled it Nauhang) “restored” to the secular priests. So the Jesuits left the island of Mindoro, and for several decades, only two secular priests (one at Baco, the other at Naujan) served the Christians there. Later a third parish was added at Calavite.

The difficulty was how to get enough secular priests who were willing to live and work in Mindoro. (Spanish secular priests, that is, for in those days there were no Filipino seculars). The reason was explained by a historian (fray Pedro de San Francisco de Asís, whose book was published in Zaragoza in 1756): “These ministries were scarce desirable, because of the smallness of their stipends, and because they carried with them unendurable hardships, and because of the unhealthfulness of the territory.”

“Unendurable Hardships”

What these “unendurable hardships” were, we have some idea from a description given by Navarrete of his visit to Mindoro. They had left Lubang island and they landed on the coast of Mindoro, below
Calavite. They walked up the hill to the village — which was no Sunday stroll (“All the way the road lies straight uphill and is rough”). Navarrete, however, had not yet seen real hardship until three days later. It is best to listen to his own words:

“After three days we descended in order to go to Guistin where we were to lodge, and whence we were to go to all parts. We walked more than six leagues that day over the most infernal road that can be imagined. In places we clambered over rocks, and in parts, even with the aid of Indians, we were unable to ascend. We found a place where the rocks were all jagged and so sharp and penetrating that they wore out the soles of our shoes...”

But that was only the beginning: “We reached the foot of the mountain of Guistin without having eaten a mouthful. There we found some Indians who had some roasted potatoes; although they were cold. We ate a little and then began to climb the mountain. It is as high as the other but beyond comparison much rougher. We did nothing but clamber up by laying hold to the roots of trees. We walked the rest of the way but after taking twenty paces we would throw ourselves on the ground to breathe a little. Finally by God’s help we arrived and found the church. Without being able to enter it we fell face downward on the earth near the door, where we stayed a long time near the door to rest.”

Domingo Fernandez Navarette was a Dominican missionary who also went to China and who later became an archbishop in Santo Domingo. He made two visits to Mindoro, and he described them in a book on the Far East published in Madrid in 1667. It was dedicated to “the most serene Don Juan of Austria”: but the events he narrates are far from serene. He speaks of haunted houses, of strange conversions; strangest of all, of a man who lived in “bestial concubinage” for six months with a “pexemulier” — which apparently is a fish with what looks like a woman’s body.

We cannot vouch for some of Navarette’s tales: for instance, what he says about Lake Naujan. “There is a fine lake near Nanhoan,” he says, “which is so full of fish... that one can sometimes catch them with the hands, take out the eggs and let them go.” It sounds like a fish story: but there are plenty of fish in Naujan.
The Fish-Trap

This we saw for ourselves when we visited the baklad or fish-trap strategically planted at the outlet of the lake. We went part of the way by jeep, and the rest of the way on foot. At one point we had to cross the river on a footbridge consisting of one slender coconut trunk. Beneath the river the water flowed swiftly, though the rushes, sticking out through the water and swaying in the current indicated that the water was not very deep at that point.

Elsewhere the river was so deep that at the baklad the fishermen had to dive to gather the catch. We counted as many as ten divers. The catch was gathered three times daily and stored in a shed, preparatory to being shipped to Manila. We were present for the afternoon catch, which consisted mostly of banglis, each fish measuring some two feet long. Our host in Mindoro (Mr. Vicente Reyes of Calapan) and our host in Naujan (Mr. Eleuterio Carandang) bought some of the banglis, and I have a photograph somewhere of four or five of these large fish dangling from a bamboo pole, one end of the pole on the shoulder of Mr. Carandang, the other on that of one of my companions, Mr. Rolando Quintos (then a student, now a professor, at the Ateneo de Manila). They had to carry the fish in that fashion over the tree-trunk footbridge, back to where our jeep was waiting.

Navarrete also talks of the crocodiles. "While I was there," he says, "a woman bathed and was left behind in the teeth of a crocodile." Which was likely enough. At the baklad we were shown the skin of a crocodile which had been caught recently nearby. It measured nine feet long.

The Ruins At Bancurro

The fish-trap is not the only tourist attraction near Naujan. There are also the ruins of the church and priory in the swampy ground in Bancurro, which had been built by the Augustinian Recollects. This must have been the site of the old town of Naujan. The road goes beside a nipa swamp, crossing the stream by several narrow wooden bridges. Then, quite suddenly, one comes upon the ruins of the old church, surrounded by coconuts and bananas and other vegetation. The people call it "simbahang bato" ("stone church") for it is made of coral rock. A good deal of it has crumbled away. When it was new the
facade must have been quite imposing: a Gothic arch for a portal, flanked by rectangular windows. Today the portal remains, with the Augustinian emblem above it, but much of the facade is gone. The roof of the structure is likewise completely gone, and only the lower sections of the walls remain, with large bits of masonry lying about the interior. The walls are thick (approximately six feet). The inner space appears to have been one single nave, for we saw no signs of pillars. The nave was of respectable proportions. Lacking any measuring rod, we paced it off; 57 paces by 18 (approximately 120 feet long and 40 feet wide).

The site has not been entirely abandoned. Within the ruined nave a grass-roofed chapel has been built where Mass is occasionally said: for there are still people living in Bancurro. The Census of 1960 credits the barrio with 873 inhabitants.

Connected with the church and at right angles to it are the ruins of the old priory. These are even more desolate for the place is now overgrown. A large tree towers over the ruins, and smaller trees are growing inside what must have been the refectory. Those who have been to Cambodia will be reminded of the ruins of Angkor, and of the trees whose giant roots have wrapped themselves around the stones of those ancient buildings.

*Itinerant Apostle*

One of the missionaries who worked in Naujan has left behind a reputation for unusual sanctity. This was Father Diego Luís de San Vitores, about whom several books have been written. He was born in Burgos in 1627, studied in Madrid, entered the Society of Jesus and came to the Philippines, arriving in 1660. He spent three months in the town of Taytay (in what is now called Rizal Province) learning the Tagalog language in which he became proficient. He was then assigned to teach at the Jesuit university in Manila. But he desired an active ministry. So he was sent with two companions (one priest and one lay-brother) on a mission to try to convert the Mangyans of Mindoro.

There were at the time three secular priests in Mindoro, namely, at Naujan, Baco, and Calavite. They ministered to the Christians: but for missionary work among the non-Christian Mangyans, Father de San Vitores and his companions established their headquarters at
Naujan, and from there they went out on their missionary excursions. On one occasion they were overtaken by nightfall in a forest which was so steep that they dared not sleep for fear of rolling down the abyss. They managed to sleep by tying themselves to tree trunks.

On another occasion they wore out their shoes in the forest and had to do the rest of the journey barefoot. Those who are acquainted with Philippine jungles — with thorny vines like the rattan, or with the leeches that infest the forests — will understand what a trial this must have been to the three Spanish missionaries.

But their hardships ("unendurable" from one point of view) were crowned with much success, for they converted many Mangyans, both those living in villages, and those roaming the mountains. On one occasion Father San Vitores sent two of his native catechists by banca down the Naujan River towards the coast where Mangyans were living. The water was low (as it often is in the Naujan River) and the banca was soon grounded. But it rained in the hills, the river rose, the banca floated again, and the following day the catechists returned with sixteen Mangyans who were willing to be instructed and baptized.

The biographers are a little uncritical when they tell such stories. The rising of the river for instance in the case just cited is narrated as a "miracle": which of course it was not. It was a natural event, produced by natural causes. But there is no question about the fact that San Vitores did make many converts, despite the initial obstacles which sometimes seemed to disappear. As when, for instance, he wanted to travel up the Naujan because he had heard of a village of Mangyans by the river bank. Again the water was low. Again it rained in the hills. Again the water rose, and the missionary and his boatmen were able to paddle upstream, and another village of Mangyans had the Gospel preached to them.

Some of the stories told about Father San Vitores in Mindoro, if true, are rather unusual. As for instance, on one occasion when he was being taken by boat to a certain island, the wind blew them to another island which was as dry as rock. They were surrounded by the sea, but they had no water to drink, and they were parched in the tropical heat. But one of the boatmen did a daring thing. He marked the spot where the missionary had jumped into the water in getting off the boat to wade ashore. He drank the seawater from that particular spot and found it drinkable. The others followed suit; they drank the
sea-water apparently made potable by the touch of a missionary’s hand.

Is this legend or fact? I suppose it really does not matter. Two things are certainly factual. First, the natives themselves of Naujan considered Father Diego de San Vitores a saint and cherished his memory for a long time. Second and most important. Father San Vitores left for Guam in 1667 and became the apostle of that island: in 1672 he was killed out of hatred for the Christian Faith. It seems safe to say that he died a martyr’s death.

Meanwhile in the Philippines the Jesuits from time to time sent missionaries from Manila to Mindoro to work among the Mangyans. They were able to build four churches for them. Murillo Velarde mentions their location. One was dedicated to Our Lady; its ruins are still visible at Anilao near Bongabon. Another was dedicated to Saint Ignatius Loyola, near Pola. A third was in honor of Saint Francis Xavier, on the coast near Naujan. A fourth was named after the Santo Cristo de Burgos: the Spanish Jesuits who built it must have come from Burgos, as had Father Diego de San Vitores.

**Past And Present**

During its 330 years of recorded history, Naujan has had many alarming moments. On several occasions the people had to flee before the advance of Moro pirates. The period of the Revolution and the early years of the American Occupation were a time of great stress in Naujan. The town was held by the Americans, captured by Filipino guerrillas, recaptured by the Americans, (but in the Philippine Commission Report of 1904, the guerrillas are referred to as *ladrones* — thieves, or bandits).

This fighting may help to account for the sharp decline in population recorded in the Census of 1903. In 1850 the town had a population of some 5,000: it was then a much larger community than Calapan, which had only 2,000. But in 1903, the population of Naujan had dwindled to 3,000 when Calapan outstripped it. Since then the populations of both towns have steadily increased. Now they are almost of equal size. According to the Census of 1960, Calapan with 47 barrios has 33,000 people; while Naujan, with 54 barrios has 31,500.
In contrast with its exciting history, Naujan in 1957 looked like a sleepy town. There was a large central plaza, an impressive municipal building, and a sadly dilapidated church. The pastor was not in when we called, but Father Isenberg who had charge of the school showed us the old baptismal books in the parish office. The records at least have been saved. (I examined Volume 3, which covers the 43-year period from 1805 to 1848.)

I have examined parochial records in many places, and I have always been amazed at the care and the patience with which the entries were made. In the old days the parish clerk wrote out everything in his neat, often lovely hand. Every detail was written out, leaving little to the imagination. Today we have printed baptismal registers, and all the parish clerk has to do is to fill in the blanks.

Old-Fashioned Hospitality

But something of the old glory of Naujan lives on in its hospitality. Mr. Carandang was an employee of the Bus Company and president of the employees' union. His wife was a school teacher: but she managed to stay home for one morning in order to prepare for us a most sumptuous lunch. Appropriately enough for Naujan, it consisted mostly of sea-food and fresh-water fish. There was a plentiful supply of large-sized prawns (sugpo), broiled to a tasty red. And there was a huge fish, deliciously roasted.

Our own brief visit to Naujan was not without incident. On a lonely country road some distance from the highway, we began to smell burning rubber in the jeep. The hood was opened and it was discovered that the rubber insulation of the electric wiring was in flames. Everyone dropped to the ground, and all hands were busily scooping up dirt from the road to smother the flames. The fire was soon put out, but the motor refused to start and the jeep had to be pushed towards the highway. About a hundred yards from the highway, we caught sight of an approaching bus. A member of our party (an Ateneo cross-country runner) was able to catch up with it, and the bus driver who was also a mechanic fixed our engine. We got back to Calapan that same afternoon.
Part III: The Rainbow and the River

There is a legend about the name Pinamalayan. Long ago (the story goes) a group of voyagers left the island of Marinduque in search of new land. After days at sea without knowing in what direction to sail, they saw a rainbow. They then set their course toward the rainbow and found themselves on the shores of Mindoro where they started a village and called it Pinamalayan ("the place shown").

It is a charming story though highly suspect. Standing at the foot of the lighthouse on the shore of the modern Pinamalayan, we could see the island of Marinduque very clearly to the east. It is incredible that the voyagers should have taken "days" to get from Marinduque to Mindoro. But — so the story goes. And to commemorate the origin of its name, the town has built a kiosk or bandstand in the plaza in the shape of a rainbow.

Actually the present town of Pinamalayan does not stand on the spot where the voyagers landed and built their village. In that place (Lumang Bayan) the old town of Pinamalayan stood for centuries until the year 1914. Mr. Thomas Weeks made plans for the transfer of the town to a new site. The actual transfer was made a year or two later. The town planners drew up their plans on a grandiose scale: with streets twenty meters wide laid out at right angles. Not even Baron Hausmann's Paris could boast of such an orderly row of very wide streets. Of course the streets are there merely in potentia. We first saw them at night and they seemed impressive, but the daylight robbed them of some of their grandeur as they turned out to be mere stretches of grass except for a narrow gravelled lane in the middle. The main street however is asphalted. And though the town boasts of several fine houses (including the house of our very kind hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Florencio Quimson), many of the dwellings are of light material, detracting considerably from the magnificence of the town's lay-out. But Pinmalayan is a growing town and may one day become a big city.

The Eve Of All Souls

We happened to be in Pinamalayan for the Eve of all Souls. We noticed early in the evening that in certain barrios along the highway the houses had lighted candles in their windows. But when we resumed
our sightseeing trip after supper (armed with a camera), most of the candles had burned out and the houses were dark. We had to tour the town on foot and by jeep several times before finding a house still illuminated. The same was true of the barrios.

Meantime in both the town and the barrios groups of children or adults were going from house to house singing, as at Christmas time. They were singing an old tune, with old lyrics in Tagalog. These groups of serenaders are called *nangangalulua* which means "souling"—i.e. going about in the name of the souls asking for prayers and alms.

Kristiano ay gising kayo
Kaluluwa ay naririto
Kaawaan at lim’san ninyo,
Kaluluwa sa purgatoryo.

(Christians awake, we the souls have come
to beg alms from you. Have pity on us,
the souls of Purgatory.)

The following morning a school teacher at Pinamalayan, Miss Leonila Andal, wrote out for us the music as well as the Tagalog lyrics of the "Nangalulua" song which we had heard the night before. The words and the music may be found in Heights, the literary quarterly of the Ateneo de Manila together with the photographs of our Mindoro visit. Among these photographs is that of a group of "Nangalulua" singers, whom Ephraim Caedo photographed 'in action as they sang under the low window of a nipa house. Some of the women were wearing wide-brimmed straw hats, and they were singing to thte accompaniment of a guitar.

The Mangyans

It was at Bongabon on the east coast of Mindoro and at Baco on the north that we saw traces of the Mangyans who still live in the hills. At Baco (or more precisely, at Kalabugao, the site of the new Baco parish church), the German SVD missionary was Father Victor Tunkel, much beloved by the children. Like all the missionaries we met in Mindoro he was a kindly and cordial man. Over the biscuits he told us about the Mangyans and showed us many pictures of his converts (before) in their native costumes and (after) in the clothes that he had distributed among them.
He also showed us the costume itself. It was entirely made of rope and braid, without any cloth at all. The Mangyan’s wardrobe is extremely simple. For the men a gee-string. For the women a piece of banana or abaca bark wide enough to cover the breast, and some rope-like pliable material wrapped and intertwined with dark colored rattan, coiled round and round to serve as a kind of shorts. And that is all.

Father Tunkel said that whenever he had some goods (especially clothing) to give away, the Mangyans came to him. That was how he was able to instruct them in the Faith. For that reason he was always grateful for bundles of old clothes.

Later on at Bongabon we again met traces of the Mangyans. We had gone to Bongabon by bus, and we arrived at noon, got off at the market and walked toward the church. The Fathers were at lunch upstairs, so we entered the deserted parish hall and opened a paper bag containing our lunch which a kindly lady had given to us as we boarded the bus in Pinamalayan: a piece of bibingka and soft drinks. But before we could finish these, our presence was discovered by the Fathers who insisted on preparing a more elaborate lunch for us upstairs.

Bongabon is one of the larger towns of Mindoro. With its twenty-eight barrios, it is credited in the 1960 Census with a population of 22,000. When we visited it, it was the end of the road as far as the buses were concerned. Beyond it was the unbridged river which one must cross to go to Mansalay and Bulalacao and the Mangyan country. Originally the center of the town was in a barrio called Anilao, where the ruins of the old Jesuit church still stand, a reminder that Bongabon has been Christian for three centuries. It is said that Bongabon, of all the towns in Mindoro, was the first to throw off the Spanish yoke.

Today, the town boasts of a new church, solid in construction but not very exciting from an architectural viewpoint. Behind the church is a place humorously called the “Mangyan Reservation”. It is a grass-roofed shed where the Mangyans from the hills can find shelter whenever they come to town. There they spend the night and get something to eat from the parish priest. It was just our luck that on the day we got to Bongabon there were no Mangyans in the “Reservation”. There had been many the previous day and all the
previous night. They had awakened early that morning and were noisy about the fire. Then they had disappeared into the hills.

The Fathers informed us of the two different types of Mangyans that live near Bongabon (apparently there are four types in all Mindoro). One is the buckid Mangyan, apparently a degenerate race "ignorant of the plow or pen" (in Chesterton's phrase) and very dirty and slovenly in their personal habits, and parasitic in their social dealings. It is this type of Mangyan that comes, sometimes in small groups, sometimes in swarms, to the "Mangyan Reservation" behind the church at Bongabon. They receive free rice, free salt and free lodging, claiming to be starving and penniless (though opulent from barter or trade) and leaving the place in a mess.

The other type of Mangyan lives further down and farther inland. These are the Hanonoo, apparently a nobler race of men, not really savage because they have their own system of writing and they have much cleaner habits and more engaging manners.

A River In Flood

At Bongabon the parish priest at the time was a Filipino, Father Ramon del Rosario, S.V.D., of Calapan (who has since become Rector of the Seminary in Mindoro). He had studied for a time under the Jesuits in Manila. Also at Bongabon on the day of our visit were two other missionaries: an, American from Wisconsin (Father Culick) and a Hungarian (Father Heesen).

Father Heesen had charge of the Roxas-Mansalay district across the river, and he told us that the river was in flood. He himself had just managed to get across the swollen river on foot, the water coming up to his waist. We talked to him briefly before he proceeded to Calapan by station wagon for a Sodality convention. He was enlightened on the subject of the Mangyans. He told us that the American anthropologist, Harold Conklin, who had been making a study of Hanonoo customs and language, was still at Mansalay. We had been anxious to get to Mansalay to see Conklin, but the flooded river prevented our crossing. We had no alternative but to return to Pinamalayan, and thence to Calapan.
Part IV: Enchanted Haven

When we went to Puerto Galera one of the bridges was under construction and our jeep could not get through. We went therefore to the old town-site (Lumang Bayan, which must have been the site of the old village of Baco), and there took a banca and arrived at Puerto Galera without entering the harbor. We climbed up the hill behind it and entered it (as it were) through the backdoor. It was only on the way back, after the bridge was completed, that we saw the beauty of the road that leads to Puerto Galera. The road winds in and out through forests, and then climbs up to a high ridge that overlooks the sea. Few roads in the Philippines are as beautiful. And few roads are made of better material; for although it is only a gravel road, the gravel is not ordinary stone. It is marble, quarried from the hillside and crunched into gravel. There is much marble in Mindoro, but it seemed to us a waste to use it in this fashion.

Along the road is a waterfall which is over 400 feet in height. It is very picturesque. The water falls into a pool which overflows under a bridge into a deep ravine below.

Puerto Galera must have been a lively town in the old days when the galleons anchored below it on their way to or from Manila. The harbor is well protected, almost completely landlocked, with two narrow but deep channels leading out of it into the Verde Island Passage. At one time (it is said) Puerto Galera was the capital of Mindoro. It went into eclipse when Calapan was made the capital. Puerto Galera participated in the Revolution of 1898, was conquered by the Americans in 1901 and then for two years enjoyed once more a brief period of glory when it was again made the capital of Mindoro (1903-1905). But its glory was shortlived. The capital was not only transferred again to Calapan but (crowning indignity) Puerto Galera lost even its autonomy as an independent municipality and was annexed as a barrio to Calapan. Fourteen years later it regained its independence but never again its glory, and it stands today, a dreamy town of a few houses on the hill above the harbor, overlooking what appears to be a beautiful lake, but what is really a sheltered haven. I have met a British yachtsman, however, who says that when the northeast monsoon is really blowing, even the high hills of Puerto Galera are not sufficient shelter from the winds.
After lunch (plentifully provided by Mr. Axalan and his family) we went up the hill to where the new church stands, a beautiful edifice, quite in contrast with the ramshackle old chapel. The missionary was Father Erwin Thiel, S.V.D., a German, who had also built up the church and mission in Bongabon. Father Thiel was interested in anthropology. He had studied at St. Gabriel’s in Vienna under the well-known Father Schmidt, founder of Anthropos.

*The “Lake”*

Father Thiel lived alone in a rickety house beside the new church. He took us down to the water by a very steep stairway cut in the hillside. Then, barefooted, with trousers raised kneehigh, we climbed into his banga. He installed the outboard motor and in a few minutes we were skimming over the almost glassy surface of the “lake.”

As we circled around the harbor looking at the pleasant greenery that thickly shrouded the surrounding hills, Father Thiel told us a number of things about Puerto Galera. The people live all around the harbor and they come to church in bancas. The children who live in places where there are no schools have to go to school also in bancas. We saw one of the schools, built near the shore and a group of boys waved to us as we passed by. While we motored around on the water Father Thiel told us of other things. There is no market in Puerto Galera. Meat and fish (strangely enough) have to be brought in from Calapan or Manila. “I live on canned goods here,” he said.

Puerto Galera has a very small population. According to the Census of 1960, there are only 5,925 persons in all its six barrios — and of these, only about 800 live in the town itself (*poblacion*).

*Underwater Beauty*

Then Father Thiel showed us something we were not prepared for. Beneath the calm waters throbbed a manifold life beautiful to see: some of the most spectacular specimens of coral of every hue and description. As we neared some undersea plateau, Father turned off the motor and pulled it out of the water to prevent its being hit by the coral. Then all around us there suddenly seemed to spring to view the wonders of marine life beneath. Blue, pink, yellow, pea green, yellow green, several shades of grey, the coral lay at the sandy bottom,
branching in various shapes, all silent and motionless. The stillness was disturbed only by the ripples of our paddles and by the little fishes lurking about and blending colors with the coral. It was a magnificent sight, everything shining brightly underwater, perfectly visible to us as we sat in the idling banca.

All this should make Puerto Galera an ideal place for the study of marine biology. There is actually a Marine Biological Laboratory there, established in 1912, but it was subsequently abandoned. Attempts have been made from time to time to revive it, but lack of funds and lack of sustained interest have made these attempts not always fruitful. Today it is closed during the year and open only during the summer. A scientist, it seems, will not have enough to do all year round.

But a novelist might find it worth his while to live in Puerto Galera, for there is romance in its history. He might for instance walk down the steep hill to the harbor and read the inscription at the landing: “Ultima tierra que pisaron los tripulantes del canonero Mariveles, 1878.” (The last piece of land trodden by the crew of the gunboat Mariveles.) Surely a novelist — or perhaps a historian (a genuine historian, one who with his imagination can recreate the past) — might have his imagination intrigued by that inscription. Who were the crew? What was their mission? What happened to them?

Father Thiel had said to us before we left: “Feel welcome to come back, anytime. Sometimes when no one comes, it is all loneliness. When you come and stay for a few days, I myself will also stop working and take a vacation.”

**Bishop Finemann’s Death**

Father Thiel had been with Bishop Finemann at the time of the bishop’s arrest by the Japanese which led to his death. We asked him for the details. Bishop Finemann was prefect apostolic of Mindoro at the outbreak of the war. The Japanese army had tried to get Filipino girls from the Catholic schools of Mindoro to go into the Japanese houses of prostitution. Bishop Finemann took steps to prevent this and thereby incurred the anger of the invaders, but they dared not touch him since he was a German, and Germany and Japan were allies in the war. A Filipino traitor however informed them that although the
bishop was German-born he had become a naturalized Filipino citizen. This altered the situation. The Japanese went to the bishop's house, demanded to see his naturalization papers and then hauled him off to prison. They made him suffer indignities in public and then put him aboard a ship "to take him to Manila." The ship got to Manila but the bishop was nowhere on board. His bones (martyr's bones, everyone thinks) are somewhere in the depths of the Verde Island Passage.

A Dunking Among The Islands

On our last day in Mindoro, after Mass in the Sisters' chapel in Calapan, we went to the private beach of the Encarnacions, boarded their speedboat and went skimming over the water to the three rocky islands off the shore. There we swam among the rocks.

Actually, if our diary is to be believed (for I have no recollection of the fact) it seems that the swim was forced upon me. The diary says that at one of the islands I had tried to get to a rock with a roll of unused film in my hand. Anxious to keep the film dry and holding it up, it is said that I stepped over the side of the boat, set my foot on a slippery stone, and went down into the water, film and all.

The weather in Mindoro (as elsewhere in the Philippines) changes almost instantly. We had gone out in fine weather. All of a sudden the wind blew, whipping up the waves. We sped back in the boat among the white-capped waves, and got to the shore none too soon. Mr. Encarnacion and his men, and ourselves lending a hand, had great difficulty getting the boat out of the water and loading it on to a trailer and carting it away to safety. We were told that the previous day, it had taken eleven men to lift that boat out of the water in even rougher weather.

Farewell To Mindoro

It was in that rough weather that at mid-day, we went back in the ferry-boat, through the Verde Island Passage back to Batangas and Manila. (Two of our group — Antonio Samson and Rolando Quintos — had gone home a day or two earlier.) To us in the boat, rolling in the rough sea, Mindoro was soon out of sight.
But not out of mind, for it is hard not to think of Mindoro. It has a vast future, if only the proper kind of industries could be attracted to the island. It has also a colorful past. When we think of Mindoro, we think of mountains and lakes and pirates, and missionaries, and stone churches now in ruins, and the distant clash of arms.