

**DEMYTHOLOGISING THE HISTORY OF COFFEE IN  
LIPA, BATANGAS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE .....	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
DECLARATION.....	v
SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATION.....	vi
<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 'The Grandeur That Was Lipa' .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Setting the Stage: A Coffee Primer .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Botanical Notes .....	4
The Global Coffee Economy.....	5
Distorted Perceptions .....	7
<b>1.3 Critique of Contemporary Sources .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.4 Objectives and Scope of Research .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Is this Gastronomy?.....	12
<b>1.5 Methodology.....</b>	<b>14</b>
Limitations of Research .....	16
<b>2 IS IT HISTORY? OR MYTHOLOGY? .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.1 MYTH: Franciscan Friar Brings Coffee to the Philippines in 1740 .....</b>	<b>20</b>
The Arrival and Spread of Coffee.....	22
<b>2.2 HALF-TRUTH: The Augustinians encouraged the extensive</b>	
<b>cultivation of coffee.....</b>	<b>25</b>
The Road to Free Trade .....	28
<b>2.3 MYTH: Lipa's coffee monopoly .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.4 HALF-TRUTH: The Philippines was at one time the fourth largest</b>	
<b>coffee exporter in the world.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>2.5 MYTH: <i>Hemileia vastatrix</i> (or Coffee Leaf Rust) ended Lipa's</b>	
<b>coffee boom .....</b>	<b>35</b>
The End of an Era .....	36
<b>3 LESSONS FROM HISTORY .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>4 POSTSCRIPT.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>45</b>

LIST OF TABLES

Table I. Southeast Asian and World Export of Coffee, 1884-1891 (Tons) ..... 34

## ABSTRACT

### DEMYTHOLOGISING THE HISTORY OF COFFEE IN LIPA, BATANGAS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by Maria Rita Isabel Santos Castro

There is no article dealing with the history of Philippine coffee that does not mention 'the grandeur that was Lipa', a prosperous period that began with a coffee boom in the late 1800's and ended with the coffee blight of c1889. Most references adopt a monocausal approach to the rise and fall of coffee in Lipa, Batangas in the end of the nineteenth century. That is, c1886-87, an airborne fungus having attacked and destroyed all the coffee plantations in the neighbouring Southeast Asian coffee regions, supposedly left Lipa as the sole supplier of coffee beans to the world. Lipa is said to have profited greatly from this alleged coffee monopoly until c1889 when the same fungus finally infected even the Lipa plantations, bringing the hugely lucrative coffee industry to an abrupt end. This view has remained unchallenged for almost a century.

By casting a wider net to include primary sources such as travelogues and government reports, plus several key historical studies, this research subjects the arrival, rise and decline of coffee in Lipa to scrutiny and concludes that what currently passes for history is more apocryphal than it is factual, dominated as it is by myths and half-truths. Viewing coffee in the broader context of the world economy, this paper dismisses the supposed c1886 monopoly as myth and argues that the coffee boom towards the end of the Spanish colonial era can be attributed to a complex series of events and antecedents and was ultimately a response to the pressures of global demand. It also argues that the seeds of the collapse of the industry were planted long before the coffee crisis of 1889-1892. Other factors such as diminishing virgin forest, monoculture, the lack of investments, and competition with other products, were probably more to blame. Possibly, the arrival of the coffee blight may have accelerated the inevitable, but was not the prime cause. This new approach to the rise and decline of coffee in Lipa reveals a history more complex than was previously thought and is a dramatic demonstration of the transforming power of gourmandism and nineteenth century globalisation.

## DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to the copy of my dissertation when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Signed

Date

## SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATION

I, Dr. Nancy J. Pollock, certify that I have read the final draft of the dissertation of Maria Rita Isabel Santos Castro and am satisfied that, on the basis of technical presentation, the thesis is worthy of examination.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 'The Grandeur That Was Lipa'

I shall always remember the grandeur that was Lipa as I first saw it as a child seated upon our window sill and held up by my *yaya*<sup>1</sup> to watch a parade celebrating Lipa's conversion to a villa... These were the days of prosperity for Lipa, when people everywhere talked of its very rich aristocracy, its handsome carriages drawn by huge horses, its almost fabulous wealth produced by the then flourishing industry, coffee... A large crowd swarmed in the plaza and in the streets. The *señoritos*<sup>2</sup>, dressed in the style of the day, in shirts spangled with sequins that glittered in the sun went about their business mounted on spirited Arabian horses. The parade moved slowly, full of splendour. In the center walked the people of quality, the lower classes crowded along its sides.

Kalaw 1965 p.1

Lipa City is located about eighty-five kilometres south of Manila in the Southern Tagalog province of Batangas. It is an old town with a long history. Although the town of Lipa was formally organized and officially came under Spanish rule in 1702, the first Lipeños can trace their roots to pre-Spanish trading communities that may have settled in the area as early as the 1400's. Once located at the mouth of the Pansipit River, over the years, flooding would several times force the community to move to higher and higher ground. After a devastating volcanic eruption destroyed the burgeoning settlement in 1754, Lipa completed its final relocation to its present site in 1756.<sup>3</sup>

The *pueblo* that was re-established by Spanish authorities from the ground up today still bears traces of the urban design typical of the Hispanic colonial settlements of the era, with the church as the central structure (that could double as a fort should the need arise) fronted by the town plaza that was typically bordered by government buildings and residences of the town elite. The Lipa Cathedral with its colonial baroque-style cupola, massive walls and balconies, still stands at the heart of the city. An old *narra* tree, said to be as old as the city itself, shades one corner of the *Plaza Independencia* that today does double duty as a parking lot. The town's main road, the *Calle Real*, (now named C. M. Recto), is still the economic artery of the city, albeit dotted with shops far less glamorous than its predecessors. It used to be that the *Calle Real*, which translates to 'royal road', was where the townsfolk could find the best shops and bazaars and where only the richest and most influential families could own homes. It is said that the farther away one lived from the church, the plaza, and the *Calle Real*, the lower one's position was in the social hierarchy. The *Calle Real* was not only a physical border that divided the town into its northern and southern sections, but was also a social boundary that separated the town's elite

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<sup>1</sup>A *yaya* is a nursemaid or nanny.

<sup>2</sup> *Señorito* is the diminutive form of *señor*. An honorific term normally reserved for the bachelor sons of the upper class.

<sup>3</sup> Jose Alex Katigbak, "Lipa Yesterday," *Tambuling Batangas: A Monthly Supplement* 1977, 16.; Lipa City Government, *Lipa City: History and Historical Events* [Official Website], accessed 20 Sept. 2003; available from <http://members.tripod.com/~lipacity/history.html>.

from the poorer barrio folk. All that has changed. Like centuries before, the Calle Real remains the mirror of the town's fortunes, and walking the dispirited Calle Real of today, it is hard to believe that less than two hundred years ago, *Villa de Lipa* was the richest municipality in the country, a model community and one of the most affluent of all the towns in Spain's colonial empire. And what was the source of all this prosperity? It was that which they called "brown gold", coffee.

Nineteenth century Lipa was unique in that it was a town that was literally made and unmade by coffee. For more than fifty years, c1840-1890, coffee was an important agricultural export and significant source of commercial exchange. It is said, that at its apex, the Philippines was considered the fourth largest coffee producing country in the world.<sup>4</sup> In all those years, Lipa was the main trading point for coffee (at one point, providing up to 96% of the country's coffee exports) and was, therefore, the centre of all the changes that the coffee trade wrought.

The widely held view is that an airborne fungus, *Hemileia vastatrix*, after destroying all the coffee plantations in the neighbouring Ceylon, Java, Sumatra, India and South America, left Lipa as the sole supplier of coffee beans to the world. As buyers competed for the limited inventory, prices rose steadily, peaking in the mid-1890s. If in 1882 the average price per *picul*<sup>5</sup> was ten pesos and twenty-five centavos, the same *picul* of Lipa coffee in 1888 was fetching nearly thrice that at thirty-one pesos a *picul*.<sup>6</sup> Accounts vary, but it is thought that the town of Lipa may have earned anywhere from two and a half to four million pesos that year.<sup>7</sup> As this windfall was concentrated in the hands of less than a dozen families, what followed was the rise of a new consumerism and *nouveau riche* display of wealth that was unprecedented, and since unparalleled and for its flamboyance and ostentation.<sup>8</sup> Local lore is full of stories of this age of abundance...stories of opulence and conspicuous consumption and the marvellous lifestyles of the Lipa aristocracy. Awash in cash, the wealthy coffee barons of Lipa built palatial homes and filled them with finished goods of all sorts imported from the West, curtains from Paris, mirrors from Austria, stuffed chairs from Vienna, chandeliers from Germany, fine Sevres porcelain from

<sup>4</sup> David Bulbeck et al., *Southeast Asian Exports since the 14th Century: Cloves, Pepper, Coffee, and Sugar, Sources for the Economic History of Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), 155.

<sup>5</sup> A *picul* is a unit of weight equivalent to about 60 kilograms.

<sup>6</sup> John Foreman, *The Philippine Islands*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1899), 337.

<sup>7</sup> Policarpo F. Hernandez, OSA, Fr., "The Augustinians and the Progress of Philippine Agriculture," *CSA Research Journal* VI, no. 2 (1995): 5; Teodoro M. Kalaw, *Aide-De-Camp to Freedom*, trans. Maria Kalaw Katigbak (Manila: Teodoro M. Kalaw Society, Inc., 1965), 1; Simeon Luz, "Cultivation of Coffee in the Municipality of Lipa, Province of Batangas," in *Census of the Philippine Islands: 1903, Agriculture, Social and Industrial Statistics* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 79-82.

<sup>8</sup> In comparison, a labourer, when he could get work, could expect to be paid about eight dollars a month. Dean C. Worcester, *The Philippine Islands and Their People: A Record of Personal Observation and Experience, with a Short Summary of the More Important Facts in the History of the Archipelago* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1899), 515.



France. Wrote native son Teodoro M. Kalaw in his memoirs; even the town's very social atmosphere was an importation from Spain.<sup>9</sup>

It's language was Spanish; Spanish were its customs, manners and social forms; Spanish were its dances, its music...Lipa society sought to equal the halls and banquets of Spain herself, the Metropolis, the Guiding Star, the Ideal.

In those days, if in the West, the consumption of refined sugar had become the index of prosperity<sup>10</sup>, according to Kalaw, in Lipa in the late nineteenth century, it was the individual's relationship to coffee that defined his place in society.<sup>11</sup>

Lipeño families were popularly classified according to their wealth or social position. Income from the coffee was the yardstick of this social classification. After the people of quality, came the middle class, to which professionals belonged. The poor class was composed of labourers; artisans, servants, tenants and other such workers...Class One families were considered inaccessible, like the stars.

A favourite tale of the Lipa folk relates how, at fiesta time, it was customary for the wealthy coffee families to have their servants bring out of the storerooms sack upon sack of gold coins and silver Mexican pesos, which may have become mouldy and tarnished during their months of storage. Servants would then wash and polish these coins to a glistening shine and then spread them out in piles on the *azoteas*<sup>12</sup> of the mansions to dry in the sun. The menfolk of Lipa, when they took to the streets, rode astride imported Arabian stallions, better than any that could be found in Manila. When the young scions shopped the Calle Real they were escorted by hoards of servants 'who opened the way for them and protected them from the jostle of the populace'.<sup>13</sup> When they visited the cockpits to bet on their favourite fighting cocks, they required the services of strongmen who would walk behind them, each with a heavy sack of coins slung over their shoulders.<sup>14</sup> Wealthy matrons washed their faces in silver basins and ate off gold plates. Young women took to wearing slippers heeled with gold and embroidered with diamonds. 'If they deigned to walk the streets, they were sheltered from the sun by servants bearing parasols.' A favourite party game of young bachelors was 'to toss their diamond rings into the darkness and then search for them by the light of burning bank notes'.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Kalaw, *Aide-De-Camp to Freedom*, 1.

<sup>10</sup> See Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York Viking, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> Kalaw, *Aide-De-Camp to Freedom*, 1-3.

<sup>12</sup> An *azotea* is a wide balcony.

<sup>13</sup> Kalaw, *Aide-De-Camp to Freedom*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Maria Kalaw Katigbak, "When Coffee Bloomed in Lipa," in *Filipino Heritage: The Making of a Nation*, ed. Alfredo Roces (Manila: Lahing Pilipino Publishing, Inc., 1977-78), 1762.

<sup>15</sup> Benito J. Legarda, *After the Galleons: Foreign Trade, Economic Change & Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth Century Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999), 214.

The sudden prosperity of Lipa did not escape the attention of Mother *España*. As a reward for Lipa's 'industry and virtue' the Queen Regent of Spain, Maria Cristina, issued a Royal Decree in 21 October 1887, converting the tiny municipality into a city, thus allowing Lipa to bear the name *Villa de Lipa*. Subsequent to the granting of such an honour, a second decree was issued granting the city a coat of arms.<sup>16</sup>

But eventually, like all proverbial booms, this too went bust. After the onset of the *Hemileia vastatrix* fungus epidemic in 1888, coffee production declined drastically, year on year. By 1894 the halcyon years of coffee were over and in 1895 Lipa's city status was withdrawn and the town was reverted to a municipality.<sup>17</sup> So dominant was Lipa's position in the national coffee trade that the death of Lipa's coffee industry was synonymous with the demise of the Philippine coffee industry in the nineteenth century. As Lipa controlled the bulk of the production and realized the lion's share of the profits, any investigation into the colonial history of coffee in the Philippines is incomplete without relating 'the grandeur that was Lipa'.

## 1.2 Setting the Stage: A Coffee Primer

### *Botanical Notes*

Botanically, coffee is classified as belonging to the family *Rubiaceae*, which includes over five hundred genera and over six thousand species. Of these, only four species are commercially valuable. The two most important economic species of coffee are *Coffea arabica* (Arabica coffee), which in the last ten years accounted for 60-70% of the world coffee trade, and *Coffea canephora* (Robusta coffee), which accounts for the balance 30-40%.<sup>18</sup> Despite the once general belief that Arabicas came from Arabia—hence the name—most authorities now agree that this coffee variety originated in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia). Nevertheless, the association is not entirely erroneous as fifteenth century Arab traders are credited with having transported Ethiopian coffee across the Red Sea into Yemen, where it was first domesticated and cultivated for trade. For more than three centuries, assorted forms and varieties of Arabica coffee were been the only coffees cultivated and consumed worldwide. As recent as the years leading up to World War II, over ninety per cent of total global exports consisted of these Arabica coffees.

<sup>16</sup> Hernandez, "The Augustinians and the Progress of Philippine Agriculture," 27-28; Juanito A. Marquez, "Lipa and the Philippine Revolution: 1896-1899" (Masteral Thesis, Ateneo de Manila University, 1969), 7-8. The original Spanish decrees may be found in Victor Balaguer, *Gaceta de Manila*, Tomo II, Num 174 (21 de Diciembre de 1887), 806; (23 de Diciembre 1887), 813. In a nod to history, elements from the 1887 coat of arms—to this day—still grace the official seal of the City of Lipa.

<sup>17</sup> Lipa City Government, *Lipa City: History and Historical Events* [Official Website] (1999 [accessed 20 Sept. 2003]); available from <http://members.tripod.com/~lipacity/history.html>.

<sup>18</sup> International Trade Centre, *Coffee: An Exporter's Guide* (Geneva: International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO, 2002), 243.

Robusta coffees, on the other hand, discovered growing wild over vast tracts of Western Africa in 1887, became commercially important only in the 1950's.<sup>19</sup>

Grown on a much smaller scale are *Coffea liberica* (Liberian coffee) and *Coffea dewevrei* (Excelsa coffee). Discovered around the 1890's by botanists searching for coffee varieties with disease-resistant properties, these coffees generated great interest for a short period but were eventually supplanted by the more manageable Robusta variety. Together, Liberica and Excelsa supply less than one percent of today's global production<sup>20</sup> (a volume so economically insignificant that its movements are routinely excluded from the monitoring efforts of the International Coffee Organization).<sup>21</sup>

The Philippines is presently the only country where all four varieties are commercially grown and exported, and one of but four countries where the Liberica variety—much reviled by arabica-loving consumers the world over—still enjoys a cult following.<sup>22</sup>

Although many of the historical sources do not specifically identify the coffee variety in their accounts, it can safely be assumed that most references to Philippine coffee before 1900 refer to the Arabica variety.

### *The Global Coffee Economy*

Haarer notes that the early uses of coffee of native Africans were probably limited to the chewing of both the fresh and dried fruits and the brewing of beverages from the leaves or the ripe fruit. Exactly when the art of roasting and preparing a drink from roasted and ground beans developed, is not known.<sup>23</sup> There are of course, legends. A Maronite monk, in 1675, recorded that an old goatherder, after observing that the goats got restless and hyperactive after eating the leaves and fruits of a certain plant, brought this to the attention of the *imam* at the nearby monastery. The imam, after some experimentation, produced a black, bitter drink from coffee beans that he had crushed and roasted. Testing it on himself, he discovered that it induced wakefulness. He is said to have given it to the rest of the monks to keep them awake for their midnight prayers. So from that monastery, did the habit of coffee drinking spread to the rest of

<sup>19</sup> Mark Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 1999); Steven C. Topik, "Coffee," in *The Cambridge World History of Food*, ed. Kenneth F. Kiple and Kriemhild Coneé Ornelas (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 641-653.

<sup>20</sup> Paul E. Harding, *IFA Publications Manual - Coffee* [Online Manual] (International Fertilizer Industry Association, accessed 29 November 2002); available from <http://www.fertilizer.org/ifa/publicat/html/pubman/coffee.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> International Trade Centre, *Coffee: An Exporter's Guide*.

<sup>22</sup> DTI-International Coffee Organization Certifying Agency, "An Investment Profile on Coffee," (Makati City: Department of Trade and Industry, Republic of the Philippines).

<sup>23</sup> A. E. Haarer, *Modern Coffee Production*, Second Revised ed. (Leonard Hill [Books] Limited, 1962), 2-3.

the Muslim world...or so the story goes.<sup>24</sup> Somewhere along the way, the old goatherder became younger, became a sometime poet, somehow acquired a name—Kaldi—and it was Mohammed through the intercession of the Archangel Gabriel, who instructed the imam on how to prepare the invigorating drink from the roasted beans. While entertaining, it is unlikely that either story is historically accurate.

What is known is that, by 1500, the drinking of coffee was already widespread in the Arabian Peninsula. In 1536, the Ottoman Turks occupied Yemen and in the following years were primarily responsible for the further spread of coffee out of Arabia and to the rest of the Islamic world i.e. Persia, Egypt, Turkey, and North Africa (thus initiating the now synonymous association between Turkish coffee and the Arabian method of preparing coffee). For nearly three centuries from its introduction into Arabia, the use of coffee was limited to the Mohammedan nations with Yemen enjoying a virtual monopoly on coffee production.<sup>25</sup>

Originally confined to religious rituals, its use quickly spread to secular society through the popularity of coffeehouses. The first cafes outside Mecca were opened in Constantinople in 1554 and soon numbered in the hundreds.<sup>26</sup> This tonic eventually attracted the attention of travelling French and Venetian merchants who were probably among the first to import both the habit and the product into Western Europe. In quick succession, coffeehouses were established in Venice (1645), Oxford (1650), London (1652) Marseilles (1671) Paris (1672) Vienna and (1683) and Hamburg (1687).<sup>27</sup> With its increasing importance in European trade, it was but natural that the European merchants were motivated to wrest control of the production of coffee from the Arabian traders. The actual circumstances of coffee's 'Escape from Arabia' is clouded by tales of romance, deception and intrigue but what is known is that from 1690-1720 the Dutch, French and Portuguese somehow acquired planting material and introduced coffee to their colonial possessions in Asia, the Caribbean and South America respectively.<sup>28</sup>

By the mid-1700s, the Turkish monopoly was broken. For many years to come, assured of a steady supply from their colonies, the Dutch and French would compete for control over the lucrative European market.

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<sup>24</sup> Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Coffee: The Epic of a Commodity*, trans. Eden Paul and Cedar Paul (Short Hills, N.J.: Burford Books, 1998), 3-11.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 1999), 7-8.

<sup>26</sup> Kathleen Seidel, *Serving the Guest: A Sufi Cookbook & Art Gallery* (2nd) [Online Book] (2000, accessed 22 November 2003); available from [http://www.superluminal.com/cookbook/essay\\_coffee.html](http://www.superluminal.com/cookbook/essay_coffee.html).

<sup>27</sup> Haarer, *Modern Coffee Production*, 3-5.

<sup>28</sup> Unlike Yemeni coffee which was tended by peasant smallholders, colonial coffee was cultivated by slaves and coerced labourers, setting a pattern of abuse and exploitation, remnant of which, persist to this day.

From 1739-1789, European consumption grew tenfold with the French colonies supplying three-quarters of the demand. In the year 1788 the French possession of Saint Dominique (now Haiti) alone was responsible for up to half of the world's coffee supply. However, in 1791, a slave uprising sent its coffee industry into permanent decline. The Dutch were quick to jump into the breach with its Java beans and until the end of the eighteenth century, was the undisputed industry leader.

The next century would pose the most serious challenge to the fragile Dutch hegemony. As coffee consumption grew rapidly in the United States and increasing volumes of coffee continued to pour in from nearby Latin America, Amsterdam was losing its ability to control and dominate the market. By the 1850's, over half the world's coffee production was being supplied by Brazil.<sup>29</sup>

In today's market, the tension between the United States as the world's largest importing country and Brazil, as the world's largest grower and seller of coffee is what continues to drive the global coffee economy. Next to oil, it is the most important commodity in the world economy, at one point, accounting for trade worth up to US\$12.4 billion in 1996/97 and approximately US\$5.6 billion in 2000/01.<sup>30</sup> It is an industry that supports over 25 million people around the world and with the entire economies of producing countries dependent on it for survival; it is automatically a very political and socially sensitive crop.

#### *Distorted Perceptions*

The entry of Spain into the global coffee economy in the late eighteenth century could be viewed as but a small part of a broader mission to recover lost glory, recapture lost possessions and to revive Spanish prestige. Once the most powerful country in Europe, the mighty Spanish Empire had been in decline since the seventeenth century. Sapped by successive wars and further debilitated by civil turmoil, Spain was industrially weak and economically backward compared to her European neighbours. As will be elaborated in following sections, the Bourbon Reforms marked a spirited attempt to stimulate economic development in the Philippines and its other possessions and trigger an economic recovery. Unfortunately, it was a classic case of too little, too late. Despite early successes, many of the economic reforms that were introduced eventually failed. As Spain gradually let down the bars to foreign trade, the inability of Spain to dominate Philippine commerce created the conditions for its British, French, Dutch and American rivals to have greater power in dictating the terms of trade and with it, the economic fortunes of the Filipino people.

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<sup>29</sup> Stanley J. Stein, "The Passing of the Coffee Plantation in the Paraiba Valley," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 33, no. 3 (1953): 360.

<sup>30</sup> International Trade Centre, *Coffee: An Exporter's Guide*, 3.

Amazingly, like the Europeans at the time of Ptolemy who thought that the sun and all the planets revolved around the Earth, the history of coffee in nineteenth century Philippines erroneously places Lipa at the centre of the coffee universe, oblivious to the greater forces that influenced and governed its course. It is a self-centred point of view that has, for decades, been the biggest stumbling block in understanding the true nature and consequences of the rise and decline of the coffee trade in nineteenth century Lipa.

### 1.3 Critique of Contemporary Sources

Largely because of the specialty coffee revolution of the 1990's and the global brand recognition of Starbucks, the study of coffee has been thought to be a twentieth century phenomenon. While it is true that in the last decade alone, there has been a plethora of publications on coffee and its various aspects (albeit with the great majority focusing on Latin America), this commodity has been the focus of the attention of researchers and historians for close to three hundred years.

Universally regarded by the specialty coffee community as the bible of the coffee industry, is William Uker's *All About Coffee*.<sup>31</sup> Also popular are more technical works, which followed soon after Uker's publication, such as Wellman's *Coffee: Botany, Cultivation and Utilization*, and Haarer's *Modern Coffee Production*.<sup>32</sup> Though popularly cited by researchers, these volumes were neither the first nor the only ones to see print. The US Library of Congress, lists in its collection over two thousand references relevant to coffee, with some written works on the history of coffee antedating Uker's by more than two hundred years.<sup>33</sup>

As would be expected, the first books that were published solely on coffee were naturally more concerned with its history, botany and cultivation. In comparison, the most recent research has been heavily influenced by the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and cultural history and has been more concerned with the social, cultural and economic impact of the cultivation and trade of coffee. Topik's *Coffee Anyone? Recent Research on Latin America Coffee Societies* does excellent work of tracing the changing perspectives of the historical study of coffee of Latin

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<sup>31</sup> William H. Ukers, *All About Coffee*, 2nd ed. (New York: Tea & Coffee Trade Journal Company, 1935).

<sup>32</sup> Haarer, *Modern Coffee Production*; Frederick L. Wellman, *Coffee: Botany, Cultivation and Utilization* (New York: Interscience Publishers, 1961).

<sup>33</sup> Richard Bradley, *A Short Historical Account of Coffee; Containing the Most Remarkable Observations of the Greatest Men in Europe Concerning It, from the First Knowledge of It Down to This Present Time; with a More Accurate Description of the Coffee-Tree Than Has yet Been Publish'd* (London,: E. Matthews, 1720); John Chamberlayne, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, Tobacco, in Four Several Sections : With a Tract of Elder and Juniper-Berries, Shewing How Useful They May Be in Our Coffee-Houses : And Also the Way of Making Mum, with Some Remarks on That Liquor* (London: Printed for Christopher Wilkinson ... 1682); John Ellis and Pre-1801 Imprint Collection (Library of Congress), *Historical Account of Coffee* ([n.p.]: 1774).

American societies.<sup>34</sup> Robert H. Bates, renowned author of *Open-Economy Politics: The Political Economy Of The World Coffee Trade* takes a different approach, asserting that it has been coffee studies that have shaped and influenced the world of social sciences and not the other way around.<sup>35</sup> For scholars looking to examine the local histories of coffee economies in Latin America or the evolution of political and economic theories in coffee studies, from staple theory to new institutionalism, both Topik and Bates are good starting points.

In stark contrast, despite its long and somewhat tumultuous history, there is painfully little that has been written on coffee in the Philippines. An exhaustive search of the dissertation archives of the leading universities in the Philippines yielded but a handful of agronomy papers and little of value by way of anthropological or social interest on the cultivation and consumption of coffee. In the 1960's there was more published research on potential coffee substitutes than there was on coffee itself. Majority of the references written since the 1920's consist of industry reports, feasibility studies and other economic papers, which naturally are more concerned with production trends, sales forecasts and trade statistics. With the emphasis on economic reporting and the analysis of production trends in aid of the development of government policy or other immediate term political purposes, the colonial history of coffee has typically been given little more than cursory mention in the introductory passages with no attention given to the social, economic and cultural impact of its cultivation.

In the last decade, papers written on Lipa and coffee in the nineteenth century were prepared at the undergraduate level and consist of mere repetitions and summaries of what has come before. Even the latest contributions of educator Reynaldo Y. Palma and local historian Praxedes Villa, having uncovered no new sources of information have contributed little to the discourse.<sup>36</sup>

Besides the paucity of research, perhaps the most glaring weakness of the limited material on the colonial history of coffee available today is the overwhelming dependence of journalists and scholars on but a handful of sources for their information. It has been typical for almost every student paper and magazine and newspaper article to depend on the information provided by just three authors, Teodoro Kalaw, Maria Kalaw Katigbak, and Rafael Bartolome without

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<sup>34</sup> Steven C. Topik, "Coffee Anyone? Recent Research on Latin American Coffee Societies," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 80, no. 2 (2000).

<sup>35</sup> Robert H. Bates, *Open-Economy Politics: The Political Economy of the World Coffee Trade* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>36</sup> Reynaldo Y. Palma, "The Coffee Industry in Lipa, Batangas in the Nineteenth Century," *Anuario/Annales* 9 (1991): 58-63; Praxedes V. Villa, "Kape and How Batangas Coffee Made a Mark in the World Market," in *Batangas: Forged in Fire*, ed. Ramon N. Villegas (Makati: Ayala Foundation, 2002).

challenge.<sup>37</sup> Taking into consideration the purpose, occasion and audience of the texts—that they were largely intended to inspire nostalgia and recreate and celebrate a lost moment in history—scholars should have recognized the limited authoritative value of these accounts. Scholars should also have considered that the accounts of Kalaw, Katigbak, and Bartolome are not refereed scholarly works. That being said, it is unfortunate that those that have followed have opted to repeat rather than critically examine the factors that may have contributed to the period that locals like to refer to as ‘the grandeur that was Lipa’. Largely through blind repetition, the colonial history of coffee in the Philippines which extends over two centuries has been reduced to two or three key events, with no explanation for gaps that span as much as sixty to seventy years.

A common feature of the accounts of Kalaw, Katigbak, and Bartolome is a monocausal approach to the rise and decline of coffee in Lipa at the turn of the century. That is, a coffee blight that attacked the coffee plantations in the Southeast Asian region is credited as the root cause for a supposed short-lived monopoly that initiated Lipa’s golden era of coffee. Ironically, the same fungal disease is named as the sole reason that Lipa’s coffee industry met its sudden demise. Though it seems that it might have been more prudent to assume that the history of coffee in the Philippines was far less tidy than has been typically portrayed, even the more recent contributions by Tinio, Villa and Palma submit to this theory.<sup>38</sup>

Probably the only published contrary view is the one offered by William Gervase Clarence-Smith (whose work seems to have been overlooked by all, although the lapse of local researchers may be forgiven, the work of Clarence-Smith being so recent). Clarence-Smith is probably the first to authoritatively challenge the conventional wisdom that the *Hemileia vastatrix* was the sole basis of the coffee crisis that affected not only the Philippines but also much of Asia, Africa and the Pacific from 1870-1914. It is Clarence-Smith’s conclusion that, while the impact of *Hemileia vastatrix* may have been the main reason that Africa and Asia fell behind as coffee producers in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the blight has to be placed in the context of other economic and social factors such as access to virgin forest, the attractiveness of alternative crops, the transition from slavery to free labour, etc.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Rafael Bartolome, “Coffee and Cacao Production in Batangas,” *Lipa City Festivities, Souvenir Programme* 1958; “The Coffee Industry in the Philippines,” (Manila: Coffee & Cacao Institute of the Philippines, 1962); “Coffee Production in the Philippines,” *The Philippine Journal of Agriculture* XV, no. 3-4 (1950); Kalaw, *Aide-De-Camp to Freedom*; Katigbak, “When Coffee Bloomed in Lipa.”

<sup>38</sup> Palma, ‘The Coffee Industry in Lipa, Batangas in the Nineteenth Century’.; Martin Jr. Tinio, ‘Lipa’s Golden Age’, in *Batangas: Forged in Fire*, ed. Ramon N. Villegas (Makati: Ayala Foundation, 2002); Villa, ‘Kape and How Batangas Coffee Made a Mark in the World Market’

<sup>39</sup>William Gervase Clarence-Smith, “The Coffee Crisis in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, C.1870 to C.1914,” in *The Global Economy in Africa, Asia and Latin America, 1500-1989*, ed. Steven Topik and William Gervase Clarence-Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Clarence-Smith’s focus has been one of the inspirations for the directions taken in this research



Specific to the Lipa experience, in a fairly obscure but well-researched article, church historian Fr. Policarpo F. Hernandez, OSA, credits the decline of the industry to a different pest altogether—the *Bayongbong* or wood-boring worm—and the shifting of farmers' interests from coffee to sugarcane and abaca (Manila hemp). Relying heavily on sources from 1850 to 1901, it is curious that none of the sources cited by Fr. Hernandez make mention of the supposed 1886 monopoly or of the *Hemileia vastatrix* epidemic.<sup>40</sup>

The narrow emphasis on the role of the coffee blight has diverted research attention from more complex questions, which remain insufficiently investigated; for example, what factors may have influenced the spread of coffee cultivation in the country, what were the antecedents that allowed the industry to flourish, or what other macro-economic conditions may have contributed to the decline. Other issues, such as agrarian relations, the relationship between gender and labour, the importance and impact of international demand on patterns of foreign trade, or the cultural value of coffee or the cultural contexts of coffee consumption have not been studied.

With the recent and renewed interest of Philippine media and the public in the history of Philippine coffee, there is evident need to separate the factual from the fictional and to correct the myopia that plagues contemporary accounts.

#### 1.4 Objectives and Scope of Research

Like many countries, the Philippines underwent a transformation in the period from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. New demand from Europe, the United States and Australia for primary commodities pushed an essentially subsistent economy into one dominated by the export of primary products. As the Philippines was thrust into the world economy, coffee was both participant and victim of the accelerated social and economic changes that overtook this far-flung Spanish outpost and is thus a valuable indicator of economic and cultural change.

In investigating the conventional version of the history of coffee in Lipa, this paper proposes that—for many years—what has passed as historical truth, is more apocryphal than it is factual. By casting a wider net to include primary sources such as travelogues and government reports from the late nineteenth century that have been previously overlooked, plus several key historical studies, this research challenges what is currently accepted as the history of coffee in Lipa in the nineteenth century and in doing so, opens the door for new and different interpretations of events. By separating fact from fancy and correcting false impressions, this new approach to the rise and decline of coffee in Lipa reveals a history more complex than was previously thought and serves as a dramatic demonstration of the transforming power of gourmandism and global trade.

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<sup>40</sup> Hernandez, "The Augustinians and the Progress of Philippine Agriculture," 5-6.

This research also seeks to point out that the weakness of coffee research in the Philippines lies not in the unquestioning belief in the myth of Lipa but in mistaking the myth for recorded history. As described by mythologist Sam Keen, there is a 'selective blindness' that comes with unquestioning acceptance of myth...an 'unspoken consensus', a 'habitual way of seeing things', an 'automatic stance'.<sup>41</sup> This 'selective blindness' can help explain the lack of scholarship and critical examination that marks Philippine coffee studies, that over the years has allowed the diffusion of a set of assumptions that are poorly supported by historical records, thus perpetuating a history of coffee in the Philippines that is, if not false, almost certainly incomplete.

Having said that, this research does not suggest that the myth of the history of coffee in Lipa be rejected outright on the basis of its historical inaccuracy. On the contrary, what this paper does hope to achieve is that the story of coffee in colonial Lipa be recognised as myth so it can be appreciated and investigated as myth. This is an important distinction and to go into this subject fully would require another paper. Suffice it to say that the value of myth lies not in the accuracy of what it depicts but in what it signifies. The study of myths and meaning provides valuable insight into a people's culture and psyche. Keen and Valley-Fox define myths as the 'interlocking stories, rituals, rites, and customs that inform and give the pivotal sense of meaning and direction to a person, family, community, or culture'.<sup>42</sup> Even with its many mixed-up versions, the story of Villa de Lipa's golden years, though far in the past, retains the power to unite, instill identity and evoke regional pride in the modern Lipeño, indicating that the story is valued for something other than its supposed historical facts. A natural offshoot of this research may well be a deeper analysis into the persistence of the Lipa myth, its meanings, and its social and cultural functions, which is a direction no less valid than that which a historian would take—which is the further investigation and verification of, 'what actually happened'. In either case, the first step begins with separating fact from fancy, myth from reality.

Ultimately, the goal of this paper is to provoke a questioning of perspectives. By challenging both current and future Filipino researchers to raise the veil of 'selective blindness' and test their 'habitual way of seeing things', can the research that has been stunted for many years be invigorated, and the debate renewed.

### *Is this Gastronomy?*

Before proceeding any further, it seems necessary at this juncture to clarify how the proposed enquiry falls within the purview of gastronomy.

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<sup>41</sup> Sam Keen and Anne Valley-Fox, *Your Mythic Journey: Finding Meaning in Your Life through Writing and Storytelling* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1989), xi-xii.

<sup>42</sup> Keen and Valley-Fox, *Your Mythic Journey*, xi.

Often narrowly defined as the art and science of eating and drinking, it is understandable that the average layman would associate gastronomy only with the pursuit of the best food and drink and hence only having to deal with issues of consumption and enjoyment. Even when, in common use, the definition of gastronomy has also been extended to mean cuisine, cookery, or sometimes, a set of food traditions and rituals, it still always seems to project the idea of gratification.

Following those narrow confines would require this paper to focus on the history of the preparation or consumption of coffee in nineteenth century Lipa. It does not. It would also raise expectations of flavour descriptions and organoleptic assessments. It pursues neither.

In Brillat-Savarin's seminal work *The Physiology of Taste*, first published in 1825, gastronomy is defined as '*la connaissance raisonnée de tout ce qui a rapport à l'homme en tant qu'il se nourrit*'.<sup>43</sup> Santich's translates Brillat-Savarin's words into 'the reasoned understanding of everything that concerns us, insofar as we sustain ourselves. Though it may not be, as Santich commented, what he had originally intended, Brillat-Savarin's definition has come to define the study of gastronomy as being equally concerned with the 'when', 'where', 'why'—or 'why not' for that matter—as it is with the 'what'; potentially embracing '...everything into which food enters, from the structure of society to global food politics...all aspects of food and drink production, preparation, politics, trade, marketing, cooking and serving, together with meals and manners and a good many other related topics...'.<sup>44</sup>

Gastronomy as a discipline could be criticized for having no methodology or theoretical framework of its own, being forced to 'borrow' from other disciplines such as anthropology, history, sociology, food sciences and economics. Yet its perceived weakness is its very strength. The trans-disciplinary nature of gastronomy studies allows it to gather multiple perspectives that can be integrated into a new way of viewing the subject. With gastronomy being the lens by which the information is examined it '...becomes a non-neutral and pro-active focal point in which other disciplines can come together to present new insights or new knowledge'.<sup>45</sup>

Gastronomy now seems well suited for the investigation of the history of coffee in nineteenth century. This new approach to the rise and decline of coffee in Lipa, by first gathering and then integrating information from various sources that rely on the disciplines of economics, history,

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<sup>43</sup> Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *La Physiologie Du Goût (the Physiology of Taste)*, trans. Anne Drayton, First Publ. 1895 (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970) quoted in Barbara Santich, *Looking for Flavour* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1996), 172-174.

<sup>44</sup> Santich, *Looking for Flavour*, 174.

<sup>45</sup> Rosario Scarpato, "Gastronomy Studies in Search of Hospitality," *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 9, no. 2 (2002): 158.

sociology, historiography plus development studies and globalisation theories, reveals a history more complex than was previously thought. The study of coffee in Lipa extends beyond the commodity itself and becomes a case study for the transforming power of gourmandism and nineteenth century globalisation.

### 1.5 Methodology

At its simplest level, the exercise of demythologising need only involve the presentation of conflicting facts, statistics or other sound historical data that negate the beliefs offered by the myth under scrutiny. Conversely, it can also involve demonstrating the overwhelming lack of corroborating evidence thereby introducing the possibility of implausibility, akin to what trial lawyers might refer to as 'reasonable doubt'. In either approach, access to a wide range of historical sources that can either invalidate the story or give it historical basis, is required.

In attempting to demythologise the history of coffee in Lipa in the nineteenth century, there were several challenges that had to be surmounted.

Foremost was the paucity of source materials. Reliable historical records from the sixteenth century up until the end of the nineteenth century are sparse. And with most extant records consisting of accounts by Spanish missionaries, reports of government officials and the chronicles of foreign travellers, any would be food researcher looking to confine his research to dedicated sources on the production and consumption of food and drink will quickly find himself facing a dead end. As indicated by eminent Filipino food writer and historian, Doreen Fernandez,<sup>46</sup>

The researcher who seeks to explore Filipino food before or early in the era of Spanish colonization, probably starts by discovering the dearth of source material...there are few of the usual historical materials relating to Philippine food—no cookbooks ethnic or otherwise, no books on household matters, no market lists, no information on conservation and preservation, no menus till the nineteenth century...

By necessity, the search for information had to be approached, in many respects, like a hunting expedition. For the purposes of this paper, non-food records such as, government letters agricultural reports, and travelogues were scrutinized for stray mentions and random references to Lipa in the nineteenth century as well as the production, trade or consumption of coffee. These casual mentions were then correlated with economic histories, church histories, agricultural reports and other local histories of the same time period, sometimes providing enough information to form credible deductions. Every so often, a single reference with bibliographic notes would point to other sources, which in turn, helped to track down other sources. Admittedly, this exercise—with its occasionally unpredictable outcomes—has its

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<sup>46</sup> Doreen G. Fernandez, "Historias, Crónicas, Vocabularios: Some Spanish Sources for Research in Philippine Food," *Philippine Studies* 35 (1987): 279.

obvious shortcomings. Yet, in such manner, with a combination of skill and luck, were several primary sources, which had been overlooked for decades, uncovered.

Another daunting challenge that confronts any would be researcher into the colonial history of the Philippines and gets in the way of further discovery, is that of language. Almost every letter and report on record during the period of Spanish contact was naturally written in Spanish. This makes the fifty-five-volume *History of the Philippines* by Blair and Robertson a logical starting point. First released in 1907, the collection was groundbreaking in its scope and focus and remains the most definitive work on the Spanish Colonial History of the Philippines. The Blair and Robertson collection includes hundreds of various entries such as rare photos, reports, letters, and transcripts of various official Spanish Documents spanning the years 1493-1898, that have all been painstakingly translated into English.<sup>47</sup> (Although, even with what seems to be a great volume of available documents, researchers should bear in mind that there are still a great number of primary sources in archives that have not been translated from the original Spanish.) An equally daunting task is accessing these original documents. Many of these early reports and chronicles can only be found where they were originally sent. Researchers who have relied exclusively on information available in Rome, Mexico City, Madrid, Seville and the United States were just as, if not more capable of producing significant work on local and regional colonial histories as Manila based researchers. There is a wealth of information that can be accessed by future researchers who have the competencies and the resources to examine them.

A second set of primary sources that are invaluable in recalling the conditions of nineteenth century colonial Philippine are the reports, travelogues and published works of foreign officials, traders and travellers who visited or worked in the Philippines during the period in question. Those of Bowditch (1796), Piddington (1823), and Foreman (1899) were originally written in English so have nothing to lose in translation. However, those of Comyn (1810), Mallat (1846), Gironiere (1868), and Jagor (1873) were originally written in Spanish, French and German respectively and while there are English translations available, it's a multilingual obstacle course for researchers wanting to examine these texts in their original form. Even sources written by Filipino writers pose a similar challenge. In the years after the revolt against Spain 1896, having benefited from university educations abroad, more and more Filipinos began writing on history, folklore, politics and literature, but their outputs were still almost exclusively completed in Spanish, as English as a popular medium of writing did not become popular until the 1930's. As regards trade reports and statistics in the Southeast Asian region, a great deal of the archival information is either in Dutch, Portuguese or French. It is clear that a multilingual researcher has the obvious advantage.

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<sup>47</sup> Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, 55 vols. (Cleveland: Arthur Clark, 1907).

### *Limitations of Research*

For this paper, the research was limited to references that have been translated into English and can be easily accessed from Manila libraries or the Internet by the average researcher.

Although the National Library of the Philippines is the national repository of the country's printed and recorded cultural heritage and other intellectual, literary and information resources, the most accessible collections of Filipiniana are held in university libraries and in the private libraries of corporate foundations. The bulk of the archival research for this paper was limited to the collection in the following libraries:<sup>48</sup>

- *The Filipinas Heritage Library* The Library, which began with a donation of materials from Ayala Corporation and the Zobel de Ayala family, today houses over 10,000 contemporary volumes on Philippine history, art, language, religion and the social sciences, and over 2,000 rare titles, rare books on microfiche, and an extensive library of slides and photographs
- *The Library at the Lopez Memorial Museum* Initially established with the private collection of Don Eugenio Lopez at its core, the Lopez library now has a collection of over 13,000 Filipiniana titles, constantly enriched by new acquisitions. Its rare Philippine imprints date from early 17th century. The library also has extensive holdings on books of the Spanish and early American period.
- *The Rizal Library of the Ateneo de Manila University* The Filipiniana Section's book collection of over 30,000 volumes covers the fields of the humanities, social sciences and general sciences. Approximately 1,000 Filipiniana book titles are also available on microforms. Religious files, annual reports, maps and vertical file materials on Philippine-related issues are also part of the Filipiniana collection.

Also visited were The De La Salle University Library, De La Salle University-Manila, The University Library, The University of the Philippines-Diliman and the Kalaw Memorial Library, Lipa City, Batangas.

For contemporary research, the Internet, through electronic databases such as JSTOR, made access to otherwise unavailable scholarly journals possible. In assessing the value of Internet sources, unless the references were properly documented and authorship and authority clearly established, the source was not considered for inclusion.

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<sup>48</sup> When visiting university libraries, visiting researchers should come armed with letters of introduction from the offices or universities with which they are affiliated, without which it is unlikely that they will be granted entry. They should also be prepared to pay fees for every visit. Privileges are generally limited to in-room use of materials sans borrowing privileges. For theses, dissertations and rare books, photocopying is typically not allowed.

Specific to coffee research, though there were hundreds of sources that were identified through various Internet and library catalogue searches, the lack of access to many extant monographs on coffee—due to various impediments such as of time and distance and expense—meant that this paper had to rely heavily on but two volumes, that of Haarer (1962) and Jacob (1998).

Of interest to the future researcher, besides the previously mentioned United States Library of Congress in Washington, DC whose catalogue lists over two thousand coffee resources spanning almost three centuries, are two specialised libraries, either of which would make dream destinations for the dedicated coffee researcher.

In London is located the library of the International Coffee Organization which has an international reference collection built up over thirty-five years of some thirteen thousand monographs (books, reports, theses, pamphlets) and over two hundred periodical titles covering all aspects of coffee, as well as wider commodity trade and development issues. It also houses the comprehensive economic and statistical data on coffee published by the ICO and a range of periodical and other statistical publications of the United Nations, its specialised agencies and other international organizations. In addition to printed material the Library holds a major collection of colour slides and videotapes which are available for purchase.<sup>49</sup>

In Zurich is the library of the Johann Jacobs Museum, which contains some three thousand five hundred items dating from the sixteenth century up to the present day, making it one of the world's major collections on the subject of coffee. Manuscripts, early printed texts, official announcements, periodicals and both popular and specialist literature from all over the world document the history of coffee in a number of languages.<sup>50</sup> The entire collection of the library is described in a recent release, *Coffee: A Bibliography: A Guide to the Literature on Coffee*.<sup>51</sup> This two-volume annotated work, which began as a catalogue of the holdings of the Johann Jacobs Museum, was expanded to include some fifteen thousand imprints relating to every aspect of coffee—from its cultivation, production, preparation and consumption of coffee, to its economic, social and cultural significance, its medical and chemical uses as a drug, and its falsifications and substitutes—from the past to the present. Representing decades of research, it is a unique reference work and is probably the most comprehensive guide in existence concerning the history of the coffee drink and its enduring social, economic and cultural role. With most of the bibliographic references including a list of libraries that hold a copy of the title, it is a most valuable resource and an ideal starting point for research. Although with only one

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<sup>49</sup> International Coffee Organization, *ICO - Library* [Official Website], accessed 29 September 2003; available from <http://www.ico.org/frameset/libset.htm>.

<sup>50</sup> Gabrielle Obrist, Jörg Smotlacha, and Roman Rossfeld, *Johann Jacobs Museum: The Library* [Official Website], accessed 17 October 2003; available from <http://www.johann-jacobs-museum.ch/english/sammlung/bibliothek>.

<sup>51</sup> Hünersdorff, ed., *Coffee: A Bibliography*.

thousand copies in circulation in private collections and select libraries worldwide, it is a convenience that will probably not be available to an average researcher.

Without a doubt, a more comprehensive and detailed scrutiny of the extant colonial records and centuries of coffee research—both in the Philippines and in libraries abroad—could reveal far more than what is detailed in the pages to follow. For now, it suffices that despite the limited scope of this research, the information discovered overturns close to a century of accepted knowledge on the history of coffee. Future researchers should be guided by the fact that this work is far from definitive. There are still a great number of sources that remain untapped and that the field for further research remains vast and unexplored.



## 2 IS IT HISTORY? OR MYTHOLOGY?

There is a danger that the history of coffee may lead us astray. The anecdotal, the picturesque, and the unreliable play an enormous part in it.

Fernand Braudel<sup>52</sup>

It is almost a tragedy that the study of coffee—which noted coffee historian Steven Topik describes as probably ‘the most important internationally traded agricultural product in history’<sup>53</sup>—has failed to capture the serious interest of the Filipino researcher. There is no study on coffee that has been conducted on the same level as, say Norman Owen’s work with abaca or John Larkin’s research on sugar.<sup>54</sup> When compared to the great body of literature that has been published on the history of coffee in Latin America and its impact on Latin American societies, the mediocrity and paucity of research available on the Philippine coffee industry is palpable.

In most contemporary sources, the history narrative of coffee at the end of the colonial era in the Philippines can be condensed into a single paragraph basically as follows:

A Franciscan friar brought three trees (or three cans of beans) from Mexico (if not directly then transhipped from Africa or Brazil) and planted them behind a convent in Laguna (or Lipa, Batangas) in 1740. In the early 1800s, Lipa *Gobernadorcillo* (town mayor) Don Galo (also Galleo) de los Reyes made the planting of coffee trees mandatory for all residents. His son, Don Santiago de los Reyes, continued his father’s efforts upon succeeding Don Galo as town mayor in 1832. With the assistance of Augustinian friars, Fray Elias Nebreda (also Lebrado or Lebrada) and Fray Benito Varas, by 1859 up to two-thirds of Lipa was planted to coffee. Lipa became the backbone of the Philippine coffee industry, which reached its apex in the late 1880’s; soon after the airborne fungus *Hemileia vastatrix* had destroyed all the coffee plantations in neighbouring Ceylon, Java, Sumatra as well as in India and Brazil. Lipa, for a brief period was the world’s sole supplier of coffee beans. In 1886, the Philippines was ranked as fourth largest supplier of coffee in the world. In 1887, as a reward for Lipa’s ‘industry and virtue’ the Queen Regent of Spain, María Cristina, issued a Royal Decree converting the municipality into a city. Consequent to the granting of such an honour, the town was allowed to bear the name *Villa de Lipa* and was issued a coat of arms. Lipa continued to profit from the coffee trade until about c1889 when the same *Hemileia vastatrix* fungus that had devastated the coffee

<sup>52</sup> Fernand Braudel cited in Cemal Kadafar, “The History of Coffee” (paper presented at the XIII Economic History Congress, Buenos Aires, 2002).

<sup>53</sup> Steven C. Topik, “Coffee,” in *The Cambridge World History of Food*, ed. Kenneth F. Kiple and Kriemhild Coneáe Ornelas (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>54</sup> John A. Larkin, *Sugar and the Origins of Modern Philippine Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Norman G. Owen, “Abaca in Kabikolan: Prosperity without Progress,” in *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Ed. C. de Jesus (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1976).

plantations in neighbouring coffee-producing countries finally reached and destroyed all the plantations in the Southern Tagalog region. The boom went bust and by the late 1890s coffee no longer “bloomed in Lipa”.

With minor variations and omissions, this is the version of coffee history that is the most popular, and the most widely disseminated. In the absence of a critical view, like the pastoral story of Kaldi, the dancing goats and the first discovery of coffee, it is difficult to know where the factual ends and the apocryphal begin. The persistence of the conventional version of the history of coffee in Lipa is astonishing—as will be demonstrated—even a cursory examination of manuscripts and published materials from the period in question offers little to support what seems to be more folklore than fact.

### 2.1 MYTH: Franciscan Friar Brings Coffee to the Philippines in 1740

Nineteenth century sources are scant and sometimes unreliable, and from what is available, it is difficult to validate the generally accepted account of how and when coffee was introduced into the archipelago. Attempts to verify this have failed to yield a primary source that either confirms or corroborates the story of the Franciscan friar and the three *gantas*<sup>55</sup> of beans. More reliable sources point to later dates of entry.

The year 1740—as the year when a Franciscan friar is said to have taken the three *gantas* of Arabica coffee beans with him on a Manila galleon on a voyage from Mexico, and subsequently planted them in his garden in a small town in Laguna—is usually attributed to Rafael Bartolome, a horticulturist who worked for the Department of Agriculture in the years prior to World War II. Author of several articles, it is his work that most students cite as a reference.<sup>56</sup> Bartolome first mentions 1740 in an article written for *The Philippine Journal of Agriculture* in 1950.<sup>57</sup> Bartolome's citation in turn can be traced to a 1928 article in *The American Chamber of Commerce Journal* which goes on to relate that following the death of this friar, the friar's servant boy dug up the coffee plants and replanted them in his father's land in Pinagtologan, a barrio of Lipa in Batangas province. These plants supposedly flourished and were presumably the source of all the Arabica plants that would eventually occupy over eighty percent of Lipa's arable land by 1888. The 1928 article in turn cites a Bureau of Industry memorandum authored

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<sup>55</sup> One *ganta* is a unit of volume roughly equivalent to about two quarts.

<sup>56</sup> Bartolome, 'Coffee and Cacao Production in Batangas.'; 'The Coffee Industry in the Philippines'; 'Coffee Production in the Philippines.'

<sup>57</sup> Bartolome, "Coffee Production in the Philippines," 3.

by Quirino B. Aguilera as its source.<sup>58</sup> Where Aguilera sourced his information is not stated and up to this writing, remains unverified.

In 1740, galleons were still plying the Manila-Acapulco route. It is assumed that that is how the fabled Franciscan friar transported the beans from Mexico to the Philippines. Since, coffee was not introduced into Mexico until fifty years later, sometime between 1790 and 1794, what is questionable is how this Franciscan friar may have acquired his planting material.<sup>59</sup> Bartolome, in a later article, actually reverses himself and casts doubt on the 1740 date of entry, citing an important inconsistency. The first farm estates in Mexico were planted with the *Bourbon* variety of Arabica sourced from the West Indies, which is a coffee strain quite different from the *typica* variety that was originally cultivated in the Philippines in the nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup> This makes Acapulco an unlikely source for the fabled three *gantas* of coffee beans.

It has also been alleged that the friar may have sourced his seeds from Java.<sup>61</sup> Noted coffee and cocoa historian William Clarence-Smith casts doubt on this possibility. The Dutch were so protective of their coffee business that the export of ripe berries or planting material was considered a serious offence, punishable by death. Even if the date was accurate, it was highly unlikely that the Dutch would have permitted it.<sup>62</sup>

The theory of a 1740 entry is further weakened by a lack of mention of coffee in the reports and travelogues of the era. In William L. Schurz's *magnum opus*, *The Manila Galleon*, a product of twenty-seven years of research, coffee is conspicuous in its absence. Schurz's meticulous research on the Manila-Acapulco Galleon trade, which lasted from 1565-1815, cites hundreds of sources, including detailed descriptions of the cargo lists and food stores for the passengers and crew and even lists of confiscated contraband. Enumerated in considerable detail are the many items and foodstuffs that went on board; silks, carpets, and porcelain, as well as ivory castanets, copper cuspidors, bird's nests, spices from the Moluccas, and teas from China. Nowhere in the book is coffee mentioned. One is tempted to speculate that, if there was any documented mention of coffee during the Galleon trade, surely Schurz would have found it. Finally, in an official report written by then Governor of Batangas, Simeon Luz, for the United

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<sup>58</sup> Quirino B. Aguilera cited in Walter Robb, ed., "Franciscan Friar Brings Coffee to the Philippines: Three Gantas of Arabian Seed from Mexico 188 Years Ago", vol. V, *The American Chamber of Commerce Journal* (Manila: The American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippine Islands, 1928), 8-9.

<sup>59</sup> Laure Waridel, "Sustainable Trade: The Case of Coffee in North America" (Masteral Thesis, University of Victoria, 2002), 47.

<sup>60</sup> Bartolome, "The Coffee Industry in the Philippines," 3.

<sup>61</sup> Haarer, *Modern Coffee Production*, 9.

<sup>62</sup> William Gervase Clarence-Smith, "The Spread of Coffee Cultivation in Asia, from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century", ed. Michel Tuchscherer, *Le Commerce Du Café Avant L'ère Plantations Coloniales* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 2001).

States Bureau of Census in 1903, Luz states that 'Nothing appears of record in the official archives of the province of Batangas nor in the parochial books of the municipality of Lipa regarding the history of the introduction of the first coffee plants ...'<sup>63</sup>

It is more likely that the tale of the Franciscan friar and the three gantas of beans is apocryphal. Nevertheless, it has been quoted as fact for far too long and likely to forever remain part of local lore.

### *The Arrival and Spread of Coffee*

Having established that the conventional explanations for the arrival and spread of the cultivation of coffee in the Philippines are probably inaccurate, this begs the question: so when was coffee introduced?

It is known that by the late tenth century, Arab merchants were already trading with China. The trade route passed through Malaysia, Borneo and Sulu onward to the Visayas and Luzon and ultimately to China. In the latter part of the 14th century, two royal families from Borneo, with their families and slaves, organized the first Malay settlement along the trade route, somewhere near the mouth of Taal River in Batangas, Luzon.<sup>64</sup> Throughout the next century, Chinese, Persian and Arab merchants frequented the archipelago's coastal areas, attracting a population that established settlements and became dependent on settled agriculture and craft production.<sup>65</sup> In researching the early spread and cultivation of coffee from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, Clarence-Smith has identified the crucial roles played by Muslim pilgrims to Mecca, Malabari Muslim traders and Sufi mystics in the diffusion of both the production and consumption of coffee to India, Ceylon and Sumatra respectively.<sup>66</sup> With the volume of trade in the Southeast Asian region, one is tempted to attribute the arrival of coffee to the Philippines by similar actors.

It is plausible that either Arab traders or Muslim clerics may have introduced the coffee beans or early Muslim settlers might have sourced beans and seedlings from Arabia or Indonesia during their pilgrimages to Mecca and succeeded in propagating coffee in the surrounding areas of

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<sup>63</sup> Luz, "Cultivation of Coffee," 8.

<sup>64</sup> UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, *The Philippines in Pre-Historic Times: A Handbook for the First National Exhibition of Filipino Pre-History and Culture* (Manila: UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, 1959), 29-30.

<sup>65</sup> Cesar A. Majul, Dr., *The Political and Religious History of the Bangsamoro People* [Official Website] (Moro International Liberation Front, accessed 1 December 2002); available from <http://mnif.net/History/How%20Islam%20Came%20to%20Mindanao.htm>.

<sup>66</sup> Clarence-Smith, *The Spread of Coffee Cultivation in Asia*.

Batangas and Laguna.<sup>67</sup> Possibly, the coffee trees reported as growing wild in the Southern Tagalog region as early as 1818 can trace their origins to these first plants.<sup>68</sup> However, without any kind of ethnographic or archaeological evidence it is almost impossible to verify this theory of coffee's early entry into the Philippines.

Probably the strongest evidence against the introduction and cultivation of coffee in pre-Hispanic Philippines is the almost total absence of a coffeehouse culture or even of the coffee drinking habit among early Filipino communities. There are no coffee rituals or ceremonies that seem to have been ingrained into the practices of the surviving indigenous peoples and no records indicating that any were ever developed. No brewing or serving paraphernalia have ever been described.

The meagre evidence seems to suggest that up until the first quarter of the nineteenth century—even if coffee was present—there was little domestic interest. Around 1759, Nicholas Norton Nichols, an English entrepreneur based in Manila noted that, '...coffee, which, as it is not cultivated, is not abundant, and its consumption is small for exportation.'<sup>69</sup> Nichols' observation ties in with the report of Nathaniel Bowditch, supercargo of the American ship *Astrea*, from Massachusetts that docked in Manila on 2 October 1796 'No coffee...can be procured here. The Spaniards, not being fond of it, cultivate the cocoa in preference.'<sup>70</sup>

The limited popularity of coffee and the competition posed by cacao was also noted by Tomás de Comyn, general manager of the *Real Compañía de Filipinas*, in his economic report, *Estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1810*,<sup>71</sup>

So choice is the quality of coffee produced in the island of Quezon, especially in the districts of indang and Silang, in the province of Cavite, that if it is not equal to that of Mocha, I at least consider it on parallel with the coffee of Bourbon; but as the consumption and cultivation are extremely limited, it cannot with any propriety be yet numbered among the articles contributing to the export trade.

<sup>67</sup>Bartolome, 'Coffee and Cacao Production in Batangas'; Clarence-Smith, *The Spread of Coffee Cultivation in Asia*; William Gervase Clarence-Smith, [E-mail from author] ([accessed 1 July 2003]).

<sup>68</sup> Henry Piddington, "Remarks on the Philippine Islands and on Their Capital 1819 to 1822," in *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, ed. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Cleveland: Arthur Clark, 1828). The discovery of coffee plants in the wild has caused some to conclude that coffee is a plant indigenous to the Philippines. Most credible sources are in disagreement. It is generally accepted that all commercial varieties of coffees—without exception—are indigenous to and originally from Africa.

<sup>69</sup> Nicholas Norton Nichols, "The Advantages of Direct Trade with Spain," in *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, ed. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Cleveland: Arthur Clark, c1759), 256.

<sup>70</sup> Nathaniel Bowditch, "Document 253: Bowditch's Visit to Manila in 1796," in *Documentary Sources of Philippine History*, ed. Gergorio F. Zaide (Metro Manila: National Bookstore, 1990).

<sup>71</sup> Tomas de Comyn, *State of the Philippines in 1810: Being a Historical, Statistical and Descriptive Account of the Interesting Portion of the Indian Archipelago*, trans. William Walton (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1969), 13.

Cacao is something more attended to, in consequence of the use in chocolate among the natives of easy circumstances. ... The Filipinos used to take cacao once or twice a day, in the same way that the Chinese drink tea.

As rightly pointed out by Clarence-Smith, the passion for drinking chocolate is probably responsible for slowing the spread of coffee consumption in early Philippines.<sup>72</sup>

It also seems that the first official attempt to cultivate coffee may not have been in the Southern *Tagalog* region at all, as is commonly thought, but in Bulacan, a province located north of Manila. Then mayor of the province, Manuel Piñon had ordered all residents to plant coffee and even assigned superintendents to oversee its cultivation.<sup>73</sup> But this agricultural program was fatally flawed, as there was yet no market for the harvested coffee. As reported by British writer and traveller Henry Piddington in 1828,<sup>74</sup>

The government, in 1795 or 96, made an attempt to force its cultivation in the province of Bulacan, but forgot, as one of their own officers *naivement* observes, "*Que no habia compradores ni consumidores*"—that there were neither consumers or customers for it.

The initial introduction of coffee to Lipa may not even have been due to the efforts of a single person but by the serendipitous activities of, of all things, a wild animal. Presumably, the coffee plants in Bulacan were abandoned and allowed to grow wild. If so, there may be credence to Piddington's report, which also recorded the movement of coffee from Bulacan to the Southern *Tagalog* region via an unexpected means of spontaneous propagation<sup>75</sup>

The coffee plant was almost entirely unknown about 40 years ago, a few plants existing in the gardens about Manila. It was gradually transported from thence to the towns by the lake, where it has multiplied to an amazing degree by an extraordinary method. A species of civet cat which these woods abound, swallows the berries, and these passing through the animal entire, take root, and thus the forests are filled with wild plants.

So abundant were these trees that, says Piddington, the first recorded export of coffee in 1818, four hundred piculs, did not come from cultivated coffee fields but were merely collected from

<sup>72</sup> Clarence-Smith, "The Spread of Coffee Cultivation in Asia"; Beyond the scope of this paper but worth investigating is the role betel nut may have played in slowing the consumption and commodification of coffee. The spread of coffee and chocolate in Europe was partly because of its physical effect as a stimulant and because of its social role as a beverage of conviviality. The chewing of betel nut and the accompanying rituals were already meeting these physical and social needs of the peasant class of early Filipinos. Research investigating the correlation between the rise in consumption of coffee and the decreasing use of betel nut may produce valuable results.

<sup>73</sup> Jean Mallat, *The Philippines: History, Geography, Customs, Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce of the Spanish Colonies in Oceania*, trans. Pura Santillan-Castrence and Lina S. Castrence (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1983).

<sup>74</sup> Piddington, "Remarks on the Philippine Islands," 130.

<sup>75</sup> Piddington, "Remarks on the Philippine Islands," 130. Piddington's description of the spontaneous spread of coffee by the civet cat (*Paradoxurus musanga*, colloquially referred to as the *musang*) is strikingly similar to the description of the *Luwak*, found in Sumatra. Coffee beans recovered from the droppings of the *luwak* are said to be the most expensive coffee available, selling upwards from US\$300 per pound.

these wild trees.<sup>76</sup> That Piddington reported coffee growing wild by around 1818 tallies somewhat with Marin's account that Augustinian friars, did not actually plant the first trees, but finding the coffee plants already growing wild are said to have further encouraged the propagation of coffee by educating the Lipeños in its proper care and cultivation from around 1814.<sup>77</sup>

Besides the 1740 version, other dates and actors have been mentioned. Local historian Jose Alex Katigbak alleges that it was a town *Kapitan*, Francisco Mantuano, who brought the first plants to Lipa in 1784.<sup>78</sup> Historian Manuel Sastron places the first coffee planting of coffee in Lipa a little later, to around 1814.<sup>79</sup> Quite possibly, they could all be correct. In reality, it's difficult to pinpoint exactly when and where coffee was first introduced. While previous writers have endeavoured to pin down the introduction of coffee to a first date and a first event, it is more likely that there were several movements that were initiated independently and maybe, could even have occurred simultaneously and merely escaped documentation.

Regardless of who was initially responsible for the introduction of coffee, as pointed out by Clarence-Smith, its logical that the 1790's would be decade it took place.<sup>80</sup> It is known that in 1791 slave uprisings in the French possession of Saint Dominique had dramatically reduced the supply of coffee on the world market driving prices sharply upward. The just formed *Real Compañía de Filipinas*—a chartered company which had the monopoly of trade between Manila and Spain and had the promotion of Philippine export crops as its main function—would have observed this trend which must have influenced the Compañía's decision to pursue the wide-scale cultivation of coffee as one of its first projects.

## 2.2 HALF-TRUTH: The Augustinians encouraged the extensive cultivation of coffee

On the façade of the Lipa Cathedral is a marker, which reads, 'The Parish of Lipa was administered by the Augustinians from 1605 to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century...The Augustinians encouraged the extensive cultivation of coffee.'

The date when the marker was installed is not indicated but it is believed by Lipeños to be as old as the church itself, dating back to at least 1905. This otherwise unassuming marker is one of the physical proofs cited by Lipa historians reinforcing the theory that it was the Augustinians

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<sup>76</sup> Piddington, "Remarks on the Philippine Islands," 130, 153.

<sup>77</sup> Valentin Marin, O.P., "*Ensayo De Una Sintensis De Los Trabajos Realizados Por Las Corporaciones Religiosas En Filipinas*," in *History of the Church in the Philippines (1521-1898)*, ed. Pablo Fernandez, O.P. (Metro Manila: National Bookstore, 1901).

<sup>78</sup> Katigbak, "Lipa Yesterday," 16.

<sup>79</sup> Hernandez, "The Augustinians and the Progress of Philippine Agriculture," 4.

<sup>80</sup> Clarence-Smith, "The Spread of Coffee Cultivation in Asia".

(and not the Franciscans) who were the main actors in the coffee success story of Lipa. A cursory investigation, however, sheds doubt on the historical authority of this marker. A photograph of the Lipa Cathedral c1900—even if taken from a distance—does not seem to indicate a marker on the church façade.<sup>81</sup> In relation to this, it is documented that only the dome transept survived the bombings of World War II and that the reconstruction of the façade was not completed until c1944.<sup>82</sup> It is more likely, therefore, that it was then and not in the early 1900's that the marker was installed.

Whether it was intentional or not, the placement of this marker in a place so central to the everyday life of the Lipeños, a place of not just spiritual but also social and historical significance, has done more to perpetuate the myth and reinforce the unwillingness to challenge the accepted version of the history of coffee in Lipa than is realised.

This is not to belittle the contribution of the Augustinians to Lipa, which was substantial. The Augustinian policy of evangelisation involved more than just the spreading of the Christian faith but also included the task of making the towns under their care self-sufficient. Wrote Fr. Hernandez, "Fruitless, perhaps, would their evangelical labours have been if no interest were taken in helping the people to provide for their daily sustenance."<sup>83</sup> Through the introduction of new agricultural products, farm implements and work tools such as the plough and the sickle, and methods of animal husbandry and settled agriculture, the efforts of the missionaries, without a doubt, revolutionized early Philippine agriculture.

Church sources prefer to name two friars, Lipa's parish priest, Fray Elias Nebreda (also Lebrado or Lebrada) and his successor, Fray Benito Varas as the key actors responsible for the spread of coffee cultivation in Lipa from 1814 to 1894<sup>84</sup>, even as Lipa historians prefer to attribute the phenomenal spread of coffee in the first half of the nineteenth century to the *Gobernadorcillos'* policies of forced cultivation.<sup>85</sup> Presumably, church sources give the friars more importance, as it is figured that no amount of pressure or punishment would have promoted the viable

<sup>81</sup> Glenn Anthony May, *Battle for Batangas* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1993), 11.

<sup>82</sup> Pedro G. Galende, O.S.A., *Angels in Stone: Augustinian Churches in the Philippines* (Manila: San Agustin, 1996).

<sup>83</sup> Hernandez, "The Augustinians and the Progress of Philippine Agriculture," 1.

<sup>84</sup> Pablo Fernandez, O.P., *History of the Church in the Philippines (1521-1898)* (Metro Manila: National Bookstore, 1979), 225; Hernandez, "The Augustinians and the Progress of Philippine Agriculture," 4.

<sup>85</sup> Luz, "Cultivation of Coffee," 78. Katigbak, "Lipa Yesterday," 16.



cultivation of coffee had the friars not first educated the Lipeños on its proper care. Referring to Fray Varas in particular, Augustinian biographer Elviro J. Perez wrote in 1901,<sup>86</sup>

This religious deserves to be remembered in the annals of the Lipenos and the whole Batangas province for the great benefits he brought not only to the town of Lipa but also to the whole province, with his initiative and labors to acclimatize the coffee, and thus develop the industry. If Lipa became a model town, rich and civilized, it was due to this kind friar who did all he could to instill in his parishioners the love of work and virtue, the source and origin of the prosperity of nations.

Taking a broader view it is possible to hypothesize that the extensive cultivation of coffee on Lipa lands was more likely a collaborative effort. For example, it is documented that Tomás de Comyn, general manager of the *Real Compañía de Filipinas*—a chartered company which had the monopoly of trade between Manila and Spain and had the promotion of Philippine export crops as its main function—had toured Batangas province in 1805 and instructed the *Gobernadorcillos*, and *Cabezas de Barangay* (village headmen) on how to induce and persuade the farmers to propagate export-oriented products such as sugarcane, indigo, cotton, and black pepper.<sup>87</sup> No doubt, Comyn would have been obligated to enlist the aid of the parish priests as the most powerful instrument to help develop those agricultural products as the missionaries, often being the only Spaniards in many towns, besides serving as the chief intermediaries between the government and the people, in many instances, wielded more power than the town mayors. Noted French traveller and chronicler, Jean Mallat,<sup>88</sup>

...in reality, it is the parish priest alone who governs and maintains order...woe to the mayor who does not know his place and does not know how to get in into the good graces of such an influential man!

It was probably upon the instigation of Comyn and the *Compañía*, accompanied with offers of cash advances, prizes and other incentives, that Don Galo and Fray Nebreda pushed for the propagation of coffee...with Don Galo providing the necessary pressure and Fray Nebreda providing the methods and the technology to achieve the task.

Be that as it may, it is argued here that the contributions of Don Galo de los Reyes and his son, and the Augustinian friars to the rise of Lipa's coffee industry have been given too much emphasis. Hailing them as champions of the coffee trade leaves out the valuable contributions of other historical actors and ignores the impact that several key economic and political changes had on the town's progress and development.

<sup>86</sup> Elviro J. Perez, OSA., *Catalogo Bio-bibliografico de los Religiosos Agustinos de las Provincia del Santisimo Nombre de Jesus de Filipinas* (Manila, 1902) cited in Hernandez, "The Augustinians and the Progress of Philippine Agriculture," 4.

<sup>87</sup> Hernandez, "The Augustinians and the Progress of Philippine Agriculture," 12.

<sup>88</sup> Mallat, *The Philippines*, 249.

By 1830, from its home in Africa, coffee had already set down roots in five continents and had been trading on the world market for almost three hundred years. As the fuel of the Industrial Revolution, coffee had completed its transition from an exotic medicinal substance to the drink of the masses. Demand was growing exponentially and the British, the Dutch, the French and Portuguese, each with plantations in their respective colonies were battling each other for control of the market. Philippine coffee, as noted by Comyn and Piddington, was of excellent quality and fit to compete with the best coffees from Java or Bourbon or Martinique, but had not managed to make inroads into the market.<sup>89</sup> As commendable as the efforts of the town *alcaldes* and the Augustinian friars may have been, in 1830, the Philippines managed to export only 160 tons which, in comparison with the 16,620 tons that Java exported in the same year, was a near insignificant amount.<sup>90</sup> This suggests that the widespread availability of coffee is insufficient in explaining how Lipa made the transition from a subsistent to an export-oriented economy.

Both Larkin and Legarda are emphatic in assigning credit to the foreign merchants houses and businesses that dominated trade from 1830-1870. These foreign businesses '...formed the main nexus between the Philippine economy and the currents of world trade.'<sup>91</sup> The foreign merchants introduced agricultural methods and machinery, provided credit and stimulated the opening of new agricultural areas.

The entry of the foreign merchant houses—mostly British and American—marked the culmination of several structural changes that brought down the barriers to free trade. Chief among them was the termination of Spain's monopolistic and restrictive trade policies. With the merchant houses providing access to capital and establishing the final links to foreign markets, by the end of the 1830s, a new era was on the horizon.

### *The Road to Free Trade*

Much has been written about the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade and its deleterious impact on the development of Philippine agriculture. From Mallat and Comyn to Corpuz and Legarda, it has been discussed how the combination of protectionist policies and restrictive trade practices plus the reluctance of the Spanish trader/speculator to commit to the protracted nature of plantation life had led to over two and a half centuries of agricultural stagnation.<sup>92</sup> Beyond subsistence cultivation, there was some surplus for insular trade, but unlike the Dutch and the

<sup>89</sup> Piddington, "Remarks on the Philippine Islands," 130.

<sup>90</sup> Bulbeck et al., *Southeast Asian Exports since the 14th Century*, 153.

<sup>91</sup> Legarda, *After the Galleons*, 211.

<sup>92</sup> Onofre D. Corpuz, *An Economic History of the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1997); de Comyn, *State of the Philippines in 1810*; Legarda, *After the Galleons*; Mallat, *The Philippines*.

English, for decades Spain failed to produce from its colony, spices such as pepper and cinnamon, and staple commodities such as coffee or sugar that could have been sold profitably overseas.

In 1778, Jose Basco y Vargas was appointed Governor-General of the Philippines with the key mission of implementing what has come to be known as the "Bourbon Reforms". With the emphasis on agriculture and the propagation of key crops for export, these reforms represented a turning point in the Spanish intentions for the Philippines.

Basco called on the Manila Spaniards to assume the lead role in investing in large-scale plantations and the manufacturing of domestic goods for export. Basco had envisioned the colony as one that was self-sufficient in staples with imports limited to raw materials to be manufactured into finished goods. Wealth would be increased through the export of spice plants such as pepper, cinnamon, nutmeg as well as indigo, cotton, coffee and other such commodities that could be sold profitably overseas. But Basco's 'General Economic Plan' was met with 'a profound and deafening silence' as traders stubbornly refused to abandon the waning galleon trade.<sup>93</sup>

Forced to resign in 1788, Basco blamed the failure of his administration in the galleon traders' shortsighted obsession with quick profits and castigated them for their refusal to take up the plough and develop the countryside. The traders were quick to rebut and in a memorial addressed to Basco's successor issued in 1788, they said

The Spanish conquerors of these islands did not leave Spain to take up the plough in the Filipinas; much less did they undertake so long and unknown a voyage to set up new looms and transplant new fruits. At the first suggestion of this they would have left the islands, and the archipelago today would be in the hands of another power.

Corpuz 1997 p.92

As observed by Corpuz, the Spanish merchants remained merchants as galleon traders refused to become farmers. In sum, no Spaniard turned to plantation agriculture for export.<sup>94</sup>

What is seldom appreciated is although the Philippines failed to develop a plantation economy like that of Java, Saint Dominique or Brazil and was therefore slow to benefit from the export of primary commodities, this meant that the Philippines was spared the brutality of slavery and forced labour. The disdain of the Spanish for agriculture had created a vacuum, which in turn allowed for the growth and expansion of smallholder farming. In the Southern Tagalog region, instead—as the Compañía had hoped—of trading with Spanish owners of large-scale plantations, much of the Compañía's activities involved extending cash advances to small

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<sup>93</sup> Corpuz, *An Economic History*, 89-92.

<sup>94</sup> Corpuz, *An Economic History*, 93.

growers and establishing connections with church and town officials and upper class families as this was the only efficient way that they could arrange for the consolidation of the small harvests of other small growers for bulk delivery. The initial results of this arrangement were not impressive. As mentioned in the previous section, the first recorded export of coffee of a four hundred piculs in 1818, in all likelihood, did not come from just one farm but represented the combined harvests of many smallholders, which were, as Piddington reported, merely collected from wild trees.<sup>95</sup>

Specific to the cultivation of coffee, this pattern of small-scale buying and selling continued for as long as the *Compañía* was active. Philippine coffee was slowly finding its way to foreign markets, albeit in relatively small quantities. In 1835, moribund and bankrupt, the *Compañía* was dissolved and with it fell the last barrier to free trade. Foreign merchant houses were permitted to set up their businesses and then foreign traders and entrepreneurs, mostly French, English and American, were allowed entry and residence. As providers of merchant financing and with their commercial relations with consumer markets in Western Europe and the United States, these traders and entrepreneurs provided the final linkage to world markets. Their efforts were key in the transformation of coffee from an exotic crop into an export commodity and an important item of commercial exchange.<sup>96</sup>

Most notable among the contributions to the growth and expansion of coffee in the nineteenth century is the entrepreneurial achievement of Paul Proust de la Gironiere. His was the Philippines' first modern plantation and it was his agricultural innovations and initial success that stimulated further interest and investment into the production of coffee in the mid 1880's. Gironiere was the first plantation owner to win the prize of one thousand pesos from the *Sociedad Economica de Amigos del Pais* for raising sixty thousand coffee plants.<sup>97</sup> Undoubtedly emboldened by Gironiere's success, other Spaniards became involved in planting coffee on a wider scale. The *Sociedad* gave out prizes to Vicente del Pino in 1838, Azaola in 1846 and Antonio Ortega in 1847 for their achievements in coffee planting.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Piddington, "Remarks on the Philippine Islands."

<sup>96</sup> For further discussion, see Corpuz, *An Economic History*; Legarda, *After the Galeons*.

<sup>97</sup> Corpuz, *An Economic History*, 108-110. The *Sociedad* was a survivor of the Basco era. Originally founded in 1781, it was charged with the responsibility of generating development ideas and projects in support of the "general economic plan." Forced into dormancy after Basco's resignation in 1787, it was revived half-heartedly in 1827. Unlike the *Compañía*, the *Sociedad* could not distribute cash advances or support funds but did manage to keep interest in agriculture and exports alive by offering awards to outstanding plantation owners

<sup>98</sup> Corpuz, *An Economic History*, 111.

By the mid-1850's, with a good number of mature trees producing, Lipa's coffee was being exported to Australia, the US and Britain (via Hong Kong), Spain and France. The transformation of Lipa from a subsistent economy to an export economy was complete.

### 2.3 MYTH: Lipa's coffee monopoly

Local historians have stated repeatedly that for a short period sometime in 1886-1888, Lipa was the sole supplier of beans to the world.<sup>99</sup> This monopoly is thought to have trebled coffee prices, from ten pesos to more than thirty pesos a picul, thus filling the town coffers and giving birth to millionaires virtually overnight.

Viewing coffee in the broader context of the world economy, available statistics do suggest that the 1886-88 was indeed a crucial period for the world coffee market. While the same statistics validate that Lipa did enjoy a coffee boom in the late 1880s, it also seems clear that the proverbial world coffee monopoly supposedly enjoyed by Lipa in the late 1880's simply did not occur.

It has commonly been asserted that the coffee blight eliminated the coffee exports of competitors Java, Sumatra and Ceylon and even India and South America. The fact that the United States imported well over 200,000 tons of coffee a year from 1886-1889 and that both Indonesia and Brazil continued to post significant export figures for that same period, immediately contradicts that assertion.

There is more to be gained by rejecting Lipa's supposed 1886 coffee monopoly as myth and instead investigating what other events and antecedents that might have fuelled the rise in coffee prices which defined the coffee boom of the late 1880's.

Relying primarily on Dutch records of maritime trade but also including import and export statistics from a broad base of archival sources, the book *Southeast Asian Exports Since the 14th Century: Cloves, Pepper, Coffee, and Sugar* provides a quantitative picture of the scale and importance of Southeast Asian trade in the world economy. Though this volume also appears in the bibliographies of several coffee research papers, it seems that it was never given close inspection. Had the statistics been examined more closely, researchers could have easily concluded that the much-fabled worldwide coffee monopoly that Lipa supposedly enjoyed in 1886 never happened.

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<sup>99</sup> Katigbak, 'When Coffee Bloomed in Lipa.'; Tinio, 'Lipa's Golden Age.'; Villa, 'Kape and How Batangas Coffee Made a Mark in the World Market.'

**Table I. Southeast Asian and World Export of Coffee, 1884-1891 (Tons)**

<p>NOTE: This table is included on page 32 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.</p>
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**Source:** Bulbeck et al. *Southeast Asian Exports Since the 14<sup>th</sup> Century*, 157.

From the data in Table 1, it can be estimated that the total coffee exports of the Philippines in 1886 was equivalent to about 8.75% of total Southeast Asian exports and less than 2% of total world exports. These are hardly the figures one would expect if Lipa indeed had been the world's sole supplier of coffee beans. Consider that in its peak years from 1887-89, the Philippines' three-year total production of coffee was just 18,000 tons, which amounted to less than one-tenth of the total import requirement of the US for the year 1886 alone. With so much evidence to the contrary, to continue to argue that Lipa enjoyed a worldwide monopoly sometime in 1886-1887 becomes pointless.

What does seem to have occurred is that, after a sustained period of growth, events conspired to collectively produce a worldwide shortage in the supply of coffee. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address all these events in great detail so only a couple of indicators will be mentioned.

The records compiled by Bulbeck et al (Table 1), indicate that there was a drop in the volume of exportable coffee from Indonesia, from 100,065 tons in 1884, to almost half, 51,724 tons in 1887.<sup>100</sup> This dramatic drop in Indonesia's production could be partially attributed to the

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<sup>100</sup> Bulbeck et al., *Southeast Asian Exports since the 14th Century*, 157.

calamitous effects of the *Hemileia vastatrix*, although Clarence-Smith has hypothesized that there may be a relationship between the collapse of the Javanese production of coffee and the abolition of brutal and much hated Cultivation System—the end of labour coercion having led to the wholesale abandonment of coffee during that period<sup>101</sup>

Coincidentally, at about the same time, the coffee fields in the Paraíba Valley of Brazil were also in decline. This had nothing to do with the *Hemileia vastatrix* as the fungus would not find its way to Brazil for another one hundred years.<sup>102</sup> Rather, intensive farming had stripped and depleted the soil and had pushed the trees to exhaustion. The loss in productivity was exacerbated by the slave riots, which eventually led to the final abolition of slavery in 1888.<sup>103</sup> Ultimately, the coffee fields in Paraíba Valley were abandoned and the centre of coffee production was transferred to the São Paulo region. The subsequent disruption in Brazil's coffee production during this transition registered a dramatic drop of more than 100,000 metric tons, in 1886.<sup>104</sup> (With regards to Brazil, the Lipa historians are mistaken in assuming that Brazil in the 1880's was not yet a dominant world player. Nothing could be further from the truth. Introduced in the early 1770's, as early as 1855, over half the world's coffee production was coming from Brazil.)<sup>105</sup> Taken together, the shortfall of Brazil and Java alone exceeded 150,000 tons for the period 1886-1887 and this number does not even reflect the reductions in coffee production in other crises areas such as Ceylon and Africa. This deficit occurred at a time when global demand was trending upwards, fuelled by the United States' seemingly unquenchable thirst for coffee. As technological innovation and mass marketing, together with low coffee prices, made the practice of coffee drinking more affordable and widespread, per capita consumption in the US had grown from three pounds a year in 1830 to five and a half pounds in 1850, up to eight pounds per person in 1859.<sup>106</sup> By 1886, the US was importing over 250,000 metric tons of coffee annually. In 1887, the volume of coffee imported by the US dropped by almost 50,000 tons to 201,280 tons but was able to recover to 201,230 tons in 1888, which increased further to 249,140 tons in 1899.<sup>107</sup> In the light of the other statistics, a safe speculation is that the 1887

<sup>101</sup> Clarence-Smith, *The Spread of Coffee Cultivation in Asia*.

<sup>102</sup> Gail L. Schumann, "Why Europeans Drink Tea" in *Plant Diseases: Their Biology and Social Impact* [Online Journal] (The American Phytopathological Society, 1998, accessed 23 September 2003); available from <http://www.apsnet.org/online/feature/biodiver/coferust.html>.

<sup>103</sup> See Stein, 'The Passing of the Coffee Plantation in the Paraíba Valley.'

<sup>104</sup> William R. Summerhill, "Productivity in the Paraíba Valley: Assessing Agricultural Efficiency in the 19th-Century Brazil," (Department of History, UCLA).

<sup>105</sup> Marcelo de P. Abreu and Afonso S. Bevilacqua, "Brazil as an Export Economy, 1880-1930" (paper presented at the Economic History of Latin America in the 20th Century, Panajachel, Guatemala, 9-11 December 1996), 6; Stein, "The Passing of the Coffee Plantation in the Paraíba Valley," 360.

<sup>106</sup> Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 46.

<sup>107</sup> *NBER Macroeconomic Database: U.S. Coffee Imports 01/1867-06/1941* [Online Database] (National Bureau of Economic Research, 17 May 2001, accessed 11 September 2003); available from <http://www.nber.org/databases/macroeconomic/contents/chapter07.html>.

fluctuation in volume is an indication of a temporary supply shortage rather than a drastic reduction in demand.

Looking at the evidence, the sharp rise in prices that triggered the coffee boom in Lipa in 1888 had nothing to do with a coffee monopoly but reflected an imbalance in the supply of and demand for this prime commodity. With demand high and supply short, it should not come as a surprise that foreign merchants were under competitive pressure to buy up whatever coffee was available and probably quoted increasingly higher prices in an effort to secure inventory. Quite simply, the boom in prices that Lipa experienced was a reaction to product scarcity, and it is more likely that the high prices that coffee buyers were willing to pay in the 1880's was less a reflection of the Lipa farmer's ability to dictate prices than it was an indication of the coffee buyers' and traders' willingness to speculate on the volatile commodity.

#### **2.4 HALF-TRUTH: The Philippines was at one time the fourth largest coffee exporter in the world.**

Often repeated with pride is the estimation in Bulbeck et al that the Philippines, in 1886, became the world's fourth largest exporter. With that ranking commonly comes the assumption that the Philippines was consequently the fourth most influential producer in the world. Not so. This statistic needs to be reviewed in the proper perspective. Even at its peak, the highest recorded quantity of coffee the Philippines produced in the 1880's never exceeded eight thousand metric tons. This volume represents less than 1.5% of the world's total production of coffee. This production volume pales in significance when compared to that of dominant producers, Indonesia and Brazil.<sup>108</sup> As observed by Dr. Feodor Jagor, celebrated German ethnographer and author of *Travels in the Philippines*, of Philippine coffee '...the amount of coffee produced is very insignificant, and, until lately, scarcely deserved mention'.<sup>109</sup>

In addition, the reputation of Manila coffee (most probably from Lipa) was uneven. Though well regarded by connoisseurs in France and able to command high prices there, it was not much prized anywhere else.<sup>110</sup>

It would seem then that, from the start, the Philippines was a producer on the periphery and was never in a position to dictate market prices or influence taste preferences. Future researchers would do well to consider, that even with Bulbeck et al's fourth place ranking, the influence that the Philippines had on the world coffee market was minimal. As the Philippines was not a

<sup>108</sup> Bulbeck et al., *Southeast Asian Exports since the 14th Century*, 157.

<sup>109</sup> Feodor Jagor, "Feodor Jagor's Travels in the Philippines," in *The Former Philippines Thru Foreign Eyes*, ed. Austin Craig (Manila: Philippine Education Co. Inc., 1916), 95.

<sup>110</sup> Jagor, "Feodor Jagor's Travels in the Philippines," 95.



dominant supplier, its industry was therefore still vulnerable to a myriad of external factors, many of which were well out of its control.

## 2.5 MYTH: *Hemileia vastatrix* (or Coffee Leaf Rust) ended Lipa's coffee boom

The conventional description of the *Hemileia vastatrix* epidemic of 1889 gives the impression that the devastation was quick, sudden and occurred almost overnight. This is not entirely accurate. Coffee rust attacks the leaves, causing premature defoliation, which weakens the tree and reduces yields. The fungus rarely killed trees and even in cases of severe infestation, where the coffee plant suffered dieback, it was not unusual for trees to survive for months before they finally succumbed.<sup>111</sup> In Ceylon, from the time the coffee leaf rust fungus was discovered in 1867, coffee plantations remained commercially viable for another twenty years before they were finally destroyed and production ceased entirely.<sup>112</sup> In comparison, the decline of Lipa's coffee industry was complete in less than five years. How to account for the rapidity of the decline?

Some theorize that it was probably the spectre of steadily worsening crop failures that caused Lipa farmers to abandon coffee as a cash crop so quickly. Testimony from the era reports that the coffee leaf rust was not the only biological attack that the planters had to endure but was the last of a string of pests and diseases that tried the fortitude of the Lipa farmers. Worcester, Foreman and Luz all wrote that the bulk of the damage to the plantations in the late 1880's was caused by two species of wood-boring worms (locally referred to as *hunun* and *bagumbong*).<sup>113</sup> Foreman records that the farmers were familiar with these pests, and reductions in the harvests were noticed since 1881 but the losses were merely tolerated by the farmers. No real effort to control the infestation was ever recorded. The 1889 infestation, however, was particularly severe, prompting several of the wealthiest coffee-owners to plough up their lands and plant sugarcane in place of coffee.<sup>114</sup> Possibly, the Lipa farmers did nothing for so long because steadily rising coffee prices and increased plantings more than compensated for the losses and masked the actual impact of the damage that the worms were creating in the plantations. The final blow came, not in 1889 but, in 1891, which is when Luz reports that the *Hemileia vastatrix* epidemic occurred, just when many of the farms were recovering from the wood-boring worms.

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<sup>111</sup> Phil A. Arneson, *Plant Disease Lessons: Coffee Rust* [Online Lessons] (American Phytopathological Society, 2003, accessed 13 October 2003); available from <http://www.apsnet.org/education/LessonsPlantPath/Coffeerust/>.

<sup>112</sup> Schumann, "Why Europeans Drink Tea" (online).

<sup>113</sup> Foreman, *The Philippine Islands*, 337; Luz, "Cultivation of Coffee," 82; Worcester, *The Philippine Islands and Their People*, 505, 515.

<sup>114</sup> Foreman, *The Philippine Islands*, 337.

It was at this point that the remaining Lipa farmers abandoned coffee and shifted their attention to other agricultural products.<sup>115</sup>

It seems clear that the available evidence confirms the theories of Clarence-Smith and Haraar, that while leaf disease may have accelerated the inevitable, it was probably not the prime cause responsible for the failure of coffee industries in the nineteenth century.<sup>116</sup> It seems clear that the seeds of the collapse of Lipa's coffee industry might have been planted long before the coffee crisis of 1889-1892. Other factors such as monoculture, ignorance of sound practices of cultivation, diminishing virgin forest, falling prices, and competition with other agricultural products, should also be considered.

### *The End of an Era*

One of the prime reasons for the collapse of the coffee industry in Lipa is a problem of agronomy. Lipa farmers could not have known it then, but the *Coffea Arabica* that was planted in the fields were unsuited for the area. It was not until 1915 that the Bureau of Agriculture determined that Arabica in the Philippines could not be grown profitably at an altitude below 800 meters.<sup>117</sup> At an elevation of 312 meters, Lipa was too low, too warm, and too humid. Obviously Arabica can grow at lower elevations, as evidenced by the nineteenth century Lipa plantations, but such trees have been proven to grow quickly, flower profusely and after producing bumper crops, become exhausted. As the tree loses its vigour it becomes more susceptible to disease and pests. In areas where monoculture is practiced, disease can spread quickly.<sup>118</sup>

In the coffee fields of Lipa in the 1880's, the care that the plants needed was not completely understood. Occasional weeding was practiced but the practice was probably governed more by experience gained through trial-and-error than science. Even as late as 1925, one agricultural survey reported that there was no evidence of sound practices of either fertilization, irrigation, or pruning in coffee farming in Lipa and the surrounding areas<sup>119</sup>, prompting another horticulturist to comment that, like many other fruits in the Philippines, coffee is not so much *cultivated* as it is *grown*.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Luz, "Cultivation of Coffee," 83.

<sup>116</sup> Clarence-Smith, "The Coffee Crisis in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, C.1870 to C.1914.," Haarer, *Modern Coffee Production*, 452.

<sup>117</sup> P. J. Wester, "Coffee in the Philippines," *The Philippine Agricultural Review* VIII, no. 1 (1915): 40.

<sup>118</sup> Haarer, *Modern Coffee Production*; Schumann, "Why Europeans Drink Tea" (online).

<sup>119</sup> E. K. Morada, "Coffee Culture in Batangas Province," *The Philippine Agricultural Review* XVIII, no. 3 (1925): 286-288.

<sup>120</sup> P. J. Wester, "The Present Status of Horticulture in the Philippines and the Outlook for the Future," *The Philippine Agricultural Review* V, no. 7 (1912): 355.

Worcester, Foreman, and Luz have recorded that by 1889, the coffee trees in Lipa were anywhere from twenty to fifty years old, many reaching the end of their productive life. Farmers had noticed that coffee seemed to do better when planted on virgin land so problems with the plants early on may have been masked by the constant expansion of coffee fields into areas of cleared forest. But with almost eighty percent of Lipa's arable land planted to coffee by 1880, there was little virgin uncultivated land left to move into. Luz further recorded that although up to two-thirds of Lipa was planted to coffee, only half were bearing<sup>121</sup>—a clear indication that either the soil was exhausted or that the coffee trees had lost their stamina. Haraar had pointed out that, if coffee was planted in areas where environmental conditions were marginal, without modern methods of amelioration, 'the outlook was hopeless from the start'.<sup>122</sup>

For the coffee industry of Lipa, the decline was almost inevitable. Yet, disease and soil exhaustion did not end the coffee industries of Indonesia, India or Africa...why did it end Lipa's?

A facile answer might be that the Lipa farmer simply 'gave up'. Disenchanted by the falling profits from the coffee trade, hectares of coffee trees were uprooted and then replanted with sugarcane, corn and rice. It is said that even if these agricultural products did not provide the same bonanza that coffee did at its peak, steady trade in these commodities was enough to sustain the lifestyles to which they had become accustomed.<sup>123</sup>

It must also be considered, however, that the Lipa farmers' rejection of coffee was made easier because of their financial capacity to consider alternatives. As economically devastating as the loss of the coffee revenues may have been for the landed class of Lipa, it did not bankrupt them and while they could have persisted in cultivating coffee against all odds—as their fellow planters in neighbouring Cavite have succeeded in doing for all these years—it was their choice to funnel their financial resources to the profitable sugar trade instead. For some, the Lipa farmers' abandonment of coffee is enough explanation for the demise of the industry.

But overlooked in most accounts is the impact of the political upheaval caused by the Revolution of 1896 and the Spanish American War, which disrupted all economic activity for nearly a decade.<sup>124</sup> Lipa was deeply involved in the struggle against Spain and the United

<sup>121</sup> Foreman, *The Philippine Islands*, 337; Luz, "Cultivation of Coffee," 82; Worcester, *The Philippine Islands and Their People*, 505, 515.

<sup>122</sup> Haarer, *Modern Coffee Production*, 351.

<sup>123</sup> Praxedes V. Villa, *Lipa* (Lipa: City Government of Lipa, 1992), 10-15.

<sup>124</sup> In 1896, Filipino revolutionaries led by Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Aguinaldo rose in open rebellion against the Spanish. The revolution spread throughout the islands and succeeded in taking almost all Philippine territories, save for the walled city of Intramuros, Manila.

In 1898, Spain and the United States of America were also at war. The U.S. was initially viewed by Filipino revolutionaries as their allies in their struggle against Spain. The U.S. Navy, out of Hong Kong, under George Dewey attacked the Spanish in Manila Bay by sea while Filipino forces attacked by land.

States and at the end of the hostilities, had paid a dear price in life and property for its role in the wars. It was in Lipa where, Miguel Malvar, the last general to surrender to the Americans, made his formal surrender in 16 April 1902.<sup>125</sup> Coffee farmers in Lipa wanting to revive the industry found that there were several fundamental changes to the marketplace. Foremost was the low price of coffee.

Coincidentally, in the same year as the revolution against Spain, 1896, the coffee crisis of Brazil commenced. Flooding the market with tons of coffee beans, supply had finally outstripped demand causing coffee prices to fall. Prices fell even further in 1897 and remained low for the following ten years. Up to 1895, coffee was being quoted on the New York Coffee Exchange between fourteen to eighteen cents a pound. In 1901, the price had fallen to six cents a pound.<sup>126</sup> With the drop in prices and the soft market, local farmers found that coffee could not be grown profitably. As the United States was more interested in tobacco, sugar, and hemp it was the cultivation of these commodities that was actively pursued instead.

Then there was a problem of the coffee itself. The *Hemileia vastatrix* epidemic had made Lipa planters wary of replanting the Arabica varieties of coffee. In Java, where plantations were also severely affected by the fungus, an immense amount of research was being done by the Dutch to revive the industry. In 1900, *Coffea canephora* or Robusta coffee, which had been found to be resistant to the fungus, was already being widely distributed in Java.<sup>127</sup> In Lipa, certain individuals were also experimenting with rust-resistant Robusta and Liberian coffees but these were more independent entrepreneurial efforts than a concerted campaign. Unlike in decades

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With the remaining Spanish blockaded and practically helpless in the walled city, the Philippines, under Emilio Aguinaldo, declared victory and proclaimed their independence on 12 June 1898. This act was opposed by the United States and ironically, also by the Spanish who preferred to "capitulate" to the Americans than surrender to the *indios Filipinos*. Behind the backs of the Filipino revolutionaries, American and Spanish authorities quietly made arrangements for the transfer of the city to American hands. In 13 August 1898, in what since has become known as the "Mock Battle of Manila Bay" the United States provided Spain a graceful exit and occupied Manila

On 10 December 1898, at the end of the Spanish-American War, under the terms of the Treaty of Paris, and without Philippine representation, the Philippines was ceded by Spain to the United States in exchange for US \$20 million. When it became clear that the United States would refuse to recognize any Philippine right to self-government and that American forces intended to occupy and control the country, revolts broke out.

On 4 February 1899, Aguinaldo declared war against the United States so long as they opposed independence. A large American military force was needed to occupy the country, and though the Americans gradually succeeded in taking control of urban and coastal areas by the end of 1903, they would be regularly engaged in war against Filipino rebels for another decade. By the end of the Philippine-American War, an estimated one-sixth of the 7 million Filipino citizens had perished due to starvation, disease, and murder.

The Philippines was independent from American rule on 4 July 1946.

<sup>125</sup> Villa, *Lipa*, 12.

<sup>126</sup> Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 78.

<sup>127</sup> Haarer, *Modern Coffee Production*, 400-401.

past, there was no Comyn or foreign merchant-financier to back the start-up farmer. Already a major customer of Brazil, it seemed that there was no urgency for the United States to resurrect the struggling coffee industry in the Philippines, certainly not when they could get coffee so cheaply elsewhere. The Commissary-General of the War Department in the United States, the single largest purchaser of coffee, preferred to import coffee from Hawaii to meet the requirements of the United States Army stationed in the Philippines rather than pursue local production.<sup>128</sup> And with almost no domestic demand to speak of, there was little to inspire the local farmer. It was like 1795 all over again. Even if the Lipa farmer could manage a decent harvest, '*Que no habia compradors ni consumidores*'— there were neither consumers nor customers for it.

In a 1902 census, only barely a thousand hectares were reported as devoted to the production of coffee. Where once up to two-thirds of Lipa was covered with coffee trees, in the entire province of Batangas, less than one hundred hectares remained planted to this crop.<sup>129</sup> Coffee would again experience a resurgence in the post-World War II years when Robusta coffee would come into great demand, but the likes of the coffee days of nineteenth century Lipa were never seen again.

Many agronomists, agriculturists and researchers have pointed out that the state of research and the level of understanding of coffee cultivation in the nineteenth century are quite unlike today. The devastation wrought by the coffee leaf rust in the nineteenth century is now seen as reflective of the lack of knowledge, financial resources and technical capabilities that marked that century. Coffee leaf rust is a disease that is as virulent today as it was over a hundred years ago and the coffee economies in Indonesia, Africa and Central America that have experienced and survived major infestations and yet still thrive, have done so because of continuous investments in research and development in addition to direct investments into the industry itself. The demise of Lipa's coffee industry cannot be blamed solely on the coffee blight. Rather, its failure should take into consideration that the elements for its recovery, i.e. access to land, access to capital and credit, availability of labour, as well as direct investments into research and development etc., were absent.

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<sup>128</sup> O. W. Barrett, "Hawaiian Coffee," *The Philippine Agricultural Review* V, no. 10 (1912).

<sup>129</sup> Luz, "Cultivation of Coffee," 207.

### 3 LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Coffee provides one fascinating thread, stitching the disciplines of history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, medicine and business, and offering a way to follow the interactions that have formed a global economy.

Pendergrast 1999 p.410

From Kalaw to Villa, the inclination of Lipa historians has been to rhapsodise their past, embellishing their accounts with phrases like, 'the grandeur that was Lipa', 'a taste of utopia', 'the legacy of a glorious past', 'Lipa...the Athens of the East'. For many years it has been the stuff of bedtime stories, a tale retold to the young Lipeño so that as he 'basks in that glorious past' he may be aware of his history and inheritance.

Certainly, memory and nostalgia have their place in bringing to mind times gone by, but as has been shown, the colonial history of coffee in Lipa—as conventionally told—trivializes a history that is neither simple nor straightforward. In its popular form, not only does the tale of "the grandeur that was Lipa" leave out the contributions of other historical actors, it fails to attribute local transformations to the impact of global influences and falls short in examining the complexities that accompany the integration of a subsistent non-capitalist economy into the world economy.

Coffee is a unique commodity to be studying in the Philippines context, as it was not a substance that was initially produced for domestic consumption. For decades, coffee was cultivated solely as an item of international exchange, its entire production destined for export to consuming countries in Europe and North America. As coffee cannot survive in colder latitudes, it was a natural choice for the exploitation of the land and labour of the Philippines in pursuit of profit. In such a manner, was coffee, in the words of coffee historian Steven Topik, the "social motor" that sucked peripheral areas into the world economy'.<sup>130</sup>

As stressed by Larkin, nothing dictated the pace of Philippine economic expansion as the demands of world commerce.<sup>131</sup> In the case of coffee, it was primarily demand from the United States that was causing the establishment of new coffee plantations, not just in Lipa, but also in other parts of the world. There are a great number of details that can prove this point, but just to explain in broad strokes, it was demand from the West that, for many years, outstripped supply,

<sup>130</sup> William Gervase Clarence-Smith and Steven Topik, *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia and Latin America, 1500-1989* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6.

<sup>131</sup> John A. Larkin, "Philippine History Reconsidered: A Socioeconomic Perspective," *The American Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (1982): 612.

and kept prices consistently high.<sup>132</sup> The high prices that traders were willing to pay afforded the Lipa their short-term prosperity which masked the reality that the Lipa coffee farmers—as producers in the periphery—had lost their autonomy, and had no power to control the future of their industry. By trading a product that was wholly dependent on economic cycles of markets at the core, coffee was traded at prices the farmers could not set, which were in turn affected by external factors that were beyond their control.

In c1888-96, even with the setbacks from the coffee leaf rust and attacks from wood-boring worms, the shortage of appropriate farmland, and the bankruptcy of several merchant-financing houses removing sources of capital and credit<sup>133</sup>, again, the ultimate cause for the final demise of the coffee industry of Lipa was the drop in coffee prices, caused by factors beyond its sphere of control or influence. Brazil had flooded the market with coffee beans. Supply had finally exceeded demand, initiating the boom-bust, oversupply-undersupply cycle that continues to this day.

In understanding what really happened to the coffee industry of Lipa in the nineteenth century, it is not enough to know when coffee was introduced, and by whom, and who promoted its cultivation, and where. The process by which trade policies were created and negated, external linkages made and broken, tariffs imposed and then taken away, technology transferred and withheld...how international demand drove merchants and traders to seek producers, issue cash advances, secure harvests, arrange purchases, fix prices and organize transport, and how the shifting of this demand to other markets abruptly brought things to an end, are all pieces to the puzzle.

The true story of Lipa, if told from a more sober perspective, could be less of a romantic recollection and more of a cautionary tale of the hazards of trading the world market from a position of weakness. The study of coffee in Lipa also sheds light on a little analysed Third World paradox, that of truncated development, or as phrased by Owen, 'prosperity without progress'.<sup>134</sup>

At the turn of the century, the population of Lipa stood at less than forty thousand. Of these, less than four thousand lived within the *poblacion*, or town proper. The vast majority of the Lipeños lived in the forty or so barrios that radiated out—some for many miles—from the centre of town. The golden age as described in local histories—the Arabian stallions, the stately mansions the gold-studded slippers—was hardly the history of the forty thousand citizens of Lipa but that of only of a few families. These families who belonged to the economic elite, or the Class One

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<sup>132</sup> For more information see Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*.

<sup>133</sup> For more information see Legarda, *After the Galleons*.

<sup>134</sup> Owen, 'Abaca in Kabikolan: Prosperity without Progress.'

classification as described by Kalaw, those who were considered "inaccessible, like the stars" composed a very, very small group. So small, that they are all known by name: Solis, Luz, Katigbak, Africa. The fortunes amassed by these families were enough to last several lifetimes

The Class Two families, or the middle class—to which the professionals like doctors and lawyers belonged—also enjoyed sizable incomes at the height of the coffee boom. Some merchants and speculators even made incomes equal to the large landholders of the town. But for the rest on the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder, which May estimates to be 98-98.5% of Lipa's population, theirs was a life of relative poverty.<sup>135</sup> Little is known about the lower classes, primarily because the historians of the day were unconcerned with the conditions of the poor. What is known is that, as the economic elite continued to raise their stock, the extremes of great wealth and grinding poverty moved further and further apart. And there is little evidence that the city of Lipa itself benefited from the revenues generated by the coffee trade. In fact, 'the grandeur that was Lipa' may probably be the biggest myth of all.

The acceptance and the perpetuation of the myths that have surrounded the history of coffee in Lipa by generations of writers has, for many years, stood in the way of comprehensive analysis of the factors that led to the growth and decline of Lipa's export economy in the nineteenth century.

This perspective is all the more relevant in the present day when the orientation of Philippine agriculture from the production of needs to the production for profit has occurred through the agency of agribusiness transnationals. Where the need to earn foreign exchange creates pressure to produce export-oriented cash crops, sometimes at the expense of staple foods. Over one hundred and fifty years after the golden age of Lipa came to an abrupt end, the Philippines again finds itself in familiar straits. As barriers to free trade are brought down and foreign interests are allowed to dictate the course of the country's agricultural development, farmers find themselves powerless to control prices or exert any influence over the links in the commodity chain.

It is argued here that a better understanding of the present globalisation trends and pressures on the coffee industry today begins with a better understanding of external demand as the fundamental variable which pushed the increase of local production of coffee making it a leading export at different points in time. It is further argued here that it is essential that the true factors that drove the export economy in the nineteenth century be understood because it is there that can be found, the roots to the coffee crisis that faces Filipino coffee farmers today and possibly the answers to the questions that surround its sustainability.

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<sup>135</sup> Owen, "Abaca in Kabikolan: Prosperity without Progress," 19.



## 4 POSTSCRIPT

From the point of view of political economy, gourmandism is the common bond which unites the nations of the world, through the reciprocal exchange of objects serving for daily consumption.

It is gourmandism which sends wines, spirits, sugar, spices, pickles, salted foods, and provisions of every kind, down to eggs and melons, across the earth from pole to pole.

It is gourmandism which determines the relative price of things mediocre, good and excellent, whether their qualities are the effect of art or a gift of nature.

It is gourmandism which sustains the hopes and the spirit or rivalry of the host of fishermen, huntsmen, farmers, and others who every day fill the richest larders with the result of their labours and discoveries.

And lastly, it is gourmandism which forms the livelihood of the industrious throng of cooks, confectioners, bakers and others of all descriptions concerned with the preparation of food, who in turn employ other works of every kind for their needs, thus giving rise at all times to a circulation of funds incalculable in respect to mobility and magnitude by even the most expert brains.

Brillat-Savarin 1994 p.132

Written in 1825, Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's prescient gastronomical meditation on gourmandism may well be accepted as a modern day definition of globalisation.<sup>136</sup> Even as there is no single agreed definition of globalisation in the world, if, as Chase-Dunn enumerates, economic globalisation can refer to 'globe-spanning economic relationships', if cultural globalisation can refer to 'the proliferation of individualized values, originally of Western value, to ever larger parts of the world population' and if political globalisation can mean 'the institutionalisation of international political structures' then coffee is probably the most globalised commodity in the world.<sup>137</sup>

Once a dominant colonial crop in the late nineteenth century, coffee in the Philippines remained economically insignificant until post-World War II, when the cultivation of Robusta coffee was encouraged to meet the growing demand in Europe and the United States for filler material for instant coffee and roasted and ground (R&G) coffee products. Since then, the industry has endured several boom-bust cycles, peaking as a major export-oriented crop and dollar earner in the late 1990's. Despite consistent growth in domestic consumption, cultivation has declined steadily since over the last ten years. Some industry watchers fear that in less than twenty years, all the coffee consumed in the country will come from overseas. The government agency tasked to conduct much needed research and development and provide farmer support and education, is woefully under-funded and although it has been assisted with government funding,

<sup>136</sup> Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste*, trans. Anne Drayton (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 132.

<sup>137</sup> Christopher Chase-Dunn, "Globalization: A World Systems Perspective," *Journal of World-Systems Research* V, no. 3 (1999).

to date, the campaign to save the ailing coffee industry has been largely a private sector initiative.

With only an estimated sixty to eighty thousand families dependent on coffee, compared to the almost two million dependent on rice, and the one and a half million dependent on coconut, it is not hard to see why coffee has become a neglected commodity.

Unlike other Latin American communities and economies that have become wholly dependent on this commodity, in the Philippines, coffee has always been a secondary product. Unlike commodities like rice, sugar, bananas or coconut, coffee is a non-essential foodstuff. In contrast, a staple food like rice is infused with enough socio-political mystique to ensure that this sub-sector is favoured by policy and remains heavily supported by public investments. Coconut and sugar are also similarly politically charged. Disputes over agrarian reform, controversies surrounding the national commodity boards, landlord-tenant issues and the like keep these essential commodities highly visible.

Despite their lack of numbers, the lack of attention given to the coffee industry is, nevertheless, lamentable. Even if only a small number of farmers are affected by coffee, these farmers are concentrated in only three to four geographical areas. Though of little importance on a national scale, coffee is of prime importance to the communities that continue to cultivate it, and the ups and downs of this highly speculative commodity continue to have tremendous transforming power over the economies and societies that are dependent on it.

According to the *Lipeños*, coffee never really disappeared from Lipa. Right up to the years before World War II, in small plots and in almost every backyard one could find at least one coffee tree. The *Liberica* and then *Robusta* varieties of coffee were introduced later on and still grows there today and while it's true that *Arabica* no longer grows in Lipa, the coffee farmers remain and Lipa remains the spiritual home for coffee in the country. Yet, an examination of the available texts on the history of Lipa's coffee industry reveal a tendency for the writers to treat Lipa's "golden years" as a closed chapter, when in fact, it is a continuing reality.

By challenging existing views and correcting the many assumptions that may have been too hastily made, the ultimate goal of this paper is to revive the discourse on this subject that has been dormant for over a century and in doing so, lay down the groundwork for more detailed work, inform future research agenda and become a springboard for new research.

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