

EXTRAORDINARY LIFE AND WORK OF
**FR. CANTIUS
KOBAK**

A POLISH PRIEST
AND HISTORIAN IN
THE PHILIPPINES



Embassy
of the Republic of Poland
in Manila

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by Carl Sanchez Bordeos



MESSAGE OF THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT FR. JOVITO M. MALINAO, OFM DURING THE VISIT OF CHARGÉ D' AFFAIRES JAROSLAW SZCZEPANKIEWICZ

Welcome to Christ the King College! Welcome to Calbayog City, Samar. It is a great honor for us in the CKC Administration to have you as our dear visitors. We welcome you, most especially *Chargé d' affaires Jaroslaw Szczepankiewicz and family.*

CKC Museum Curator, Mr. Carl Bordeos, informed me of your visit, and I am glad to have you here at Christ the King College. The archaeological materials that you will see are visible pieces of evidence of how rich our history and culture is. These treasures that we have in the Museum, preserved, and collected by Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM, are sources of knowledge to amplify the interests of our fellow Samareños, especially the young people, to overcome ignorance brought about by mediocrity and indifference. We already know the influence and impact of modern technology and gadgets on young people.

As the 28th President of Christ the King College, I believe in the importance and relevance of Fr. Cantius J. Kobak's collections and contribution to the cultural heritage of Samar. It is an example of the Franciscans' perspective and attitude towards other cultures. As Missionary Franciscan, he showed his great respect and high regards

to the Bisayan culture by promoting and preserving archaeological materials and documents. His endeavors and expeditions showed his deep appreciation of the local culture as equal to other cultures. There is no sense of superiority and subjugation. These concepts and values trace back to our founder St. Francis of Assisi's attitude on humility and minority that all are embracing and all created beings here on earth are footprints of God's presence in the history of humanity. This perspective and consciousness of Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM influenced a lot to the vision of Christ the King College community, Faculty, and Administrators to preserve the Museum despite our limited resources and funds. More definitely, we do not want to lose and destroy these artifacts but to continue his mission in promoting and preserving the Franciscan efforts and contributions to the sphere of education, heritage, and evangelization in the whole area of Samar Island.

Thank you for coming to CKC and Samar. May the rest of your stay will be meaningful and delightful. We are looking forward to our possible and continuous tie-up and exchange to make these humble efforts of Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM to Samar Island, and the people be preserved and recognized as meaningful contributions in the field of education and cultural preservation. Pax et Bonum!

MABUHAY MY FILIPINO FRIENDS.

Many of Filipinos when thinking about Poland, will give 2 names, Saint John Paul II and Lech Wałęsa, the leader of Polish Solidarity movement. It is not a case of Samar and Leyte Islands. Filipinos in Calbayog on Samar Island know very well the extraordinary work of Polish Franciscans Fathers David Wyrzykowski and Leopold Niedźwiecki from the Province of the Assumption in Puławski, Wisconsin, USA (town named after Polish and American hero Gen. Kazimierz Puławski) assigned to Samar from 1952. Father Cantius Zdzisław (Jesse) Kobak, called proudly on Samar Island “Historian of Samar”, joined both in Calbayog City in 1959.

Polish Franciscans responded to the call of Polish Franciscan Saint Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941), who offered the Mass and prayed for the future missionary presence of the Franciscans in the Philippines when he visited Manila in 1936.

Cantius J. Kobak was born in Chełmoniec, Poland on 29 June 1930. He migrated to the United States in 1937, where he finished all his studies. In 1949, he became a Franciscan and was ordained a priest in 1957.

Fr. Kobak’s respect and fascination with the Philippine culture led him to do extensive research on Filipino history. His findings encouraged him to establish Christ the King College Samar Archeological Museum and initiate the Samar-Leyte Research Center where he was foremost etymologist. Fr. Cantius was a missionary to the people of the Philippines for 40 years. He served as a teacher, priest, and chaplain. His works on history, culture, the arts and language of Eastern Visayas left an unforgettable impact in the hearts of the people during his stay in the Islands in 1959-1989 as foreigner, Pole, missionary, writer and researcher. Poland-Philippines special bonds grow from his endeavors in Samar and Leyte.

Cantius Kobak was the best friend of the Philippines Filipinos could wish for! After sixteen years after his death in 2004, the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Manila and CKC Museum are ready to publish a first complete biography of Fr Kobak to preserve for next generations what this extraordinary priest-missionary have achieved in the Philippines.

Malugod na pagbati sa inyong lahat!

Jarosław Szczepankiewicz
Chargé d'affaires ad interim
The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Manila

Manila, 9th Oct. 2020

Poland’s Chargé d'affaires ad interim Jarosław Szczepankiewicz with Fr. Jovito M. Malinao at the Christ King College in Calbayog City, Samar, on December 2019



INTRODUCTION

THE PHILIPPINE MISSION OF THE ASSUMPTION PROVINCE

IN January and February of 1948, the urgent need for missionaries to the Philippines was broadcast to the entire world. In the aftermath of the World War II, the Franciscans in the United States were urged to send missionaries since many of the churches had for centuries been under the pastoral care of the Spanish Franciscans.

In July of 1952, the Assumption Province, established by Polish Franciscan immigrants to United States in 1877, voted to accept a foreign mission in the Philippine islands. The site chosen was Samar, one of the poorest Islands in the archipelago. To prepare the way for the missionaries, Provincial Minister Fr. Theophane Kalinowski made a trip to the Islands on September 4-25, 1952. He conferred with Bishop Miguel Acebedo of Calbayog Diocese who proposed to turn over the Colegio de San Vicente de Paul (CSVP) to the care of the friars. In

addition, he concluded seven parishes to the north of Calbayog, which entailed pastoral responsibility for people in the entire northwest section of Samar and its adjacent islands. Both the college and the parishes were to be administered by the missionaries. It was agreed that two missionaries would come immediately to take over the administration of the college and that others would come, when available to assume administration of the mission parishes.

REINVIGORATING THE FAITH

FROM the first thirty two (32) friars who arrived in the Philippines in 1577 up to a total of 2,700 friars by the end of 1898 who tilled the soil with their own sweat and blood, seventy-two (72) of whom died as Martyrs. Of these six were canonized and eighteen beatified.

As late as 1900, there were still 450 friars active in the Philippines but by 1952, there were only sixteen (16), four (4) of whom were inactive.

The mission of the friars in the 20th century was not only to carry on the Franciscan tradition and heritage of the island, but to reinvigorate the faith. Officials in the Philippine hierarchy and Franciscan Curia requested and encouraged the friars to come and rebuild this Church as the Seraphic Father Francis did centuries ago.

The pastoral problem in the Philippines was serious. Only 2,400 priests were available to minister then the eighteen million Catholics on the islands (a ratio of 1: 7,000). In Samar and Leyte, the situation was even worse; there was, on the average, one priest for every 17,000 Catholics. Meaning, some 35 percent of the Filipinos were deprived of a regularly celebrated Mass while only 2 percent of the dying had the consolation of the “Last Sacraments.”

With the insistent pleading of the Filipino bishops and the Secretary General of the Franciscan Missions, the Assumption Province took initial steps to establish a mission in the Philippine Islands in 1952.

THE CHALLENGING TASKS

THE present Christ the King College, the pioneer Catholic Institution of Higher Learning in Region VIII (Eastern Visayas) was established under the name of Colegio Catolico in 1905. The school was founded by a group of staunch supporters of Catholic Education with the enthusiastic approval of Bishop Thomas A. Hendrick, the first American Bishop of Cebu (1903-1909).

Two Paulist Fathers were sent to Calbayog from Cebu and the school was solemnly inaugurated and opened on September 10, 1905. In 1910, Calbayog was designated then a Diocese for the Islands of Samar and Leyte. Because of this, a seminary department was added to the school, which changed its name to Colegio de Seminario de Calbayog. In 1926, the college department was moved to a new

site, while the seminarians remained in the original building of the college.

One of the Paulist Fathers was appointed as first director of the Colegio after its separation from the seminary. According to the Diocesan Catalogue of 1924, the academic program at Colegio de San Vicente de Paul was fully recognized by the Government of the Philippines and was authorized to grant A.B. degrees, high school diplomas, and intermediate and primary certificates. Filipino secular priests of the Calbayog Diocese took over the administration of the Colegio in 1928, while the Vincentian Fathers remained to be the administrators of the seminary.

In December 1941, the Colegio, like all other schools suffered the same fate: it was forced to close its doors during the World War II years. The institution lost laboratory equipment and many library books. Its doors were reopened on July 8, 1947 under a government permit. The

Reverend Fr. Basilio Rosales, Director of the Colegio at the outbreak of the war, resumed his administrative tasks. Under his capable leadership, the college made educational and material progress, notably the construction of a library building adjoining the old one and the reintroduction of collegiate courses.

Toward the end of 1951, the Colegio was making a desperate and frantic attempt to survive and overcome its financial inadequacy. The buildings were termite-eaten and mercilessly battered by typhoons. Financial resources were at their lowest ebb, and the teachers were resigning for lack of salaries. The complexity of these difficulties and problems was enough to blight all hope and possibility for the school's survival. This was the welcoming state of affairs that would challenge the patience and resoluteness of the men commissioned by the Assumption Province to begin their missionary endeavors in Samar.

The first two (2) Polish Franciscan missionaries who arrived in Calbayog City, Samar, Philippines on December 11, 1952.



Fr. DAVID WYRZYKOWSKI, OFM

Fr. David took the responsibility of directing Colegio de San Vicente de Paul (at present the Christ the King College) while Fr. Leopold was the 1st Franciscan Pastor of San Vicente Ferrer Parish (Brgy. Tinambacan, Calbayog City), the first of seven (7) Samar parishes accepted by the Franciscans in 1954.



Fr. LEOPOLD NIEDŹWIECKI, OFM

Fr. David took the responsibility of directing Colegio de San Vicente de Paul (at present the Christ the King College) while Fr. Leopold was the 1st Franciscan Pastor of San Vicente Ferrer Parish (Brgy. Tinambacan, Calbayog City), the first of seven (7) Samar parishes accepted by the Franciscans in 1954.

The school building of Christ the King College built by the first two (2) Polish Franciscan missionaries solemnly blessed in 1955.



PREACHING THE SPIRIT OF FRANCIS

ALMOST immediately, the Provincial Council of the Assumption Province began to search for friars willing to make a generous sacrifice. Filled with an ample dose of courage and adventure, and the prayerful support of their brothers, friars came forward. Frs. David Wyrzykowski and Leopold Niedźwiecki were selected from a large group of volunteers considered by the Provincial Council. Fr. David was 35 years old, ordained eight years, with time spent in teaching high school and working in the printery at the Province in Puławski city in Wisconsin. Fr. Leopold was five years younger, ordained four years, with some teaching and parochial work to his credit. Their departure ceremony on October 30, 1952 was the first of many that would be conducted by Fr. Theophane Kalinowski. In that impressive service, Frs. David and Leopold received the mission crosses as a sign of the command to preach in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

On November 1, 1952, the friars bid farewell for at least six years. They began their long journey, trusting in the words of Fr. Theophane Kalinowski “May the burden of this mission cross be light, may its yoke be sweet... Bring the people peace, love and salvation... Lead them along the path of love and faithful service to heaven and God!”

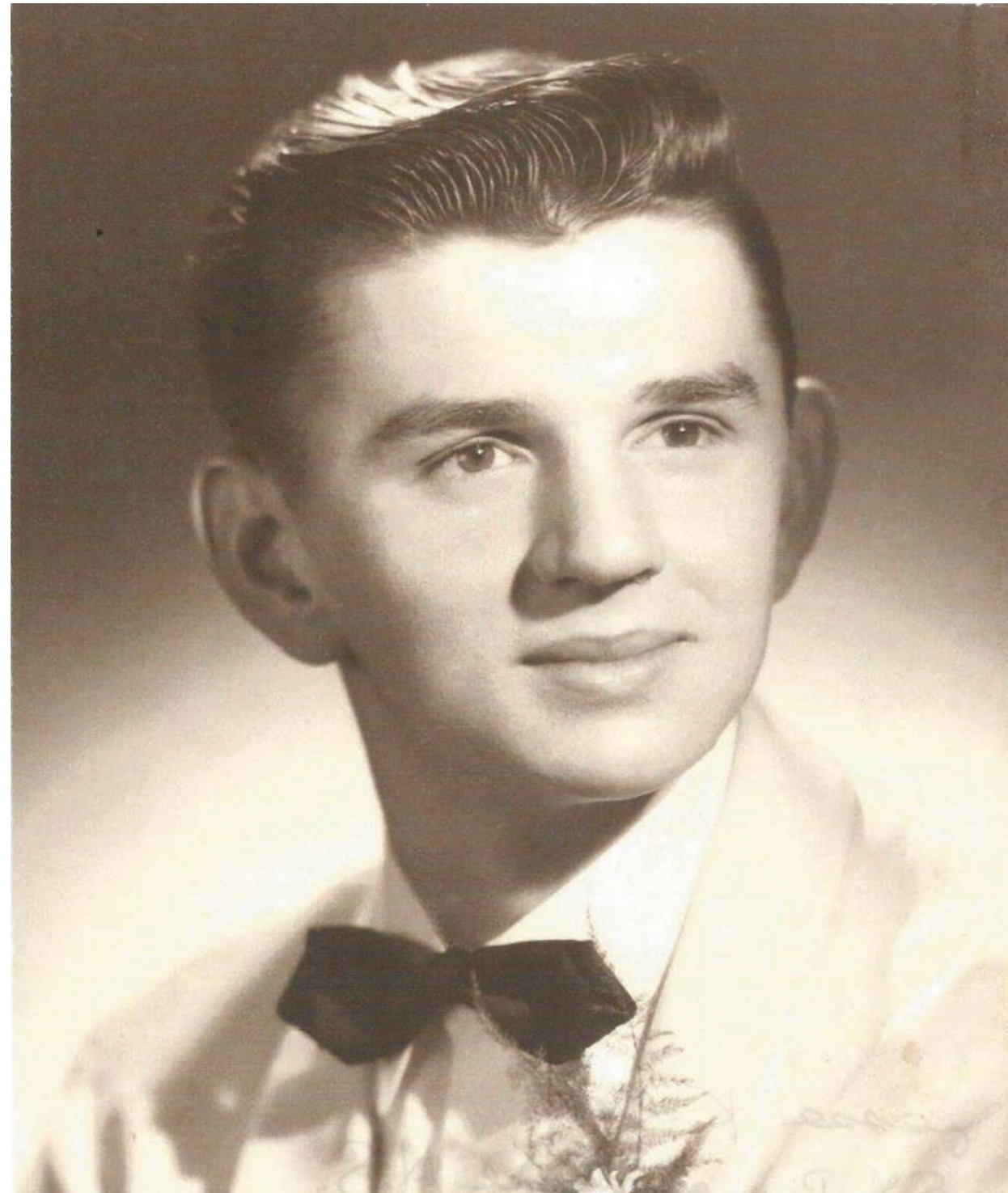
Another concern and primary goal of the friars from the very beginning was to foster vocations among the young Filipino boys in Samar to prepare and train them for the Franciscan priesthood and Brotherhood. Bishop Acebedo encouraged the friars to accept the native vocations.

As the bishop had promised, Frs. David and Leopold took control of the college which had a total enrollment of 825 students in three departments taught by lay teachers: 275 in college, 375 in high school and 175 in grade school. Fr. David faced with the almost insurmountable and gigantic task of paying off heavy debts plus the teachers’ back salaries that ran into thousands of pesos.

Possessing a real genius and foresight in planning and a tremendous drive for hard work, Fr. David stabilized the school’s financial affairs. He then envisioned a new school building, a sixteen classroom wooden structure that would serve as a temporary residence for the friars. With the invaluable assistance of Mr. Jose Gomez, members of the faculty of the Colegio de San Vicente de Paul, and civic-minded individuals, the friars were able to acquire six (6) hectares of land situated three blocks from the sea in the eastern part of the town, known as Hamorawon.

On the feast of Christ the King, October 30, 1955, the new school building, now located in the heart of Calbayog City, was solemnly blessed and dedicated by His Excellency Msgr. Manuel del Rosario. The school was officially named Christ the King College.

On June 28, 1959, about one hundred fifty (150) people participated in the departure ceremonies for Philippine-bound Polish missionaries, Fr. Pacific Linowski and Fr. Cantius Kobak at the Christ the King Seminary in West Chicago, Illinois. Fr. Provincial preached the sermon and bestowed them their mission crosses.



The young **Zdzisław (ang. Jesse). Kobak** in 1949

FR. CANTIUS J. KOBAK, OFM

EARLY YEARS

BORN Zdzisław Kobak in Chelmoniec village, near Toruń city, in Poland on June 29, 1930 to Andrzej and Luiza Kobak born Mucha.

His father came to America in 1931 during the Great Depression, the worldwide economic downturn from 1929 to the early 1940s. In 1937, young Zdzisław came with his mother and brother John to Cleveland, Ohio.

He completed his elementary education at St. John Cantius School, and attended one year at the parish high school before transferring to the Franciscan-operated St. Bonaventure High School and Minor Seminary in Sturtevant, Wisconsin.

Upon graduation, he decided to enter the Order of Friars Minor and became a novice on August 14, 1949 taking the name Cantius. After making final profession on August 15, 1953, he continued his theological studies at the Christ the King Seminary in West Chicago, Illinois, and was ordained to the priesthood on June 1, 1957.

THE INSPIRATION OF HIS NAME CANTIUS

ST. John Cantius (pl. Jan Kanty) was a Polish priest, scholastic philosopher, physicist and theologian. It was this 14th Century Saint from whom Fr. Kobak took as his religious name Cantius.

St. John Cantius was born on June 23, 1390 in a small town of Kęty in Poland to Stanisław and Anna Kanty. He attended the Kraków Academy where he impressed his professors and colleagues with his pleasant and amiable disposition; always happy, but serious, humble, and godly. He also won the hearts of all who came in contact with him. He made excellent progress in the study of philosophical and theological sciences at which he attained bachelor and licentiate.

In 1418, he obtained a degree on Doctor of Philosophy. Upon graduation he spent the next three years conducting philosophy classes at the university, while preparing for the priesthood.

Upon his ordination, he became rector at the school of the Canons Regular of the Most Holy Sepulcher in Miechow. While

there, he was offered a professorship of Sacra Scriptura (Sacred Scripture) back at his alma mater, the Kraków Academy, which would later be named in Poland the Jagiellonian University. He attained a doctorate in theology and eventually became director of the theology department. He held the professorship until his death in 1473. He spent many hours copying manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures, theological tracts, and other scholarly works.

In physics, he helped develop Jean Buridan's theory of impetus, which anticipated the work of Galileo and Newton.

During his time in Kraków, he became well known in the city for his generosity and compassion toward the poor, especially to the needy students at the university. He distributed all the money and clothes he had, retaining only what was absolutely necessary to support himself. He slept but little, and on the floor, ate very sparingly, and was a total abstainer from meat after he became a doctor. He made one pilgrimage to Jerusalem with the desire of becoming a martyr among the Turks, and four pilgrimages to Rome on foot.



Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM with the Mission Cross before he was sent to Calbayog City, Samar in 1959.

He died while living in retirement at his alma mater on December 24, 1473 at aged 83. His remains were interred in the Collegiate Church of St Anne, where his tomb became and remains a popular pilgrimage site. During his life he performed various miracles, which were multiplied after his death at his tomb. He was canonized by Clement XIII in 1767. The Roman Breviary distinguishes him with three hymns; he is the only confessor not a bishop who is thus honoured.

INTEREST IN HISTORY & CULTURE

SHORTLY, upon his arrival in the Island of Samar on August 28, 1959, Fr. Cantius Kobak began to take great interest in Philippine History, Culture and Linguistics as well as in the early Evangelization done by the Spanish Friars.

Fr. Kobak became interested in the history and culture of Samar Island prompted by the virtual absence of published materials about the place around the time of his arrival. His curiosity led him to do an extensive research and even archaeological expeditions to various areas around the island. He collected and compiled histories of Samar and Leyte towns and of the Colegio de San Vicente de Paul, Bisayan songs, poetry, dramas, riddles, and Bisaya-Spanish dictionaries.

Upon learning that it was the Jesuits who brought the Faith to the Islands of Samar and Leyte, in 1595 contacts were made

with the Jesuit Archivist in Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI) in Rome and a request for certain materials in microfilm pertinent to the history and mission thrust was initiated. Hundreds of folios of excellent material was acquired as the years went by; the same was done with the Franciscan Archivo de Pastrana in Guadalajara, Spain. The microfilms were processed into photocopies; these were read and the Spanish text typed, corrected and readied for translation in English.

GREATEST SCHOLARLY ACHIEVEMENT

EVETT D. Hester, one of the staff of Dr. Fred Eggan, Director of the Philippine Studies Program at the University of Chicago, invited Fr. Kobak to join the Alcina project. There was this major attempt to resurrect Fr. Alcina's incomparable contribution to Philippine history and culture during the late 1950s. Dr. Eggan wrote to E.D. Hester from All Souls College in Oxford, England extending the following welcome endorsement:

"... I agree with you fully regarding Fr. Kobak. If he will do Books One and Two, that will be fine. You will be able to help him a lot on the zoology and the botany. Dr. Paul S. Leitz and I will go ahead with Books 3 and 4 and perhaps publish the two together -- or separately as may be desirable."

Heavily engaged in the retreats, preaching ministry, parochial assistance, spiritual

assistance to six (6) Poor Clare cloistered nuns scattered throughout the archipelago and working of Fr. Alcina's Part Two of the Historia, Fr. Kobak was unable to make any contribution to the task.

In the mid-sixties, Fr. Kobak began to acquire and amassing extensive manuscript materials from the Central Jesuit Archives in Rome through the kindness and generosity of the archivist named Fr. Joseph Teschitel, S.J. All materials pertain to Samar and Leyte.

In 1967, the entire Part Two of Fr. Alcina's Historia de las islas e indios de Bisayas was acquired in microfilm from the Academia de la Historia in Madrid and substantial portions of Part One from the Biblioteca de la Palacio, also from Madrid, Spain. Thousands of folios of Fr. Francisco Ignacio Alcina's manuscripts from the 17th century were acquired to be processed, translated and annotated. This became Fr. Kobak's greatest scholarly achievement: the tracking (in various European and American museums and archives), transcribing, translating from Spanish to English, and publishing or preparing for publication all extant copies of the manuscripts written by Fr. Alcina, who was a missionary in Samar, Leyte and the Bisayan Islands from 1634 to 1670.

With the help of Fr. Pablo Fernandez, O.P. from the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, the work on Fr. Alcina's manuscript was initiated.

U.S. Ambassador Gerhard Mennen Williams in Lo-ok Cave of Brgy. Malajog, Calbayog City, Samar, on May 1968.



Christ the King College (CKC) had a Gala Reception and Gala for Ambassador Williams where it was attended by the Franciscan Fathers, CKC Faculty, Minor Seminarians, all departments, the City Mayor and his wife, and City Officials.

The Ambassador spent a lot of time with the Friars in their recreation room exchanging views and events. He was deeply elated with the presence of the missionaries in Samar Island especially with the expanding College, which trained educators for the public school system.

Kigal, the pre-Hispanic dance in Palapag, Northern Samar.

One of the twenty drawings of the Palacio Real Copia acquired in microfilm from the Biblioteca de Palacio in Madrid, Ms. 2015 in Apri 1989.



Photocopies of these microfilms were printed and prepared by Fr. Kobak at Christ the King College in Calbayog City, Samar. Transcripts were made, typed, and submitted to Fr. Fernandez who corrected and filled-in the lacunae, misreadings and upgraded the text into modern Spanish. Extremely

long sentences and very long paragraphs separated continually by semicolons were all shortened. Text was then again retyped into neat copies and readied for preliminary English translation along with annotations prepared.

Preliminary publication were initiated in the *Philippiana Sacra*, a graduate school publication of the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. It began to appear with the May-August 1979 Issue. The entire Part Two was completed in print by the year 1983.



The Bisayans during the 17th Century Philippines (A Muñoz Copia of the Alcina Drawing)

*Found in the Archives of the Biblioteca de Palacio in Madrid, Spain as Ms. 2015.
The above was reproduced and enhanced from a microfilm into a photocopy.*

Upon completing the preliminary publication of Fr. Alcina's Part Two in 1982, the editors initiated the publication of selected chapters from Part One, Books I-IV in 1984-1985 in the *Philippiana Sacra*. Although continued publication of Fr. Alcina was interrupted due to pressure of the ministry, work continued slowly and at a more moderate space.

FR. ALCINA AND FR. KOBAK

FR. Francisco Ignacio Alcina (1610-1674) was a 17th Jesuit missionary in the Philippine Islands who dedicated 40 years of his life to the ministry of evangelization. Thirty-six of those years were spent in the Visayas, particularly in Borongan (Eastern Samar), Paranas (Samar), Carigara (Leyte), Cebu, Catbalogan (Samar), and Palapag (Northern Samar).

With unparalleled effort, he found the time, the interest and energy to pen the monumental, nine-volume "Historia de las islas e indios de Bisayas 1668." He gathered information from the Bisayan Samareños about their ancient customs, traditions, beliefs, poems, ballads, songs and epics. All this was written in the year 1667 in Palapag and completed in Catbalogan in 1668.

He left Samar and settled in Manila in 1670. Here he began seeking permissions and approbations for putting the nine-volumes to print. But this precious history was never published for he died in 1674 and his writings were forgotten for some 112 years.

This was discovered by Dr. Juan Bautista Muñoz in 1784 in the Real Sociedad Medica de Sevilla who made copies of the four books Part 1, whereas Part 2 was rescued from destruction. The latter manuscript was being used as wrappings for powders and ointments in the Botica. This invaluable *Historia* was resurrected but never printed.

In 1965, Fr. Kobak OFM acquired copies of the Alcina manuscript from Central Jesuit Archives in Rome. In 1967, he acquired microfilms from the Academia de la Historia and Biblioteca de la Palacio in Madrid, Spain. Fr. Kobak spent more than thirty (30) years of outpouring effort, energy, and time with the help of Dominican scholars Fr. Pablo Fernandez and Fr. Lucio Gutierrez in researching, writing, rewriting, editing and annotating Fr. Alcina's monumental work.

After 332 years, Fr. Alcina's grand contribution to Philippine History and Culture finally saw its light with the publication in year 2000 of the Part 1 Volume 1 with Spanish texts and English translation. Fr. Alcina's *Historia* 1668 provided the most complete and extensive ethnographic account of any regional group in the Philippines in the 17th century.

RESEARCHER OF THE SUMUROY REBELLION

FR. Kobak also researched and wrote about the Bisayan Rebellion of 1649-1650, which started in Palapag, now a municipality in Northern Samar province.

The Bisayan Revolt was led by Agustin Sumuroy, hence, this is also popularly known as the Sumuroy Rebellion. It may be considered as the first major rebellion to burst wide open during the first eighty-four (84) year period of Hispanization and evangelization of the Philippine Islands. The uprising was very extensive, widespread and held the Island of Samar alone for one full year and some three months.

On a Tuesday evening, June 1, 1649, two days before the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, Sumuroy plunged his murderous javelin through the heart of Fr. Miguel Ponce Barberan, initiating a revolt which would steadily gain momentum of unmanageable magnitude.

In Catubig, another municipality in Northern Samar province, Sumuroy murdered and martyred the saintly Fr. Vicente Damian. This rebellion spread to the town of Bacor (today the Can-avid-Dolores region) and Taft in Eastern Samar and inspired other rebellions in Leyte, Sorsogon, Albay, Camarines, Masbate, Cebu, and the entire coast of Northern Mindanao.

With Fr. Kobak's efforts for the Alcina account, Sumuroy Rebellion was one of the finest contributions of Fr. Kobak had for Samar.

Large Stone lid covering the burial jar in Mungulbungol Island (in the present Municipality of San Vicente, Northern Samar) during the year 1968.

INTERESTS IN SAMAR ETHNOGRAPHY

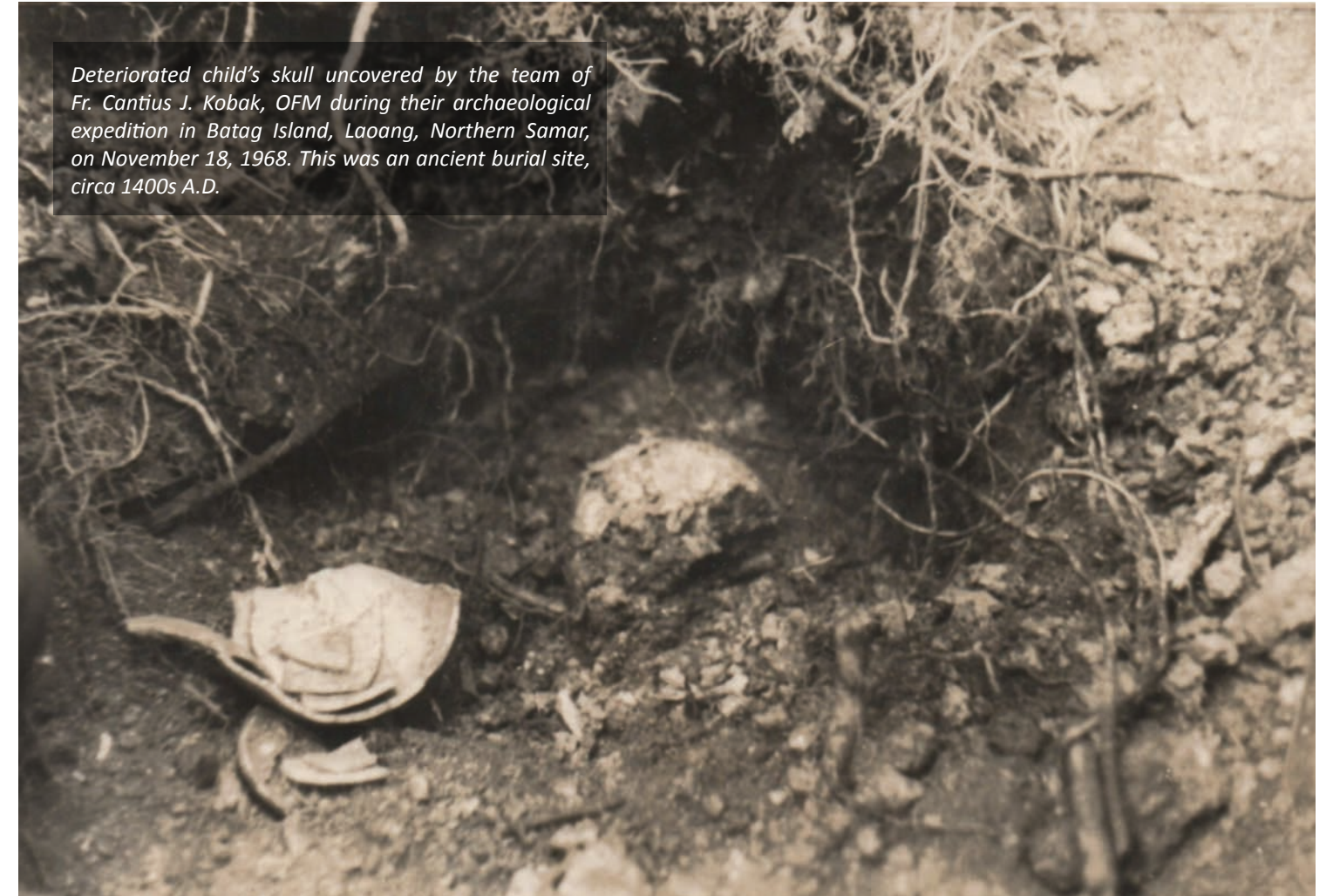
FR. Kobak was also assigned to teach at Christ the King College. Because of this, he had the opportunity to assign term papers in Bisayan writing, poetry, songs, dramas, riddles, etc. Collections began in a delightful manner.

In 1965, the Bishop and Rector of the Calbayog Cathedral began the renovation which dated back to 1865. Interested in the many old church furnishings that were being cast aside, he was given permission to save the items. An old altar with the Franciscan Coat of Arms, a wheel with some twelve small bells attached to it on a stand and with a crankshaft, pewter, candelabra, candle sticks, old painting of a Saint, and several assorted items were offered to him.

In Capul Island, the priest brought him over a discarded old chalice, ciborium, and a monstrance no longer used. These items created an interest in other ethnographic materials such as old wooden statues of saints, some with ivory faces and hands; old crucifixes; old-fashioned stone cereal grinders locally called *gilingan*; antique household items and implements such as charcoal irons, jewel boxes, old Spanish coins, jewelry, rings, earrings, bangles, Chinese porcelain plates or jarlets and jars.

He began collecting Bisayan publications, old Spanish Bisayan or Samaron Vocabularios or Dictionaries; the *Pasion* or Passion of Christ chanted by elderly women during Holy Week.

Deteriorated child's skull uncovered by the team of Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM during their archaeological expedition in Batag Island, Laoang, Northern Samar, on November 18, 1968. This was an ancient burial site, circa 1400s A.D.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITIONS

IN 1967, public school teachers brought him stoneware jars which were found near Gandara, Samar. This triggered and marked his interest in visiting ancient burial sites around Samar Island. Jesuit missionary priest Francisco Ignacio Alcina, in his *Historia de las islas e indios de Bisayas 1668* had related how and where the ancient Bisayan people buried their deceased. With this

knowledge, plans were made to give it a try during semestral breaks.

Fr. Kobak gathered a group of college students and began the first archaeological expedition in Oras, Eastern Samar. Caves that were searched yielded pottery shards and bones. Chinese porcelain blue-white (15th Century), even broken stoneware and porcelain shards, human bones and teeth, and other artifacts were recovered in a small island facing the town of Oras in Eastern Samar.

Upon returning into the mainland of Samar, he noticed a boy carrying *tuba* (a local wine or a coconut fermented wine) in what seemed like an ancient jar with dragons on both sides in relief. He asked one of the college professors with him to buy the *tuba* along with the jar. The boy hesitated to sell the jar because he needed it but agreed after the boy was offered to buy the *tuba* with the jar a triple price. The next day, the team went into the deep interior of the Island of Samar on the Great Oras River.

IN SEARCH FOR ANCIENT BURIAL SITES

THEIR next attempt was in search of ancient burial sites, so Fr. Kobak's team went south along the eastern coast of Samar to a town named McArthur with the old name of Libas. They were introduced by the parish priest and the brgy. Captain to another small island known as Minalungon which has a cave and which was used for ancient burials. They hired a motorboat and headed for the small island about an hour's motorboat trip. The name of the said island was significant as mina means many while lungon means coffin or a casket.

The cave was littered with broken earthenware shards, bones, rotten pieces of wood, all indicative of what it was. A fisherman arrived to see what the team was up to and they were informed that foreigners did diggings in 1923 and college students from Manila also did some excavations. These students found many interesting items as pottery, jars, jarlets, human bones and a fine necklace of gold. Fr. Kobak's team attempted some diggings but it all seemed exhausted. The fisherman, according to the memoir of Fr. Kobak, did not like the idea of disturbing the area by their archaeological diggings as it may cause a strong typhoon.

On May 24, 1968, Fr. Kobak went to the town of Guiuan, almost at the southern tip of Samar. He was also very interested to see this ancient town as it has a large stone church with all the ancient church furniture undisturbed. But the recent supertyphoon Haiyan or Yolanda in 2013, the church was severely devastated that it was restored recently by the experts from the National Museum. From the town, they went to Calicoan, Lilibucan, and Cando where a gigantic American Naval Air Base was constructed during the War but was never really used.



Ancient jarlet found in Minalungon Island of Gen. McArthur, Eastern Samar. May 1968



In Minalungon Island of Gen. McArthur, Eastern Samar during the expedition of Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM



Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM (second from left) with the barangay chairman and wife and some community people from the Island of Cahayagan, Laoang, Northern Samar.

In Homonhon Island of Guiuan,
Eastern Samar



VISITING THE HISTORIC ISLAND OF HOMONHON

IN 1968, Fr. Kobak also visited the historic Island of Homonhon, where the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan landed in 1521 and stayed for eight (8) full days. This was the first island in the Philippine Archipelago where Magellan and his men were met by the people from Suluan Island of Samar.

Italian chronicler Antonio Pigafetta named this Island “*Acquada da li buoni signalli*” or the “Watering Place of Good Signs.” There, on land, Magellan ordered to set up two tents and that the sick men of the Armada be transferred therein.

THE ENCOUNTER OF SULUANONS AND MAGELLAN

FR. Kobak shared in his research that on March 18, 1521, Magellan saw a vessel manned by nine (9) men. These were the people from Homonhon’s nearby Island of Suluan.

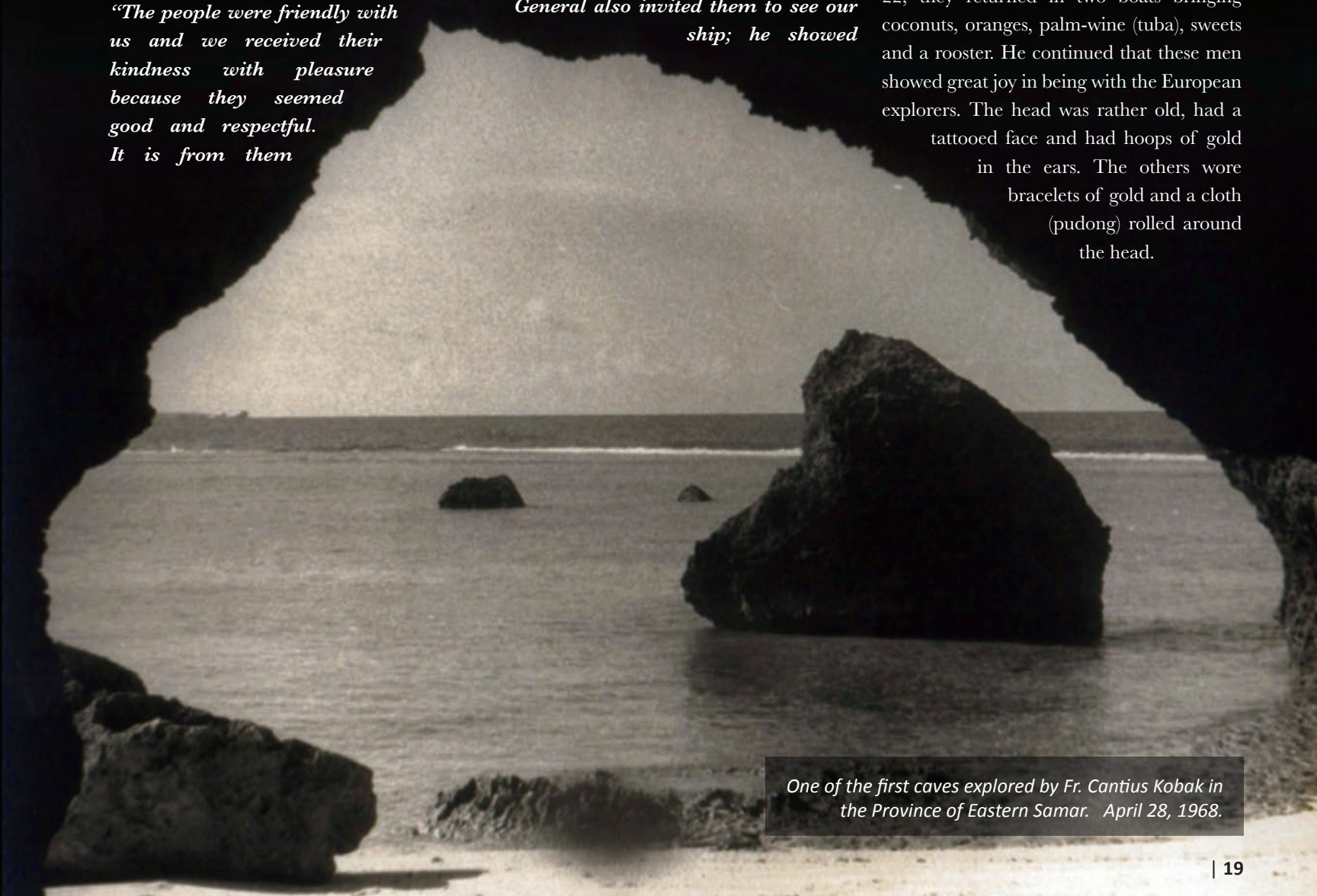
Pigafetta in his *Primo Viaggio intorno al mondo* related how they were well-received by these people from Samar. He wrote:

“The people were friendly with us and we received their kindness with pleasure because they seemed good and respectful. It is from them

we knew the names of many things and about the neighboring islands. To honor our General, they brought in their boats some of their goods which were cloves, cinnamon, pepper, ginger, nut moscada, bark of the same, gold and other things. They informed us that those are the products in these islands where we are coming... The Captain General also invited them to see our ship; he showed

them as much as was notable and new to them... They left, requesting to leave with a lot of gracefulness and courtesy. They assured us that they would return bringing along food as they earlier promised us.”

Pigafetta recorded that the islanders fulfilled their promise because on Friday, March 22, they returned in two boats bringing coconuts, oranges, palm-wine (tuba), sweets and a rooster. He continued that these men showed great joy in being with the European explorers. The head was rather old, had a tattooed face and had hoops of gold in the ears. The others wore bracelets of gold and a cloth (pudong) rolled around the head.



One of the first caves explored by Fr. Cantius Kobak in the Province of Eastern Samar. April 28, 1968.

ADVOCATE OF THE FIRST MASSES IN SAMAR

Fr. Kobak advocated that the first unrecorded, non-chronicled Masses were celebrated in Samar's Homonhon Island on March 17-25, 1521. March 24, according to Fr. Kobak's writings, was Palm Sunday, the beginning of the Holy Week.

While it was true that chronicler Pigafetta never recorded anything about the Masses being celebrated in Homonhon Island during their eight-day stay but the non-mention of these Masses did not imply

the absence of the ritual or denial of the celebration as Masses in those days were a common practice, an ordinary morning activity.

NO OPPORTUNITY FOR DIGGING

When Fr. Kobak visited Homonhon Island on May of 1968, it was fiesta time and they had no opportunity for any diggings. He fondly remembered that the people have wonderful hospitality who would not let them go nor would the parish priest.

Coming back to Guiuan, they were told to go up into the high cliffs or mountains where they found hundreds of pieces of broken shell bracelets and some in almost perfect state. Fr. Kobak wrote that he only took a few samples for the museum.

ON A CULTURAL VISIT

On December 28, 1968, Fr. Kobak and his team visited Capul and San Antonio Islands. They always visited parish priests, municipal officials, and teachers. Because by doing this, their search for Samar's ancient burial sites and gathering of some recoveries all were very helpful and cooperative.

They also visited Mungulbungol or San Vicente Island as well as further west of Capul, the Samputan Islet, where their visit yielded some fine treasures. A blue and white Chinese burial urn with lid (jarlets, beads, bracelets and carnelian gemstones). This was indicative of a wealthy child-burial of a datu (local chieftain).



RESTORED DRAGON JARS

In February 1969, Fr. Kobak asked the Filipino Friar who was there with him on the Island to go back and see. The friar went back and returned with two sacks of broken stoneware, earthenware, porcelain, dragon jars, and a whole lot of assorted archaeological recoveries. From these, Fr. Kobak was able to restore three dragon jars.

Meanwhile, one large hall was allocated for the museum at Christ the King College. He invited some American professional archaeologists who heard about the finds to come over to see them. The archaeologists dated all the material recovered from burial sites, and Fr. Kobak labeled everything as they described them.

CO-FOUNDER OF THE LEYTE-SAMAR MUSEUM, JOURNAL

THE Divine Word University (DWU) in Tacloban City, Leyte announced that an ancient cave burial in the Sohoton National Park located in Basey, Samar. An SVD friend Fr. Anthony A. Buchcik invited him to join the archaeological expedition in the mid-1967. Because of these collaborations, the two co-founded the Leyte Samar Museum and the Leyte-Samar Studies journal of the DWU Tacloban.

A photo by Fr. Kobak taken during their visit in Batag Island, Laoang, Northern Samar on November 18, 1968.

Burial recoveries from ancient sites of Gandara (Western Samar); Oras (Eastern Samar); Minalungon Island (Gen. McArthur, E. Samar); Guiuan (E. Samar); Capul Island (Northern Samar); Mungulbungol Island (San Vicente, N. Samar); Dalupirit Island (San Antonio, N. Samar); Batag Island (Laoang, N. Samar), and other places in the three (3) provinces of Samar Island. Recoveries were identified by three (3) American archaeologists invited by Fr. Kobak to Calbayog City, Samar in 1968. Arranged and labelled by Fr. Kobak.



JAR BURIALS

Some small islands in ancient times were only used for burial. Hence, the burials were secondary and not far from the shore. During this expeditions of Fr. Kobak and his team, they were able to open up about eight to ten of large, vaulted jars. The jars were impossible to excavate since they are usually rather thin, clay-baked and cracked up.

In Barangay Burabod in Batag Island of Laoang, Northern Samar, they were introduced by the people to some large burials with these stone lids which had grooved circles on one side as lids for burial jars. The team found one stone lid which resembled a heart, and this was extremely heavy. The team has to make a bamboo rack and strapped the stone to take it for the museum.

In another barangay of the same Island, they were able to recover a small Chinese, stoneware bowl, a small skull in deteriorated state, longer arm or wrist bones appeared with five (5) shell bracelets. Other archaeological items were recovered, too: daggers rusted out, ancient agong, beads, a golden earring, very soft with an Indonesian Garuda embossed.

NEW ASSIGNMENT IN CAMALIG

In 1970, after his eleven (11) mission years in Samar, Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM was assigned in Manila. He served at the Santuario de San Antonio Parish in Forbes Park, Makati.

In 1972, the Provincial Vicar Fr. Silvestre Murillo, OFM asked him to temporarily substitute as parish assistant of St. John the Baptist Parish in Camalig, Albay after a Spanish Friar left for his home-leave to Spain, and will not return. Hence, Fr. Kobak left Santuario de San Antonio Parish on October 18, 1972 and returned on May 6, 1973.

Because of this new assignment, he was able to explore caves in Camalig. In the village of Cotmon of the same area, there can be found a large, three-chamber cave. It was in Hoyop-hoyopan Cave, where archaeological materials were discovered by Fr. Kobak between the months of January to March of 1973. The materials excavated are still at present stored in the museum of Camalig Parish, which plans to reopen to the general public in the coming years.

RECOVERIES BEFORE 800 A.D.

When Fr. Kobak went to Hoyop-hoyopan Cave for the first time, he was able to notice right away on the floor of the cave evidences suspecting that it may have been a burial cave in ancient times. A decision was made to explore the walls of the cave on the following day by checking the outdoor surroundings and entrances and exits to the caves. Indeed, the cave was full of materials of ritual earthenware vessels,



Ancient paganito ritual image 800 A.D. recovered by Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM in Hoyop-hoyopan Cave, Camalig, Albay

mostly broken, some burnt human bones, rusted iron implements, glass beads, and shell bracelets. None of the materials found contain porcelain, a fact that suggested that these items recovered by Fr. Kobak dated back to before 800 A.D., or even earlier.

IN ONE OF HIS WRITINGS, FR. KOBAK REMEMBERED WELL:

“Checking the walls of the cave, there was evidence of jar shards encrusted to the wall and a sign that there was a great fire in the

cave. Attempting some diggings against the walls yielded jars filled with human bones and lot of pottery all welded together as a result of fire. Making some preliminary diggings in the floor of the cave, there began to appear numerous earthenware jars, jarlets, plates of every shape and size imaginable. Also, iron spears, weapons and knives along with many colored paste beads, shell beads and some gold beads.”

Removing a large stalactite, Fr. Kobak and with some of his team from the town of Camalig, they were able to discover jarlets enveloped in them. Not far from the

entrance of the cave, after removing the calcite encrustation, they found embedded firmly earthenware images which they had to chisel out. They were successful in recovering three (3) complete images with fierce, ugly, frightening features. Several others had the heads and bodies separated or broken-up. One of the earthenware pieces which was complete was an image in a sitting position with a seeming drum or an agong on his lap. This ancient image was wearing a pudong or an ancient headdress, with large protruding ears, some sort of ritual anito or diwata.



Archaeological recoveries from the Hoyop-hoyopan Cave in Brgy. Cotmon, Camalig, Albay dating back to the pre-Tenth century or even much earlier. Cave as an ancient Bikolano Burial Site discovered by Cantius J. Kobak, OFM in January 1973.

HELPFUL TO FELLOW SCHOLARS

Fr. Kobak helped two Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) scholars by loaning them his microfilmed manuscripts. He was particularly helpful to fellow historians like Dr. Bruce Cruickshank and Dr. William Henry Scott.

Dr. Cruickshank's Samar 1768-1898 was the first extensively documented research on the local history of Samar Island. In the Introduction of this Samar book, Dr. Cruickshank recognized Fr. Kobak as "the first serious historian of Samar".

As for Dr. Scott, he was able to reconstruct the sixteenth-century Philippine culture and society with the help of sources solely provided by Fr. Kobak. Dr. Scott was the book author of *Barangay: Sixteenth-century Philippine Culture and Society*.

RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES

IN September 1989, Fr. Kobak left the Philippine Islands after some thirty (30) years of missionary efforts. He returned to the United States and was appointed chaplain of St. Anne's Rest Home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

There he continued his research and writing on Samar history and culture, which coverage he expanded to Leyte after he had completed the volumes of Fr. Alcina's manuscripts.

Fr. Kobak collaborated with Dr. Rolando O. Borrinaga, a Professor at the University of the Philippines, in translating Manuel Artigas y Cuerva's *Reseña dela Provincia de Leyte* to English. Fr. Kobak and Prof. Borrinaga never met in person as they were only exchanging emails. But despite of the geographical distance from each other, they were able to successfully worked on and translated Artigas book.



With fellow Franciscan Friars during the first historical expedition of Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM (rightmost in this photo) that began just outside Calbayog City. They had to cross the river to the North.

ADVISE TO CANCER PATIENTS

Fr. Kobak suffered from cancer for two years from 2002 to 2004. In one of his last emails to Prof. Borrinaga, he wrote the following reassuring message with a universal appeal, which he allowed to be shared to others. Fr. Kobak wrote:

"Try helping your friends with the Big 'C.' Not an earnest wish or demand for healing; it will not happen. Life may be extended and stretched [only] for some time.

"The best, from our Christian stance is: Lord, Your will be done!

"This orientation makes one totally free. No scheming, no hassles, no worry what will happen, how soon, how quickly, etc. If I set my heart on struggling for healing or miracle, hoping for it, [and] praying for

it does not get me anywhere. I would not be free; I would have imprisoned myself, shackled [by my] healing wish.

"Due to our broken human nature... God permits matters to take its course...

"I am of this conviction and orientation: God's will be done... His choice.

"Although the ups-and-downs are with me, I am not really troubled. I know what is coming. When St. Francis heard of his near-death illness, he shouted with joy: 'Welcome, Sister Death!'

"Death cancels out all cancers, all pain, and grant us eternity and perfect joy.

"I am fortunate: I know what is coming and it's coming slowly. Thus, I have precious time to look back at my life...

"Time for more prayer, meditations, reflection, spiritual reading, Scripture

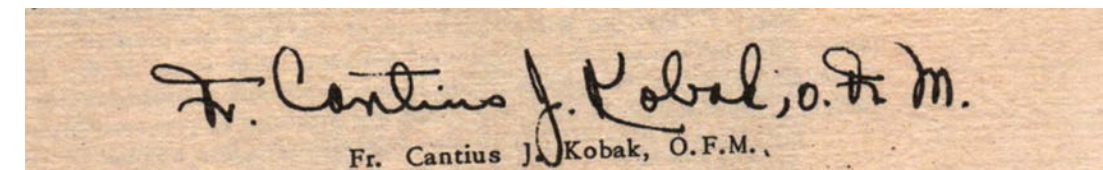
reading.

"I have time to make apologies to those whom I have hurt and write appreciatively to many for their [acts of] goodness and kindness. That's the way to go. Honestly, it is an adventure."

FINAL DAYS

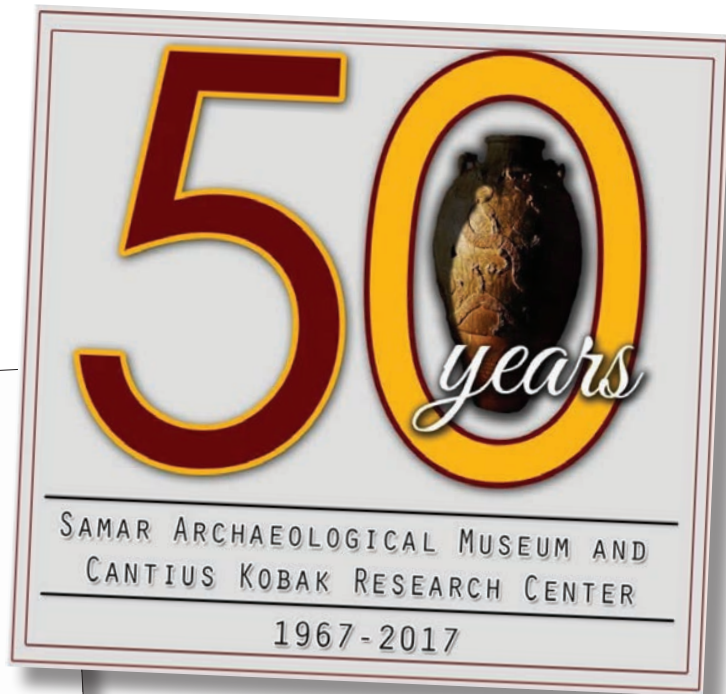
WHEN Prof. Borrinaga was done editing the Artigas book and it was ready for publication, the next day, August 15, 2004, Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM welcomed Sister Death at the age of 74. He was buried on August 20 at the Franciscan cemetery of the Assumption Province in Pulaski, Wisconsin.

Their translation work *The Colonial Odyssey of Leyte (1521-1914)* won the 2006 National Book Award for Translation from the Manila Critics Circle.

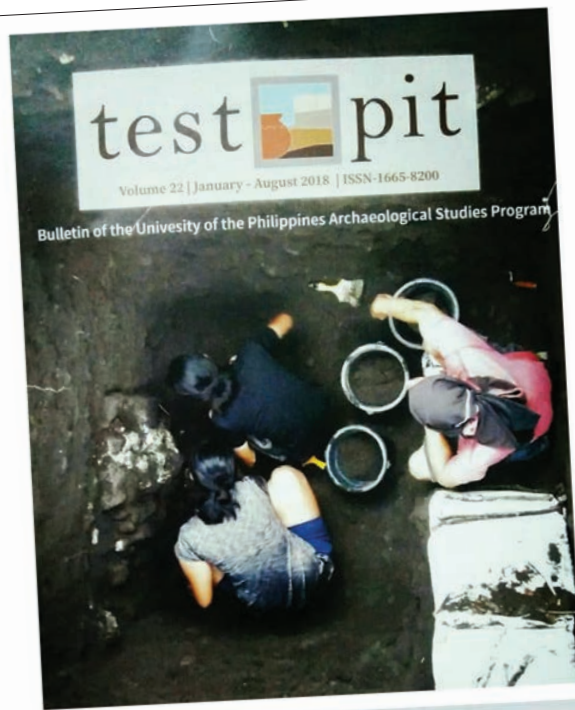


Signature of the greatest 'Historian of Samar'

The golden anniversary logo of the Samar Archaeological Museum of Christ the King College



Cover of the coffee table book on the local history of Calbayog. Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM was first to be mentioned in the Acknowledgment page of the Calbayog Coffeetable Book published by the City Government of Calbayog in 2008. Samar historians, researchers and writers were very much grateful to Fr. Kobak for they said: "... he cleared the way for our historical journey... as he was consumed by collecting documents on Samar, translating most of them into English (which made research easier)."

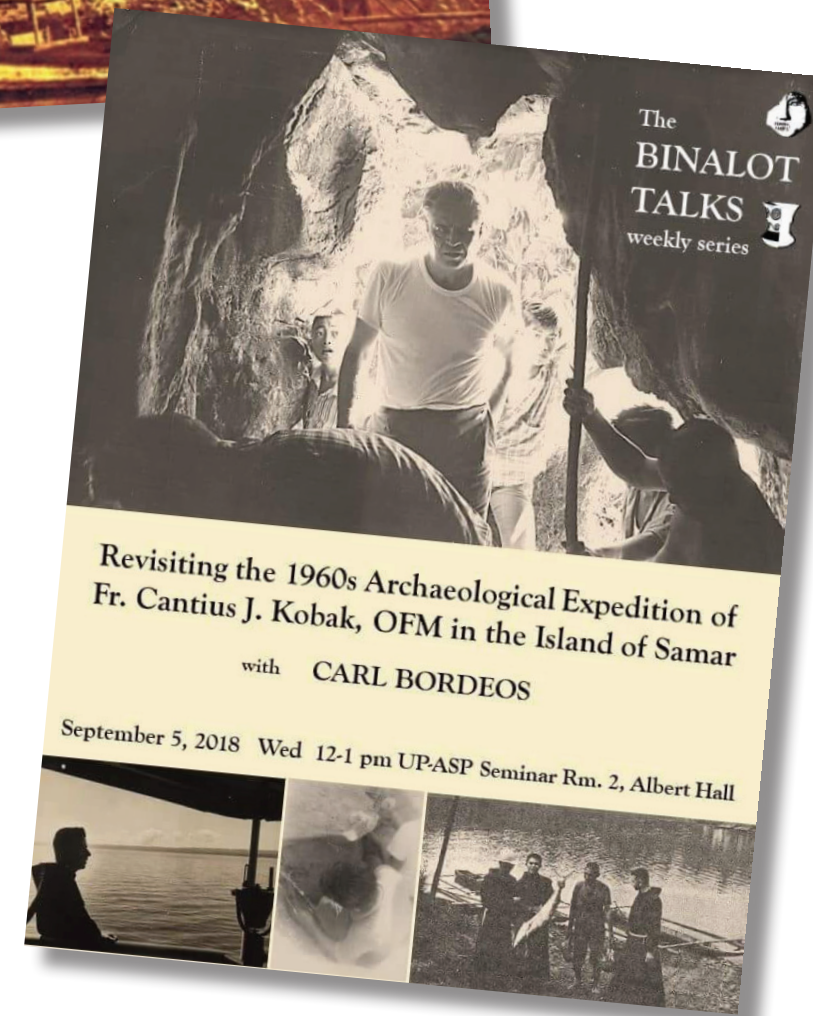


Short biography of Fr. Kobak published in the Test Pit, the Official Bulletin of U.P. Archaeological Studies Program

Cantius J. Kobak, OFM: Founder of CKC Museum

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Carl is the current Curator of the Samar Archaeological Museum,
Christ the King College in Calbayog City, Samar.
He was recently elected as the President
of the Eastern Visayas Association of Museums (EVAM).

Poster of the talk given by the author at the Archaeological Studies Program of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City



The book is dedicated to the memory of Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM.

BOOK SIGNING

Samar Archaeological Museum
Christ the King College
Calbayog City
November 9, 2017
9:00 am

50 years
SAMAR ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM
CHRIST THE KING COLLEGE
CALBAYOG CITY, SAMAR

One of the Book Launch and Signing organized by the Samar Archaeological Museum of Christ the King College

The lecture on the Archaeology of the Philippines and Samar with prominent archaeologists Dr. Victor J. Paz and Emil Robles

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE PHILIPPINES AND SAMAR

With
Dr. Victor J. Paz and Emil Robles
University of the Philippines
Archaeological Studies Program

at Christ the King College, Calbayog City
28 June 2019 (Friday), 8:00 am to 10:00 am
*photo courtesy of Christ the King College - Samar Archaeological Museum



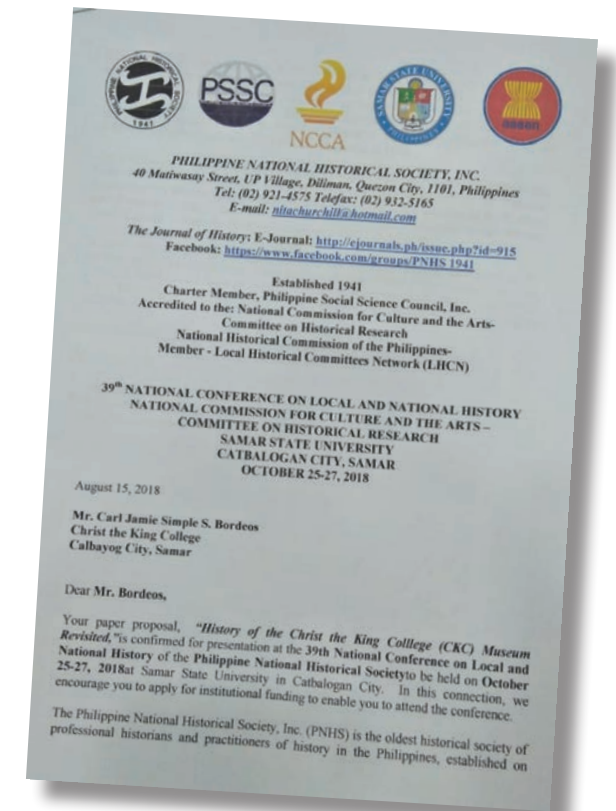
One of the paper presentations done by the author during the Philippine-Spanish Friendship Day Conference held at the University of San Carlos in Cebu City.



Surat Binisaya Lectures by U.P. Prof. Rolando O. Borrinaga at Christ the King College, Calbayog City, Samar, last November 9, 2017



Some of the country's archaeologists from the University of the Philippines



Confirmation letter from the Philippine National Historical Society (PNHS) wherein the 'History of the Christ the King College Museum' was presented in the National Conference on Local and National History.



Archaeology Excavation Simulation at Christ the King College to stimulate the interests of cultural workers, some faculty and student participants organized by CKC Museum and UP-ASP



Franciscan Fathers celebrated the Eucharistic Mass during the 50th Anniversary of the Christ the King College Museum.



Former Samar Governor Sharee Ann Tan, Mr. Michael Cristobal of the Provincial Tourism Office, CKC Museum Curator Carl S. Bordeos, and University of the Philippines (U.P.) Professor Dr. Rolando O. Borrinaga inside the CKC Museum.



Cultural workers and some local historians in attendance during the Golden Anniversary celebration of the CKC Museum.



Dr. Rosalina Paragas of Christ the King College and Dr. Alma Marino of the University of Eastern Philippines with their former mentor, Fr. Cantius J. Kobak, OFM



Student council/government officers from both Junior and Senior High School departments got to experience conducting museum tours to their fellow students.



Seminarians with Lay Instructors after their CKC Museum Tour.



For the past ten (10) years since its reopening, CKC Museum has conducted several museum tours to students and teachers.



CKC Museum also received foreign visitors yearly like this group of Chinese.

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PHOTO CREDITS

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 1949 Photo of young Fr. Cantius Kobak : U.P. Prof. Rolando O. Borrinaga
 1959 Photo of Fr. Cantius Kobak : The Chronicle of BVM Assumption Province
 Inside Photos : CKC Samar Archaeological Museum
 : CKC Research & Publication Office
 : Prolepsis Journal



Embassy
of the Republic of Poland
in Manila

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Mr. Carl Jaime Simples S. Bordeos, holder MAEd, worked with Christ the King College for eight years, where he holds different functions: Curator of the Samar Archaeological Museum, Editor-in-Chief of Prolepsis, CKC's Official Research Journal; and Research Director of the Cantius Kobak Research Center. He was President of the Eastern Visayas Association of Museums, one of the Board of Directors for the Regional Tertiary Schools Press Advisers' Association, member of the Philippine National Historical Society, Philippine Association of Institutions for Research, Association of Scholarly Peer Reviewers, and Association of Scholarly Editors. He also presented research papers in regional and national conferences. At present, he serves as Secretary of the National Committee on Museums, National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

Photo Cover: CKC Samar Archaeological Museum & Cantius Kobak Research Center

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This publication was published by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Manila using funds of the Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Published by Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Manila, 9th Floor, Del Rosario Law Centre, 21st Drive corner 20th Drive, Bonifacio Global City, City of Taguig 1630, Metro Manila, phone: +63 2 53182700, e-mail: manila.amb.sekretariat@msz.gov.pl