FRIAR BOTOD
Graciano Lopez Jaena

1 “Who is Botod?”

2 “Look at him, there he goes, he is there in the Plaza, that plump friar who is talking with a woman beside the trunk of the almendre tree! Do you recognize him?”

3 “No.”

4 “Look well towards the center of the plaza, look across it, and fix your gaze on that small tower of bamboo and nipa that is the belfry of the town. At the stairs, also made of bamboo and nipa, grow various luxuriant young almond trees, and beside the trunk of the largest trees and under its shade is Friar Botod, talking angrily with a woman. Do you see him now?”

5 “Yes, yes, I see him. He is a barbarian. How he frowns! The girl is not bad: but by what I see, by his movements and grimaces, Friar Botod, the devil, has a bestial look. What do I see? Now he raises his stick in a threatening manner.”

6 “He scares the girl so that she will grant him his wishes.”

7 “Will this rogue of a friar eat this girl?”

8 “He is capable of it. See the crowd of small boys who are leaving the parochial school, naked, some from the waist down, others from the waist up, running towards his Reverence to kiss his hand. The surrounded friar commands them in a scornful manner; the boys run away frightened.”

9 “But, look, look! The shameless friar has slapped the girl twice... Hmm... She falls down on her knees at his feet, looks as if she were asking his pardon. She kisses his hand. Poor girl. He leads her away... the bad friar. What a brute, what a detestable person. But you permit and suffer the same abuses against the honor of this weak person, victim of the brutal force of this cynical friar.

10 “We are hardened to this sight; it happens all the time.”

11 “But what does this religious devil do in God’s world? He is the priest of this town.”

12 “A priest! A friar is a priest! I did not believe that the friars are parish priest in the Philippines. They told me, and I never believed it.”

13 “then see it for yourself and be convinced.”

14 “In my country there came a time when we kicked them out.”

15 “There is no more reedy, my friend; you must give the morcilla (black sausage) as you give it to dogs.”

16 “All things come to an end and all debts must be paid, says a proverb; the day will come and woe to them. Meanwhile, let us leave everything which prolongs it.”
“This is horrible, worse than China, a thousand times worse than Warsaw. Ah, let us leave these sad ideas, let us go near and see the rascally friar.”

“Jesus, Jesus! How terrible, ho ugly! ...He looks like a seal.”

“What a comparison friend!”

“Yes, yes, a seal, a seal without whiskers.”

“Well said.”

“Let us describe a seal—I mean a friar—so that the whole world will know him.”

Like this.

Friar Botod is not called so because it is his proper name nor his family name.

*Botod* means big abdomen, fat belly. The town nicknamed him so because of his immense paunch.

His baptismal name is Ano (anus) because he was born on St. Ann’s day; but he gets furious and very angry when he is called Friar Ano, preferring that they call him Botod rather than Ano.

It is then Friar Botod or Friar Ano Aragones, son of unknown parentage, who was found near the vicinity of Eber by the stairs of the church of Pilar on a stormy night by a certain mule driver who passed by that place on his way from work.

He educated the boy as well as he could; he wanted to teach the child his trade, but at the age of fourteen the boy ran away from the house of his aged foster father, and after walking and walking, he arrived at Valladolid, where he entered the convent of the Augustinian fathers.

Not quite twenty-one years of age, he was sent by his superiors to the Philippines, to which he brought his boorish ways.

He looked like a dead mosquito; but after being ordained and singing his first mass, after five years in the country, eating bananas and papayas and being angry and being called a priest in a town as important as this, he came out of his shell. He changed completely. He is a very valuable man.

He knows more than Lope, and he has more grammar than Santillan.

There you get a sketch of the birth and novitiate of Friar Botod and his stay during his first years in the Philippines.

[Lopez Jaena here describes the Physical appearance of the friar and concludes that Friar Botod looks like a well-fed pig who eats, drinks, sleeps and thinks of nothing but how to satisfy his carnal appetites.]

Look, he is leaving the convento (parochial house) again accompanied by that young girl who is sobbing and crying bitterly. Friar Botod is petting her, consoling her, but
she is insensible and indifferent toward it all. She continues crying and being
overcome by fear, obeys and follows the friar automatically.”

35 This time they don’t leave the convent alone; following them are some young girls,
very beautiful, very young; others are grown up already, but all are beautiful and
well-dressed. He now enters an omnibus to take them for a ride and a picnic.”

36 “But who are these young girls and why does he have them in his convent, the Fray
Botod?”

37 “These are his canding-canding.”

38 “Who are these canding-canding?”

39 “In the Spanish language canding means goats.”

40 “If you don’t explain it to us more clearly I will not be able to unravel the story. Why
does this devilish friar have in his power these innocent creatures and why are these
angelic-looking girls called little goats?”

41 They are called little goats simply because in time when they mature... you hear it, do
you understand now? He has them in his power because they come from poor
families. Under the pretext of educating them in the Christian doctrine, the
Catechism, reading, writing and other skills, he takes them from their homes, fooling
the unfortunate parents, or even using force.”

42 “But isn’t there a woman teacher in town?”

43 “Yes, but the woman is of the same tribe as Fray Botod.”

44 “This is unheard of! Horrible! But why don’t they denounce this barbarity of Boboo
or this lascivious friar to the government?”

45 “There is nobody in town who wants to meddle. Oh! The one who dares...

46 “I do not wonder because since I was born I have not left this town but from what I
have heard of the others, it is not venturing too far to infer that this practice is
common.

47 “Wretch! What villainy! In that manner the young buds open up near the heartless,
soulless, friar, having the same fate as that of the bayaderas of India.”

48 [An explanation of the bayaderas of India follows. They are women kept by the
Brahmins, supposedly for religious reasons but actually for their own gratification.]

49 [For entertainment, Botod plays monte and burro with the town’s rich but he never
loses. The indios let him win; otherwise he is in a bad mood.]

50 How does his “Reverence” discharge his duties towards his parishioners’ souls?

51 Tilin, tilin, tilin—a loud sound of the bell is heard at the door of the convent.

52 “Open, boy.”
53 The boy brings into the gambling room an old man, who walks slowly as if he had come from a long distance.

54 “Good evening, sir.”

55 “What do you want?”

56 “Confession, sir.”

57 “Go and call the assistant, father Marcelino.”

58 “Not here, sir.”

59 “What do you want?”

60 “Confession, sir.”

61 “Go and call the assistant, father Marcelino?”

62 “Not here, sir.”

63 “What do you mean, not here?”

64 “Father Marcelino, sir, is in the other confessional.”

65 “Then wait for him.”

66 “I cannot wait, sir.”

67 “Why can’t you wait, you rogue, you savage.”

68 “Because the sick person, sir, is dying. He will die.”

69 “Then let him die and let him go to hell. I am not hearing confessions.”

70 “Sir, pity, pity, sir.”

71 “Go, tell him to make an Act of Contrition and I will give him absolution from her.”

72 “Sir, sir.”

73 “Go rogue, do not bother me anymore. I am losing, damn Jack! Oh, brute, go. Boy, open the door for this old man.”

74 You can have a good idea here of how Fr. Botod regards his religion—

75 He leaves a sick Christian who is asking for the last rites of the church to die without confession because of a Jack of Clubs.

76 After the death.

77 “Sir, that one died.”
“Well, and what?”

“The family wants, sir, that three priests get the corpse from the house and a Requiem Mass be said for him.”

“Does the family of the dead person have much money?”

“No, just enough, sir, the family wants three priests.”

“I will do it; but you can’t have three priests.”

“The wife, sir, wants Father Marcelino to be the main priest.”

“No, I don’t like it. These things belong to me and do not concern the assistant at all.”

“But, sir...”

“Nothing doing.”

“Well, sir, how much sir?”

“One hundred and fifty pesos, second class funeral with an old cape with silver.”

“Three priests, sir?”

“Three? It can’t be; I alone am worth three.”

“Father Marcelino, sir, asks only fifty pesos for three priests, and a first class funeral.”

“You, with your assistant, can go to hell. You are talking to the wrong party. Father Marcelino is a scoundrel.”

“Pardon, sir.”

“Go bring the money. If you do not come with the money, your dead will not be buried. Do you understand?”

“Very well, sir, I will consult the family.”

“Whom will you consult? No, bring the hundred fifty pesos. If not, the corpse will rot in your house, and you and your whole family will go to jail.”

“Sir (in a repentant tone), sir, he does not have much money, sir, the dead person.”

“Go and ask the rest of the relatives to lend you money.”

“They don’t want to lend it, sir.”

“Go away, go away. Sell the dead man’s rice field and you will have money. Look for a loan company, you idler. If not, I won’t bury your corpse.”
“Very well, sir.”

He kisses the hand of the priest and leaves the poor man. Three hours later, the assistant priest, knowing the friar very well and that he will be the object of insults, arms himself with a strong drink and creates a scandal.

With a glass of alcohol and *tuba* which he mixed well, Father Marcelino goes straight to the convent.

The assistants of the secular order step themselves in vices to the same extent as the friars themselves. The bad examples begin to spread. The Indian priests follow the examples of their superiors, the friars. They become as wicked as they, or worse.

It is said then that Father Marcelino went to look for Friar Botod, planning to hit the chubby-cheeked “Reverence” in the abdomen.

Father Botod, foreseeing that his assistant would be drunk and what he would do, ordered the boy to close the convent with an expressed order not to let the assistant in.

Father Marcelino, doubly irritated by this measure, shouts loudly at the door of the convent, shocking the people.

“Come down, come down, Botod, if you are not afraid, friar without shame, you filthy, stingy vile, bad man, see, see what I will do. I will break your neck! Animal! Friar, coward, you do not have a bit of shame.”

Similar insults and others spurt out of that mouth, smelling of alcohol and *tuba*.

Fr. Botod does not utter a word against these diatribes, but after three days, the father assistant is called by the bishop and locked up in the Seminary.

The corpse is given a pompous funeral but the family has gone into debt.

[As host, he entertains visitors at the expense of the townspeople. As money lender, he lends money but forces the tao to pay him back with cavans of rice, the price of which he dictates.]

How does he think and boast?

Preaching:

“Indios, laborers, we are all rich in Spain. There on that soil of the Virgin, nobody is poor. We all wade in gold.”

“Jesus, what a liar is this friar.”

Botod continues.

“We came here to these barbaric lands to conquer souls for heaven, in order to be dear to our great Father San Agustin.”
“Keep still, Manola,” exclaims a Spaniard who happens to hear this nonsense of Fr. Botod.

He continues the sermon.

“We have come to civilize you, serfs, indios, carabaos, and illiterates. You are all slaves of Spain, of Father San Agustin. Do you understand? Amen.”

It is the first time that Fr. Botod has occupied the pulpit during his fifteen years of being a priest, and all he does is to hurl a lot of insults.

[He eats like a pig and is fond of pepper, luya and other sexual stimulants.]

Between a Kastila and his “Reverence”:

“Father Botod, why don’t you educate, provide and endow the town with good instruction?”

“It doesn’t suit me, countryman.”

“Your mission is to instruct the country which you administer spiritually”

“Political reasons forbid us. The day when the Indio becomes educated and knows how to speak Spanish, we are lost.”

“Why, father?”

“Because they will rebel against us and will fight the integrity [sic] of the country.”

“I don’t believe it. You will be the ones who will lose your substance and easily get gains, but Spain…”

“But why, are we not the same Spain? Go, go, go! The interest of the friars is the interest of Spain. We cannot go back to the old ways.”

How does the friar punish?

Barbarously.

Because a man did not work three days in the hacienda, he deprived him of salary and gave the unhappy laborer fifty lashes on his bare buttocks.

See it:

“Oy, tao, why didn’t you come to work for three days?”

“My wife is sick, sir.”

“Oy, boy.”

“Sir.”
“The bench and the whip, *ala, ala, hapa, hapa* (stretch him out, stretch him out).”

“Sir, sir, my wife is sick, my wife is sick!”

“You lie; *ala, hapa!*”

The poor unfortunate lies down flat keeping his mouth above the bench. Fray Botod at the same time takes off the man’s pants and his underwear, tying his head and feet to the bench.

“And you, sacristan, get the whip and give him fifty lashes.”

You should know that the punishment is in three measures, that is, that it is not fifty but one hundred fifty lashes.

What brutality!

“Enough sir, enough sir, *aruy, aruy, aruy!* It hurts, sir, enough, sir, enough!”

“Keep quiet, brute, animal. Boy bring the hot peppered vinegar.”

Over the body lacerated from the lashes, the inhuman friar pours the vinegar with the pepper in it, rubbing the vinegar and making the unfortunate man see stars.

“Compassion, compassion sir, enough, Padre, *aruy, aruy, aruy!*”

The poor laborer is doubling up because of the pain, trying to untie himself.

After such a cruel operation, the sacristan applies the rest of the lashes until he completes the fifty.

Terrible moments! The man doubles up again, a nervous spasm chokes him—groans, moans die out in his throat.

The friar in his cruelty is amusing himself, laughing like a fool.

Sad reflections of the past Inquisition! Fr. Botod is worse than a hyena.

(1874)
