

ETHNOHISTORY AND CULTURE CHANGE AMONG THE BAGOBOS: Some Preliminary Findings*

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Introduction

Ethnohistory is essentially the welding of contemporary ethnic data to information obtained from historical documentation.¹ Such an approach enables one to probe historical meaning or significance over and above the historical records, thereby enhancing one's research to the point where one is allowed to traverse the historical continuum from one end to the other, or from past to present.

In another sense, ethnohistory is the collective experience of an ethnic group. The word ethnic refers to certain cultural, lingual, or physical characteristics that pertain to a group of individuals. Such agglomeration is usually small, and the term ethnic group in the context of modern societies denotes minority groups, those small enclaves of traditional and pre-modern communities that have endured and are sometimes regarded as exotic and troublesome survivors of a long, forgotten past.

The case for ethnohistory in Philippine historical writing is founded on one of the more critical issues in Philippine historiography today. Heretofore, Philippine history has strained to be understood in terms of what is historically meaningful to Filipinos. The historic past purports to be a collective past, the totality of what is considered as the common experience of the Filipino as a people or nation.

Yet, the Filipino past is not a single, homogeneous experience. There has been a variety of historical stimuli to elicit a variety of historical responses and idiosyncratic experience even as the same or similar historical events produced unique responses. Ethnohistory rests its claims on Philippine ethnic plurality and seeks to understand the dynamism of ethnic traits and attributes vis-a-vis historical phenomena. The plurality of Philippine society today underlies the multiple cleavages that characterize its structure. The concept of ethnicity is that of small group identities that persist in spite of and at times, in utter disregard of the preeminent idea of nation or state. The challenge of

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¹Francis A.J. Ianni, "Time and Place as Variables in Acculturation Research," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 60, No. 1, Part I (Feb., 1958), p. 41.

ethnohistory is the challenge for every Filipino to grasp the totality and vastness of human experience. The totality and homogeneity of historical experience are not one and the same thing.

The Bagobos at the Time of Spanish Contact

The origin of the Bagobos lies, up to this time, veiled in anonymity. The state of pre-historical and archeological research in Davao or for that matter the whole of Mindanao is such that historical material regarding the origin of the various indigeneous groups has remained niggardly and therefore insufficient. One of the two known archeological surveys conducted in southeastern Mindanao was the archeological excavation of the Talikud Caves of Davao Province in 1972.² The survey was reportedly a part of a long term program to explore and test archeologically the broad triangular area from southeast Mindanao, northern Sulawesi, and the western end of Irian Jaya including Moluccas in order to investigate the movement of Austronesian-speaking peoples as well as the cultures that are found in the spread of Malay tradition.

The explorations in the Davao area were conducted in the provinces of Davao province, Davao Oriental and Davao del Sur. The specific sites were some caves found on the islands facing Davao City. Some of the findings are significant in that they purport to pertain to the pre-history of peoples in southeast Mindanao, and Solheim has proposed that the area of origin of proto-Austronesians was somewhere within the island area of Palawan island in the west, southern Mindanao, Sulawesi, and Irian Jaya.

By and large the most significant finds in the Davao area were the rock sites of Talikud island said to be the earliest sites of the excavation. The shell finds at the Talikud shelter were found to have been used over a considerable period of time. A few flaked stones not natural to the shelter suggested a flaked skill tradition the same as that of the west coast of Palawan and the Sulu Archipelago.

²Wilhelm Sollheim 11, Avelino Legaspi and J. Neri, S.J. *Archeological Survey in Southeastern Mindanao*, Monograph Series No. 8 of the National Museum of the Philippines and the University of Hawaii. (Manila, 1979).

The Spanish Conquest of Davao

The conquest of Davao in 1849 allowed the Spaniards to make inroads into the Gulf's vast interiors in search of trade and native converts who could be won over to populate the Christian settlements that were soon to be established all over the Gulf area.³ Davao at the time was inhabited by native Muslim groups and those whom the Spaniards termed *Infieles*, the natives who were neither Muslims nor Christians. Among these the Bagobos constituted one of the more numerous groups some of whom became the first Christian converts.

Up until the early 1880's, the Spaniards had not sufficiently acquainted themselves with their Bagobo converts to be able to describe them with any degree of familiarity except to note with mounting apprehension the fact that the Bagobos practiced human sacrifice. Towards the ends of this decade however, the presence of a more permanent missionary i.e., a parish priest in Davao enabled the missionaries to observe the Bagobos with a little more intimacy. By then a breakthrough has been made in the recorded history of the Bagobos.

The Bagobos were found to be the principal inhabitants of the Davao mountain range and in particular of Mt. Apo, a dormant volcano in whose folds the Bagobos built their *rancherias* or farmhouses. Along the coast they also lived in settlements such as Lobo, Binugao, Cautit, Melilla etc., and in some like Daron, they lived alongside other native groups. Both upland and lowland Bagobos were known to practice human sacrifice quite frequently, the object of their propitiatory activities being a local deity called Mandarangan, who together with his consort, Darago, was believed to live in the great volcano itself. The crater of this volcano is covered by a dense fog during most of the day and from its bowels columns of sulphur and smoke continually shoot up. Such a sight must have been most awesome for the Bagobos, evoking among them the first and primal stirrings of the ineffable. A Jesuit missionary in the 1860's once described the crater as resembling an immense sacrificial altar.

The first visit of the Spaniards to a Bagobo house was in the house of Manib, Datu of Sibulan. The visitors found themselves in a windowless tree-house, its dimly lit interiors offering few comforts. A platform like elevation was the only architectural feature that intruded on the simplicity and modesty of the single chamber. On this platform, the guests were received by Manib, surrounded by his family. In the presence of visitors, he

³The conqueror of Davao was Don Jose Oyanguren, a native of Guipuzcoa who came to the Philippines in 1825 and was an experience trader in Caraga, an old Spanish province in the Pacific coast. Oyanguren was awarded a concession to pacify Davao for the Spanish government in return for exclusive rights of trade. The Decree of Feb. 27, 1847 made him governor of Davao for 10 years and granted a monopoly of its commerce for the first six years. See Emma Blair and James Robertson (eds.). *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 43 (Cleveland: A.H. Clark Co., 1903), p. 232.

took care to impress them with a display of his household wealth. The platform on which he and his family sat was covered with native woven cloth or blankets while pieces of large Chinese porcelain plates were conspicuously distributed at various points in the room along with the *agongs* and other musical instruments. The plates and the *agongs* were items of great value among the Bagobos whose brideswealth were usually exacted in these highly priced goods. A native iron forge was likewise noted by the Spaniards.

The Spaniards were more impressed with the ancient genealogy of Manib, and his father Pangilan, a very old man at this time. The Spanish missionary placed the age of Pangilan at about a hundred years. As a young man he was said to have made a wedding present of 100 pairs of human ears, a token of a hundred human victims, to his bride. A few years later, when Pangilan died, Manib together with all his relatives refused to lift the *lalaon* or period of mourning until seven slaves had been sacrificed and their blood poured over Pangilan's grave.

The Bagobos were distinguished from other native groups as being the most fastidious dressers. The Bagobo was always dressed elegantly from head to foot. Men and women were adorned with earrings, necklaces, bracelets, armlets, and anklets of beads, shells, or precious metals such as gold. Around the waist, they usually wore a wide belt of cloth on which are sewn hundreds of tiny bells cascading from the torso so that the least movement produced a pleasant and most fascinating sound. They matched their ornaments with a serious and regal air about them.

By now, it had become apparent that the Bagobo social structure was dominated by a warrior class known as *magani*, the Datu himself being a chief *magani* among them. It was the Datu as *magani* who decided when to proclaim the yearly festivities that ended in sacrificing enemies and other human victims. Only *magani* participated in the rites of *paghuaga*. Although the social organization recognizes the religious role of a shaman in the *mabalian* who performed the lesser rituals and ceremonies, it was the Datu who as chief *magani* officiated in the most important rites of the community.

A man's aim in life was to become a *magani*, which was itself the very essence of manhood. He who has killed a number of his enemies was set off from the rest of the community by certain special tokens. He who has killed two or more persons was distinguished for the deed by being allowed to wear the blood-red shirt and the chocolate colored headgear. Those who have killed four were privileged to wear the blood-red trousers, and those who have killed up to six wore the complete outfit of blood-red shirt, trousers, headgear and in addition carry a small bag of the same color in which are placed betel nut and lime for chewing. The missionaries worked hard to stamp out the practice but confessed that their efforts towards this bore little success.

Patterns of Settlement and Livelihood

The patterns of settlement and livelihood among the Bagobos in the 19th century

were strongly reminiscent of those that the Spaniards first saw in the Philippines in the 16th century. Instead of compact and permanent villages, the Bagobos lived in farmhouses set far apart from one another. The fields were planted to rice, abaca and sugarcane. Among the men were artisans such as goldsmiths and carpenters while the women were weavers of abaca, piña, tindog, and wrought fine embroideries.

Almaciga, a local resin was the principal forest product which together with wax constituted the chief exports of the region. The Bagobos were known as keen traders and usually produced an excess of local manufacturers for purposes of trade. They traded hemp made from the native abaca, betelnut, knives, and other crafted tools as well as weapons from the native forge. Bagobo knives were highly priced for their fine craftsmanship. The incoming trade with the Muslims and Christian brought back iron pots, copper wires, Chinese porcelain, salt, and animals. Aside from the coastal trade with the Muslims, Bagobos also traded with other native tribes in organized trade parties that visited other settlements after the customary notices had been given.

Acculturation: The Contact Situation

From the start, the colonization and Christianization of the Bagobos was an uphill struggle that produced no appreciable gains for the first twenty or thirty years. This was largely due to the sporadic and intermittent patterns of contact that hardly enabled the Spanish presence to make any impact. Town-making proceeded at a slow, uncertain pace while the conversion of the native inhabitants lagged behind weighted down as it were by a malady chronic to the pacification of the Philippines in the early centuries of conquest — the *remontados*, those whom the Spaniards branded as apostates of the Catholic faith and fugitives of the Christian *reducciones* or settlements.

An exception to this dismal and frustrating procedure was the settlement of Lobu. This was also a large coastal settlement of Bagobos along the coast of the Gulf which in the 1880's came close to fulfilling Spanish dreams of a model Christian settlement populated by native Bagobo converts. Lobu had fresh water springs, an excellent anchorage, and a population that was more or less sedentary and already raising crops such as corn, tobacco, bananas, and root crops. In 1884, Lobu became the town of Sta. Cruz. The ceremonies in the founding of the new town were graced by the presence of the Governor of Davao and his wife and made more impressive by the sight of the Spanish gunboat, "Gardoqui," which brought the Spanish governor and his wife to the shores of the new town.

The founding of Lobu into the town of Sta. Cruz owed much to the efforts of Fr. Matthew Gisbert, a Jesuit missionary who visited Davao for the first time in 1880, having inherited the charge of converting its *infeles* from Fr. Quirico More of the same Society of Jesus. Fr. More had been the missionary of Davao for some time and had already built a chapel in the Bagobo settlement of Tuban. In the same year, Fr. Gisbert was able to persuade the Bagobos of Tagabuli, Binaton, and Balalon to form a *reduccion* in Lobu. The

priest had agreed to live with the Bagobos in Lobu for a time without endeavoring to root out their "infidelity" i.e., paganism. It must have been this condition that softened the resistance of the Bagobos and made them receptive to the idea of resettlement. In addition, the missionary had brought his own provisions: plenty of rice and other supplies. The Bagobos agreed to work in weekly turns receiving a share of the Father's goods at the end of the week. After a month's work they were able to clear a wide path from the shore to the river Tabing, their source of drinking water. Then a chapel, dedicated to St. Joseph, was built. A school teacher, Angel Brioso, was appointed for the education of the children of the new settlement.⁴

In 1898, when the Jesuits of Mindanao were called back to Manila due to the outbreak of the Philippine revolution, the town of Sta. Cruz was left in the care of Angel Brioso. For reasons unexplained in the missionary account, Angel Brioso, in collusion with other Visayan Christians and Muslim collaborators, destroyed the town left to his charge, melting its bell and other church items and afterwards dividing the metal between him and his friends. Brioso and his friends had previously declared themselves *insurrectos* or rebels.

When Fr. Gisbert returned to Sta. Cruz after the revolution, all that remained of his church were its posts. The greater and more productive part of the town had become the property of a certain Lt. Thomas who was the head of the first American military contingent to arrive in Sta. Cruz. The Lieutenant installed Angel Brioso as a municipal head of sorts of the town. Despite its setbacks, Fr. Gisbert was forced to concede that the town recovered and became once again prosperous by virtue of government fiat. The inhabitants were compelled to open new streets to make way for new establishments such as trading houses. The missionary account betrayed a tinge of sorrow as it noted the growing strength of Protestantism in Sta. Cruz from 1904 onwards.

The story of Sibulan was not carefully chronicled unlike that of Sta. Cruz or Lobu. Sibulan was made into a *reduccion* some time in 1876 and renamed Santillana.⁵ In 1889, Manib was arrested by *cuadrilleros* or soldiers of the colonial government for refusing to provide an auxiliary force of Bagobos to aid in the capture of a Bagobo fugitive of the *reduccion* of Astorga. Manib was likewise charged with impeding the latter's capture and was confined in the local jail for sometime.

Some Spanish authorities worried about the lack of prudence in the arrest and incarceration of a Bagobo datu with good reason. After Manib's release, word reached the Spaniards that the Bagobos had sacrificed another human victim in the highlands of Sibulan.

⁴"History of Sta. Cruz," Manuscripts signed by Fr. Matthew Gisbert. The Loyola House of Studies Archives, Quezon City.

⁵Carta del P. Pablo Pastell in "Cartas de los Padres de la Compania de Jesus de la Mision Filipinas. Vol. 2 (Manila: Los Amigos del Pais, n.d.)

lan and killed as well those who were deemed responsible for the Datu's humiliation. After this, Manib and his followers razed their fields and abandoned their *rancherías* taking care to lay traps and snares along the path of their pursuers.

Impact of Colonization

The political evolution of Davao from the Spanish *reducciones* to the American towns and trade centers meant the gradual weakening of the traditional structures. In the 1920's, Bagobo culture began yielding almost imperceptibly to change. With the death of the old datos like Manib, Bitil, and Tongkaling, the loose political system which was centered on the local rule of the datu slowly gave way to a new centralized macrostructure whose head was a strangely remote authority known as the provincial governor or the municipal mayor. Other factors such as demography and economic changes combined to force the Bagobos towards the inevitability of social and cultural transformations.

Up to 1919 the *poblacion* or center of Sta. Cruz was still a Bagobo community, the sprinkling of Visayas, Chinese, Japanese and American residents constituting a minority. The landscape was dominated by the familiar *Talisay* and *Acacia* trees and the municipal hall standing by the side of the old Catholic church as these buildings did some twenty years before in the Spanish colonial decades. Such colonial idyll however, could not long survive the implacable demands of modernization and change of the next period of occupation.

Under the Americans, more Christian settlements and centers where native goods could be traded were established. Two such trade centers were established in Sta. Cruz and Sibulan. By 1907, Japanese homesteaders and abaca planters began coming to Bagobo lands. Japanese farmholdings burgeoned all over Bagobo settlements facilitated either through marriage with Bagobo women or the contravention of laws restricting the ownership of Philippine lands.⁶

To counteract the growing strength of foreign immigration into Davao, the Commonwealth Government passed the Colonization Act of 1935 that encouraged Filipino immigration into virgin lands in Cotabato, Lanao, and Davao. In the 1930's, Sta. Cruz was mostly populated by migrant workers employed in the Japanese and American plantations. Some 132 hectares of the poblacion area were owned by American veterans of the Philippine-American War of 1898. Sta. Cruz under the Americans grew to an extensive municipality composed of the present towns of Digos, Bansalan, Hagonoy, Padada, and all the known Bagobo settlements in the modern province of Davao del Sur. In the *poblacion* itself, the average landholding amounted to about five or six hectares, but in Digos and Padada, American landholdings covered hundreds of hectares.

⁶Serafin D. Quiason, "The Japanese Colony in Davao, 1904-1941", *Philippine Sciences and Humanities Review*, (June-December, 1958), Vol. XXIII, Nos. 2-4, p. 222.

Few Bagobos, however, worked in the foreign-owned abaca plantations. At about this time, they slowly started to disappear from their residences in the lowland *poblacion*. Cases of land disputes involving native Bagobos and Visayans multiplied. The most common of such conflicts were the adaptation of coercive means to make the Bagobos clear forest lands for the new settlers and the migrant encroachments on lands already cleared by the Bagobos.⁷

When the war broke out in 1942, the migrants temporarily fled Sta. Cruz to other coastal areas farther south while the Bagobos sought the refuge of the nearby mountains. When the whole country surrendered to the Japanese in May of the same year, most of the Visayans returned to their homes in Sta. Cruz, especially when it was learned that the Japanese military would not occupy it. The Bagobos of Melilla, Binaton, and other upland areas were made to organize the local KALIBAPI under a native District President. No effective guerrilla unit could be organized in the area mainly because many Japanese civilians had intermarried with Bagobos. After Liberation in 1945, most of the plantations owned by the Americans were sold to local Filipinos in Sta. Cruz. Among them were the Almenúras and Bendigo families, formerly of Danao, Cebu City who have since then become the political leaders of the town. American anthropologists, Fay Cooper Cole and Laura Watson Benedict who had been observing the displacement of the Bagobos since 1916 noted that the ineluctable transformation of the Bagobos could not be held off for long. Some of the Bagobo experiences during the last fifty years are best told by themselves.

Life Histories

Cesar Manapol

I was born in Binaton, formerly a part of Sta. Cruz this municipality, on November 20, 1916. My father, Jose was a native of Tanjay, Negros Oriental who came to Davao in 1914 as a school teacher. He was a missionary trained in Silliman University and was a counsel and refuge of the Bagobos here in our area. My mother was a full-blooded Bagoba, whom my father met while he was a school teacher in Melilla. I also met my wife in Melilla.

The word Lobu is pronounced Lab-o and means a water source. When I was a little boy, we often came down to Lobu from our home in Binaton. All the mountains have names i.e., Karatongan, Karamagan, Boribid. I did not experience the tribal wars among the natives of Davao. I only know about them from what my elders used to tell us youngsters. According to my uncle, it was the Bilaan whom the Tagabawas (Bagobos) usually fought. These "wars" were really stealthy raids in the dead of the night rather than face-to-face combats. I also remember the trade which natives conducted with one another. Bagobos of Binaton usually traded with the "Kaolos" (Tagacaolos) and the Kalangans. When I was a little boy, we used to come down from Binaton bringing camotes and other farm produce to

⁷Interview with Amado Brillantes, retired Chief of Police of Sta. Cruz, in Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur, January 5, 1984.

be traded or bartered with the other tribes. The accustomed trading place in our area was Tuban. A trade day was agreed upon by interested parties by making arrangements with local datos. Once a date has been agreed upon, we tied a knot on a piece of string and counted the days by such knots until the appointed time. Everyone is careful not to forget this date. Whatever we brought back from the trade in Tuban was shared with our relatives who usually came around when they know you have just returned from a trade trip. This was the custom. Even datos have to share with others who have not been able to trade.

During the war, I was a soldier and therefore did not like the Japanese. Before the war it was alright. Some Bagobos were hired to work in the Japanese plantations. Sibulan, Toril, Calinan, and Binaton all had Japanese haciendas. The workers were paid in cash as well as in kind. Some were permanently employed in Japanese families and were paid about P15 monthly. Two of my Aunts, both Bagobos, Sabina and Itik, married Japanese. Many more Bagobos who were married to Japanese during the war were "big shots" in Sta. Cruz. They occupied together with their families the biggest houses here during the war. After the war, they had to leave Sta. Cruz, but their Japanese husbands provided well for them. Some have been taken to Japan.

Among the Bagobos, there were few rich people except those married to the Chinese. It is not true that a non-Bagobo can acquire or own Bagobo lands through marriage with Bagobo women. A Bagobo woman is allowed to inherit property, and in marriage it is the husband who administers their property. However, the wife continues to own the property. Among Bagobos, inheritance is transferred from parents to children, but not from wife to husband. A son-in-law would be ashamed to claim land that belongs to his wife.

During the latter part of 1944 we returned to Melilla. I became a sergeant in the police force under the Philippine Civil Affairs Units (PCAU). After the war, there were many loose firearms. Consequently, there were many incidents of armed robbery. Even Bagobos also had loose firearms, although they only used them for hunting game. In Sta. Cruz, I don't remember any outstanding criminal cases after the war. Running amok among Bagobos was common during this time. There was one case I remember — this was Buan whose wife ran away with another man. He killed two people before he was himself killed by the relatives who came to succor his victims. Before the war was certainly the better times.

Tawiling Bigkas

I was born on January 5, 1931 in Baracatan, Davao del Sur. My parents were both Bagobos, but I am married to a Visayan. When I was a little girl, this place (Sibulan) was still a forest. Most of the houses were styled according to "Binagobo" fashion. The first in our family to live here was my great-grandfather. During my father's time the family occupation was farming. My mother, like the rest of our womenfolk, occupied herself with housework and weaving. I don't remember having been scolded by my parents. I liked to play a lot.

I experienced working for the Japanese. The work was mostly clearing fields. We were paid daily in kind: three salted fish, three leaves of tobacco, and one chupa of salt. We were seldom paid in cash. During the war we lost many things: two sewing machines, our animals, and farm implements. After the war we went back to our fields and started all over again. I think the period before the war was a better time. For one thing our roads here in Sibulan were much better because the Japanese maintained them well through hard labor among us natives. There were few criminal incidents. Today the Bagobos have "awakened", and now we want our children to go school, know many things, be independent, and work our own farms.

Datu Salumay

What I remember from the past are our datos here in Salumay (Calinan, Davao City). Spanish soldiers sometimes came to talk to our datos about game and other sources of food.

I think their purpose for being here was the same as any other people — to look for one's livelihood. We Bagobos are not too interested in other people or in what other people do. In general we mind our own business and care only for our own affairs.

Our place Salumay, is surrounded by mountains and forests. The names of our mountains are Mando and Malanbo. We earn our living by farming and hunting. During this time there were only a few Cebuanos in our place. I don't remember Americans living with us in this place. During the American period, our Datu was Dumokan. At this time Bogobos in our place began to sell their lands. We were living them in Simod by the side of the Banke-rohan river.

When war broke out, I moved my family back to Salumay. Some "Filipinos" also moved with us to this place from fear of the Japanese who have already occupied the city. During this time our datu was Datu Sumba. The Japanese did not come to Salumay. We did not experience liberation in Salumay, but some Americans reached our place. They distributed clothes and food among us.

SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY BAGOBO CULTURE

During the 1975 census the Bagobo population numbered a total of 29,363, the concentrations of which are found in Davao City which claims 53% of the total population, Sta. Cruz with 26%, and the remaining 21% are found in three other municipalities of Davao del Sur.⁸ Sta. Cruz and Sibulan are political subdivisions of this province, Sibulan being a barangay of Sta. Cruz. Most, if not all, of the 15 barangays comprising Sta. Cruz today were known Bagobo settlements in the 19th century. Except for the *poblacion* or center, most of the *barangays* are in the highlands adjacent to the coast since the topography of Sta. Cruz is generally rolling and mountainous.⁹ It has a total land area of 27,960 hectares which is 6.71% of the total land area of the province.

The population of Sta. Cruz in the 1980 census is 48,272 with a density of 176 persons per square kilometer. The population is characteristically young with the ages of 44 years and below comprising 47.3% of the age structure. Consequently, the municipality has a high dependency ratio of 96.60. Moreover, 74% of children between the ages of 0-6 months were found to be suffering from various levels of malnutrition. The major occupations are employment for the *poblacion* and farming for the majority of the *barangays* including the *barangay* of Sibulan. The principal crops grown are coconut and corn. None of the *barangays* has irrigation facilities.

Sibulan is 21 kilometers distant from the *poblacion* and has a population of 2,518 most of whom are engaged in upland farming. It is accessible by jeepney from the district

⁸ *Statistical Variables*, Third Quarter 1978: A Regional quarterly publication of the National Census and Statistics Office, Davao City.

⁹ *Comprehensive Development Plan of Davao del Sur 1983-1987*. Prepared by the Provincial Development Staff of Davao del Sur.

of Toril in Davao City for the first nine or ten kilometers. The remaining three or four kilometers must be negotiated on foot along a sloping and increasingly rugged terrain. Along this road the traveller to Sibulan must negotiate three precipitous descents. The third traverses the Baracatan river which is actually no more than a mountain stream. On rainy days, this tiny stream can become a roaring gorge after an hour of heavy rain, impeding passage to Sibulan. Following the steep ascent from this river, one comes to Sibulan proper nestling high up in the Davao mountain range.

One's first eyeful of Sibulan reveals the *Barangay* Hall built close at the edge of a precipice, a basketball court, and a cluster of empty huts surrounding an open cockpit. On Saturdays, the market day of Sibulan, these empty huts come to life and are suddenly filled with people. Some arrive on horseback apparently from higher and more distant grounds. Except for some recent structures the landscape of mountain walls and rising peaks surround the newcomer with the ambience of the traditional. The panorama of native flora: the smell of bamboo, the sight of the tall and stately *durian* trees, and the verdant turf everywhere, all seem to defy the passing of time.

Yet, there are no more tree houses in Sibulan. Today's Bagobo houses are built on the ground, but foisted on piles instead of posts. The interior is usually divided into three or more sections: a receiving area with one or two wooden benches for visitors, a kitchen, and an elevated and walled-off area for sleeping quarters. Today's dwellings are also provided with windows. The house of the *barangay* captain is of the bungalow type. While the architectural types have given way to modern ones, the materials used are those that are derived from traditional sources. For roofing and walling, the old *buho*, a specie of bamboo which are plaited together for use as thatching material, is still very much in evidence. The Bagobos of Sibulan maintain that the *buho* is impervious to rain as well as sun.

On the other hand, settlement habits of old appear to have persisted. Houses are set far apart from one another. The clustering of two or more houses that are within calling distance of each other is of occasional incidence. When a group of houses are built close together this is usually because the owners are close relatives. An obvious reason for the dispersed pattern of residence is that each house is usually constructed in the midst of or adjacent to a garden of about 1000 to 2000 square meters planted to either rice or corn, some fruit trees, coconuts, bananas, and some vegetables. Such a pattern is strongly reminiscent of the *rancherias* of old which were built close to one's ricefields and in which one's immediate neighbors are family members.

Sibulan farmers are dry cultivators. Since there is no irrigation system for the entire municipality of Sta. Cruz, firing was and still is the only known means of soil cultivation. Necessarily, this has resulted in the cumulative degradation of the soil. Most of the old Sibulan folk whom I interviewed told us that the soil is not now as rich as before, and this is the reason why Sibulan folk seek a much higher ground on which to plant their rice. The affluent ones own bigger ricelands in Tabog, an almost vertical wall of green fields that rises high above Sibulan.

There are a number of small sari-sari stores selling softdrinks, beer, cigarettes, and other non-essential items. These stores are not selling basic goods since from observation each family is more or less self-sufficient in basic food such as rice and other staples. At harvest time, crops are stored in family granaries or sold at the market places in Davao City or Toril.

Today's Bagobos are predominantly Christian. Many possess Christian names which is usually a token of having received baptism either from Catholic or Protestant rites. The practice of adapting the name of one's father as a surname has gained currency, i.e., Pedro Tongkaling is the son of someone whose only name is Tongkaling. A possible exception are the names of second or third ascending generation members who are still known by only one name. A Catholic priest comes to say mass on Sundays, while the Protestant chapel is served by a resident Pastor. The present generation of Bagobos hardly react to the name of Mandarangan, unlike the older generations whose eyes would suddenly light up with an old intensity at the mention of the deity. Many Bagobos prefer to dismiss the subject by associating the old worship with works of the devil.

However, old habits die hard, and old practices become ritualized instead of merely ceasing to be. In 1913, when the American anthropologist, Laura W. Benedict attended a *Gin-Em*, the longest and most elaborate of Bagobo festivals which culminate in human sacrifice, she noticed that the Bagobos who shot a chicken as offering said a prayer in apology for not being able to offer a human victim, a tradition which had already been proscribed by the American authorities.

During the burial of the *barangay* captain in Sibulan in April this year, the son of the slain *barangay* official killed a black chick at a point when the cries and the wailings of the family seemed unbearable. He had the black chick in his hand for some time and seemed to be waiting for a signal or the right moment to kill it.

Presently, a more powerful factor that could possibly bring about drastic changes among the Bagobos would be the political situation and the increasing social as well as economic pressures that it has brought to bear upon them. The activities of both the New Peoples Army (NPA) and the military have greatly destabilized the area, the natural consequence of armed encounters between these two groups being the dislocation of non-combatants.

According to military documents,¹⁰ the first group of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CCP) was organized in Mindanao in June 1971. The group's activities were intensified in Tagum, Davao del Norte and Digos, Davao del Sur. The following year the Mindanao Regional Party Committee (MRPC) organized, and by the end of 1982, the CPP had already established seven fronts in Region XI. An ambush in Sulop, Davao del Sur on November 3, 1982 resulted in the death of Mayor Mondejar and several PC/INP

¹⁰Proposed Lecture of CG, RUC XI to the AFPCGSC, CLASS 18 on 12 Sept. 83 at Malvar Hall, AFPCGSC Military Documents at RUC Headquarters, Panacan, Davao City.

personnel. The event also signaled the start of armed hostilities in the region.

The CCP/NPA operational viability relies much on the support of the people. Reports of a system of "progressive taxation" in which each family is asked to contribute P1.50 plus a chupa of rice depending on the economic conditions of the locality, have circulated freely since 1976. When moving about across territories in which insurgent influence has been fairly established, ranking party members pass the night in the houses of sympathizers. Upon the approach of intruders or any other stranger, an alarm is made in various ways such as dropping heavy objects on the floor, ringing of bells or *agongs*, disturbing chickens and other animals.

The other disruptive element is the military itself. To contain and neutralized the insurgent threats, the Regional Unified Command for Region XI (RUC) was organized on April 18, 1983. The establishment of the RUC was a move to enhance the operational effectiveness of the military by coordinating and integrating all the Armed Forces in the Region. The first important operation was named *katatagan* which consists in a three pronged program.¹¹

- a. Phase 1 — Intensification of civil-military operations in unaffected areas to win the people to the side of the government while at the same time strengthening para-military forces and self-defense capabilities;
- b. Phase 2 — Intensification of civil-military operations in cleared areas previously influenced by the insurgents and the establishment of a civil defense force; and
- c. Phase 3 — Reconciliation. During the third phase the military will rehabilitate previously affected areas with the help of other government agencies to ensure the acceleration of socio-economic growth in the region.

Today, the presence of these competing forces strains the peace and tranquility of the Bagobos who are only now being made aware of the larger political realities around them. The advent of centralized rule has not really made itself felt among the cultural minorities until recently. The institution of the datu system as known to the Bagobos appeared to have been restricted to mediation and arbitration rather than outright rule. Up until modern times, the only familiarity that Bagobos have with political authority is that of the *datu*, a local functionary whose authority did not normally exceed the number of his followers. In the past, an offending Bagobo could lose his life to the *datu's maganis* under terms that had been specified to him by custom and tradition. The risk of losing his life to his personal enemies was probably greater than the former possibility.

Today's festering political conditions have made the Bagobo more vulnerable in his struggle for survival. They have magnified life's uncertainties by exposing him to forces over which he has neither choice nor control. In a bid to draw the Bagobo to the larger mainstream of the nation and society, the system is unwittingly making use of methods that would destroy the very milieu that nurtures him. The system claims justification

¹¹Ibid.

through a known principle of social theory, that of the mutuality between individual and society.

On the other hand, the unwholesome atmosphere is driving many Bagobos to lowland *barangays* where they are drastically and inexorably torn from their traditional lifestyles. Thus, the present disorders may yet prove to be the propelling force that could bring the Bagobos to integration or assimilation into the larger Filipino society. When that happens, it would appear that their integration has been achieved at the cost of their genuinely Filipino tradition and culture.

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