

SOCIAL HISTORY OF DAVAO AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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Introduction

I am a fifth generation member of one of the first families that established the Spanish settlement in Davao in 1848. My great, great, great grandfather, Gabriel Bangoy, was the first Cabeza of Davao during the Spanish time in 1853. My grandfather, Ciriaco R. Lizada, was the last American to be appointed by the American Military Government in the 1900s.

Perhaps it is also good to know, as a backgrounder, who were the people of Davao (City) before, during and after the Spanish established its settlement here. Davao was first inhabited by the Bagobos, one of the several tribes in Davao. In the latter part of the 1400s, Islam took its roots when Muslims settled along its coasts. In 1848, the Spaniards established the first settlement in Davao. In the 1900s, the Americans took over the colonization of Davao from the Spaniards.

These are the times, the events and the people that I will dwell on briefly based on the stories and experiences of the first, second, third, and fourth generation members of my family.

Davao At The Turn Of The Century

All throughout the Spanish occupation, the evangelization of the non-Christian tribes was a major concern of the missionaries and the settlers. From the time of the first settlers to the time of their children evangelization continued.

Vic Generoso, my Spanish teacher, wrote in the 1884 San Pedro Fiesta publication:

"...much help was given the missionary by the old time Christians, notably Aniceto Bustamante, Damaso Suazo, Teodoro Palma Gil, Ciriaco R. Lizada and Calixto Cervantes..."

All of those mentioned were second and third generation members of the first settlers. The term "first settlers" refers to the Christian migrants who came with the Spanish colonizers to Davao at the end of the 19th century to settle and colonize Davao.

My father told us how my grandfather helped the missionary in his work.

They would cross the Bankerohan river in banca, walk up to the end of the road at Matina (Matina Golf Club), turn left towards the shore (Times Beach) and there take a banca and paddle for hours towards Daliao to convert the natives to the new faith; or... go on horseback with Teodoro Palma Gil up the hills of Mandug to be with the natives in their villages to explain Christianity.

They even reached as far as Davao del Sur in Darong together with Fr. Urios. There, in 1894, Datu Timan, a Bagobo datu and his tribe were baptized. He also told us how other relatives, like his cousin-in-law, Don Francisco Bangoy, assisted the baptism of the datu and his tribe in Tigatto.

The need to evangelize was there, as some natives still practiced human sacrifice secretly. In Toril, where the de la Cruz family decided to stay with their Bagobo friends, the same was true. One day, his Bagobo male friends passed by his house, preceded by a carabao-pulled sled, where a rather big sack was moving. Curiosity prompted him to ask what it was and he was informed that they were going to perform a tribal offering in a nearby forest. Inside the sack a blind boy was tied up and on the way to be sacrificed. Having established good rapport with the datu, my grandfather reminded him that such a practice was now prohibited. He suggested that, instead of sacrificing the blind boy, he be given to him as a gift. This the datu did. The boy became my house helper in Toril up until he was 70 years old. He stayed with us and remained loyal to my uncle until he died an old man, not knowing who his real relatives were, not even his father and mother.

The Settlement of the Pioneers

At first, the little Spanish settlement was an attraction to the surrounding natives. Bagobos and other natives came to town, some bringing along teenage boys and girls, offering them to us to work in our homes. Usually, the agreement was consummated with an exchange of dry goods. In my grandfather's house there were nine of them, working happily,

and doing all kinds of jobs such as chopping firewood and running errands.

In many houses there were "*ulipon*", which actually meant slave as they were then called. Later they became like members of the family. This was true even in the thirties. One Christmas Eve, while we were waiting for the Midnight Mass, a Bagoba came with two little children begging for a place to stay. Later, she asked to leave her children with us. My aunt accepted the two little girls and they stayed with her until they were grown up and were married. Their mother just visited them once in a while. She continued to stay up in the hills, while her daughters grew up in our household.

Life in the Town

Everybody in the town was self-sufficient. At the back of their homes were vegetables and fruit trees. Out in the front yard were chickens and pigs. In Lanang, grandfather constructed a hut on stilts. During high tide, when the hut is surrounded by deep waters, they would go by banca and fish inside the hut for their meals.

There was not much to buy in the town. There was no need for a market as everybody already had what the market had to offer. There was just a Chinese store selling dry goods.

There was not much use for money. Land was abundant, food was sufficient, and the vessel that came from Manila came irregularly. In the meantime, money was kept and children played with big coins.

One of the children of Antolin Bangoy (son of Gabriel Bangoy), who was also a *cabeza de barangay* recalls using big coins as toy cooking pans in their game, *bahay-bahayan*. Up in the mountains, the Mandavas bored holes in them and made them into necklaces and bracelets (up to now the old necklaces are made out of old coins). In grandmother's house, she kept coins in bamboo nodules, breaking them after a certain time to wash the molds off the big "*pesetas*" and later dry them under the sun. Then she put them back in to a new bamboo tube.

The Gas Lit Streets

Father remembered the little dusty streets, lit by gas lamps, and the "*parolero*" who kept track of the position of the moon to save petrol. On moonless nights he would fill the lamp with gas enough to last until morning. During halfmoons he put enough gas to light the streets until the moon shone fully and lighted them with moonlight. At full moon, he used very little petrol.

Early Education

The early education of the first settlers took place in the convento. It started from grade one. Each year, the situation was improved by adding a book or two. They were all proud to say that even at a lower grade they knew how to read and write and that their morals were grounded on good values.

The First Roads

The first roads were more like trails than streets. In 1905, when grandfather constructed the house at Bolton, Bolton was no more than a pathwalk, two meters wide, with hog wire and beetlepalms on the sides. San Pedro went as far as the present Anda then to Legaspi. Claveria extended up to the present Ideal theater, the place being planted with abaca by the Bangoyos. In these little streets, particularly San Pedro, athletic competitions, such as the one hundred meters race, were held. There were no cars then; just horses on the streets.

The Pioneering Days

Truly, these were the days of the real pioneers. It was they who cleared the forests, opened little farms, walked by the beach to Lanang, paddled bancas to Daliao, and rode horses to the hills. It was they who interacted and befriended the natives and developed the Davao dialect, a combination of Visayan and one or two native languages. Dabawenyo, or the Dinabaw dialect, was spoken by the early settlers. It was used by the children of the Spanish colonizers, children of the Bagobos of the hills, and children of the Davao Muslims. (Dinabaw is a Mandaya-based dialect). These people were later referred to as the Dabawenyos, people whose roots were traced to the Davao tribe or members of the families of pioneers.

The Most Important Event of the Century

Aside from the evangelization of the natives, and the

organization of the town, the most significant event of the century was the land grants and recognition of land ownership by the Spaniards. Proprietorships led to the development of lands. Thus inspired, people from all over the world decided to come to Davao: Spaniards from Spain, Chinese, Japanese, and Americans all came to Davao for lands.

The Cross and the Crescent

At the turn of the century, one of the events remembered most by my parents was the time when there was shooting in the streets, with people running and shouting, as they took refuge in the convento. This was the time when the Spanish authorities, having lost the Philippines to the U.S., were about to leave and factions were formed to take over the Spanish government of the town. A coalition was attempted but did not last. The chief of the police, together with his wife and a relative, was assassinated by one of his own soldiers. The assassin became the chief but later on was also killed. People were taking the law into their own hands.

Amidst this confusion, Fr. Urios and Fr. Benaiges went out to the streets, holding back those were fighting, and removed the guns from them. Yet the fear of anarchy was there. The fear of a Muslim take over of the town was foremost. However, the letter of Balaguer, written on April 17, 1899, narrated a very important and significant event of the day:

It was admirable to behold the heads of the towns of the Moros presenting themselves to Fr. Urios placing themselves under his orders and telling

him that they did not recognize any other authority except his, and that if they found themselves threatened they would be the first ones to defend us...

This is one moment of time in Davao's history that should be cherished, remembered and honored for here Muslims and the two priests stood together for peace, thus restoring peace in the Christian town of Davao.

In the 1930s

The coconut trees planted by the early settlers were not bearing fruit. On the other hand, the ranches of the Spaniards were thriving well and so were the 55 American owned abaca plantations. The abaca lands of the migrants and the Bagobos were all stripable and productive. The coming of Japanese investors contributed to the progress of Davao in the thirties. Compared to the 1900s, Davao in the 30s was a far cry from the little town of the 1850s, yet it retained its provincial and rural air.

On The Street Where We Lived

The once little trail that was Bolton now had residences with gardens in front, and flower hedges all around, while others still had the old trees of the 1900s. At the back of our house remained three huge acacia trees, a thick bamboo grove, and some banana plants. On some days, the Bagobos still walked the street in single file, children, women, the men and the Datu.

Later, at sunset, swarms of black feathered red-eyed birds (Lansang) swooped down to roost on the big mango tree on the yard of the Hizon residence at the corner of Bolton and Rizal Streets. Up in the sky, thousands of bats came from Samal Island in seemingly endless hordes. Some flew low to roost in the kapok tree on the street while others continued their flight to the hills.

At six in the evening the church bells rang the Angelus. The few people on the street stopped to pray. Children in Bolton were nowhere to be found as we were all trained to be home before six to join the family in prayer. At nine in the evening the street was almost deserted. Neighborhood dogs lingered and lay on the street. People walking by carried "bastones" (canes) to ward off the dogs which had the habit of sniffing pedestrians. In the mornings the chimneys from a few houses emitted white smoke as breakfast was cooked with firewood. All houses had water tanks, to catch the rainfall for drinking.

The Social Classes of the Thirties

People in the town were identifiable by the way they dressed:

- a. People wearing coats and ties were either professionals or people engaged in white collar jobs.
- b. People wearing *maongs* or denims were laborers as *maong* was used by "hag-uteros", that is, abaca fiber strippers.

- c. People wearing rubber shoes belonged to the lower income bracket, as people in the upper income level always wore leather shoes.
- d. People sporting two holstered revolvers with bullet belts strapped around their waist were out of town visiting landowners.
- e. People wearing *buri* hats were tenants, as land owners wore fedora hats.
- f. Women wearing *kimonas* in the markets were Tagalas.
- g. Women wearing wrapped around *patadyong* were most likely Muslims.

The Progressive Little Town

Mr. Ernesto Corcino, a friend and historian, wrote in "Davao History: An Overview" (Region XI Historical Convention, Sept. 17-18 1993):

...large quantities of products for export brought Davao into the arena of foreign trade; engines and vehicles were introduced, roads opened up and large stores of varying commodities were established as Filipino migrants began to increase...

Outside Davao (Toril), the transportation was provided mostly by *calesas* pulled by different colored horses. In the city, old model Ford cars provided transportation, picking up passengers and delivering them to their doorsteps, in addition to the lone yellow-painted busline (Dabusco) that plied the San Pedro-Sta. Ana route. While before, Bagobos came to town on horses, it was now a common sight to see Bagobos, in their native attire, hiring cars and going around the city at leisure. The biggest bill at this time was the twenty peso (P20.00) bill on which Mt. Mayon was printed and people, kidding each other, would say, "*de-bulkan ang kuarta niyan*", meaning one was rich and had plenty of money.

The two main shopping areas were San Pedro Street and Sta. Ana. San Pedro was an upper class shopping area. Here were bazaars owned by Bombays. Indians from Bombay, (Utomal), Syrians and Lebanese (Borgailys) could be found selling items from perfumes to textiles to horse saddles. The Chinese restaurants were Kwong Lee and Asia, and the Chinese tailoring shops were Chiew Ning and Centro de Modas. The Macau Chinese were famous tailors while the Cantonese were famous for their cuisine.

There were a few Batangueño stores with peddlers selling *kulambo* (mosquito nets) and other Filipino stores (Amigleos). A Manila Branch, German-owned gun store sold double-barreled shotguns, a favorite of the farmers and the natives.

There were also Japanese establishments: A restaurant called Mikasa, A Hotel, Kashiwara, Bazaar Takeuchi, and the biggest Osaka bazaar, selling all Japanese goods whose quality was looked down upon.

There were Japanese barbershops where pictures of different haircuts were hanged on the wall and the customer was given a stick to point at the desired haircut to be done. Some barbershops had Japanese women barbers. Japanese food parlors specialized in "*Mongo con hielo*" and Japanese "*Manjo*". Near Legazpi was a theater called the Liberty where, outside at night, vendors sold durian at twenty centavos. Lanzones were sold not by the kilo but by containers called *bagta*.

The other commercial area was Sta. Ana. The wholesale stores there were then considered far from the town. Drivers picking up passengers in Sta. Ana would cry out "*Dabaw, Dabaw*" for San Pedro-bound passengers.

Between San Pedro and Sta. Ana was a stretch of nipa-covered swamps from the shores at Boulevard to the Sta. Ana Elementary School up to the vicinity of San Pedro hospital. Here mangrove trees grew and Davao residents cut their Christmas trees from these areas. Christmas trees were made by wrapping their branches with green crepe papers. At Uyanguren Street, near the swamps, mangrove crabs could be seen crossing the street.

The Market

The market near the PLDT-Aldevinco-BoyScout building under acacia trees was a center of daily interaction, particularly between the Visayans (mostly from Cebu) and the Tagalogs (mostly from Cavite).

Here the Visayans learned Tagalog and Tagalogs learned Visayan from actual practice. With both Visayans and Tagalogs not speaking correctly, many hilarious incidents occurred:

- a. A Cebuano buying "*siopao*" wanted to know what was inside the dough "pork or chicken" and asked "*Ano ang ilalim nito*" ? and the Tagalog answered "*papel*"
- b. A maid was sent to market for the first time to buy one kilo of "*matambaca*" and came back with two "eye balls" of a cow, apologizing for having bought only two because "*wala na talaga*".
- c. A Tagalog *tindera* was surprised when a Visayan wanted to buy fifty centavos of "*panakut*". (literal meaning, something frightful).
- d. A Visayan maid in a Dabawenyo home was bewildered when told to "*Kamanga ang baso*". *Kamang* in Dabaw is "get" and in Visayan "crawl".

These hilarious incidents of Visayans and Tagalogs crossbreeding Visayan and Tagalog words like as *pagumangkin* and *inimin* gave birth to the pre-war Davao phrase "Tagalog sa Mat" when referring to a non-Tagalog speaking wrong Filipino.

The Bagobos in Guianga

Seventeen kilometers away from the City is Tugbok,

the seat of government of the Guianga district. It is here where my father, as Deputy Mayor, held daily office.

During vacation time I rode with him to his office and stayed there the whole day. Here I had my first contact with the Bagobos, whose children later became my friends. They came to seek my father's advice and mostly to register their newly born children. It was only then that I knew that many of them at that time still did not have a family name.

A couple came to register their new-born child and when asked for the name they said "*Landigan*" (somehow the term "*Salading*" is associated with a clothesline that snapped at the time the baby was being born) and when asked for "*appeledo*" (family name) they said "*Bagobo*". My father explained to the couple the necessity of having a family name and suggested that the father's name from then on would be the family name. The father's name was Llawan so the child became Ladingan Llawan.

Remembering that incident helped us understand why our old Bagobo friends called and shouted at my father from a distance with greetings of "Lizada! *Kumusta Kaw?*".

Education

My parents were brought up under the Spanish system of education in which foremost of all is "respect for the elders". We were never allowed to answer back when reprimanded. We were always told to "listen to your parents". Now psychologists and educators tell us always to listen to our children.

When visitors arrived we were all told to go to our room and not to go out to the *sala* for that would be an intrusion into adult conversation. Offenses were penalized by making us kneel at the altar for a few minutes.

In school, the same was true. We were told to kneel in front of the class but with a variation. This time we knelt with outstretched arms and at times with a book on each palm.

At school, the bell was rung twice. The first was the warning bell before forming the line. The second bell was for lining up. When the first bell was rung (warning bell), wherever the student was and whatever he was doing, he had to stop. All froze until the second bell was rung.

The Outskirts of the Town

Beyond San Roque was the sparsely inhabited area of Bajada. It was composed of rolling open hills of cogon where stood a tall molave tree, the favorite resting place of the wild doves (**balud**). The Cabaguio or Jereza Subdivision was a field of grass and trees. Across from the Regional Hospital was the building of the military trainees, a military training camp. In front of the present Carmelite Convent (Lanang Golf and Country Club) was the small ranch and coconut farm of the Roscoms.

At kilometer seven (Alcantara and Beach Club) was our farm. Here there were patches of second growth forests where monkeys and wild chicken could be found. Blue and white kingfishers, yellow and black orioles, grey and brown wild

doves, woodpeckers, black crows and hawks. During moonless nights we would go through the farmlands to the sea, bringing lighted torches made out of bundled dried coconut leaves, to catch fish and crabs and to pick up shellfish from the ebbing tide waters. Between the Insular Hotel and the farm was a stream shaded by mangrove trees, a spawning ground of many fish.

Landlord and Tenants

Land was abundant in Davao. My aunt returned to the government forty hectares of land in Tuganay, which she could not attend to. It is now a prosperous fishpond. Marapangi was where grandfather gave several hectares of his land to tenants. Farmowners and tenants came from the extended families of many landowners. The "*Engkargado*" or farm caretaker represented the owner in the farm. He was his extension.

During fiestas, relatives were invited to the farm. Invitations involved the father, mother, children and *yayas*. Here we met uncles, aunties, cousins and *yayas*. Cooking was done outside the house by the families of the tenants whose whole families were also present. There was non-stop cooking. They cooked as the guests arrived and guests came for the whole day. However, I noticed that many didn't stay long. They came, ate and went away. I found out later that the culture of the time (the *custumbre* or *ugali*) was to visit all the relatives in the area whenever you were around. You may not have been invited but you were expected to visit. This practice is still true in some other areas. In the 1960s we resided in Toril and

and during one of the fiestas we cooked one half sack of rice for relatives and friends who dropped by to say "hello".

The Japanese in Davao

Dr. Serafin Quiason, in his article "The Japanese Colony in Davao" (Historical Convention in Davao 1993), wrote:

The Japanese colony in Davao, is the first colony that the Japanese developed in South East Asia. This is the only one in South East Asia which the Japanese settled and developed and it was here in Davao.

A Japanese report in 1934 stated that Japanese corporations held about 25,086 hectares of agricultural land; 19,072 of which were leased by private individuals. One of these leased lands was that of my grandfather in Marapangi. Others belonged to our relatives in Daliao, Toril, Bangkal Heights and Mulig. Japanese farmers were highly industrious, innovative and dedicated to the farm. Their farmhouses were like their homes in Japan, low and unpainted, built in the middle of an abaca field away from the road, surrounded with gardens of flowers and fruit trees and, whenever possible, near a river. Near their homes was a vegetable garden tilled by the wife who pickled the excess harvest and kept it in stock. Near the kitchen, out in the yard, was a barrel cut in half sitting on a low concrete stand with firewood underneath, ready to heat the water for the daily afternoon bath.

Accustomed to the concept of a "neighborhood association", they saw to it that they were always within the reach of other Japanese farmers and homes. In areas where they were separated by a river, they put up hanging bridges using cables and wooden planks for an aerial pathwalk, thus assuring them of ready access to their homes. Dr. Josefa Saniel of the UP Asian Studies wrote in her paper on the Japanese in the Philippines:

It is of common belief that Japanese plantations are so linked with each other as to facilitate not only close common communication but quick concentration of Japanese subjects upon a moment's notice...

In Japanese farms, Japanese tradition was observed. In my grandfather's farm, Japanese women wore *kimonos* and working clothes, tilling the garden with their infant strapped to their back sleeping soundly. Japanese tenants hired Filipino laborers and worked with them. Japanese discipline and orderliness were followed at the work site. The Japanese and the laborers started their work at the sound of the bell. Rest at ten in the morning was also announced by the bell as well as the time to smoke, drink or eat. Resumption of work was also signalled by the bell.

Farmers came to town only when necessary, like when giving the landlords their share of the sale of the abaca hemp, buying supplies at Japanese cooperative stores, or visiting the headquarters of the Japanese Associations for news from home. Not only did they keep Japanese traditions but they also kept Japanese dogs on their farms.

Japanese records show that in 1939 there were 17,000 Japanese residents in Davao. The well-planned community life was shown by the Japanese daily publications, Japanese radio programs, the presence of Shinto and Buddhist temples, Japanese cooperatives, and the strong Japanese Association.

Mintal, in the Guianga district, looked like a small Japanese town. Japanese residents dominated the town. Japanese stores lined the street while a big Japanese hospital, amidst pine trees, stood in front of the huge campus of the Japanese school. In the nearby places were irrigated Japanese plantations. The town was clean and well kept. Japanese school boys wore red caps, and girls dressed in blue and white.

Gloria Dabbay, in her book, **Davao City: its History and Progress**; quoted President Manuel Quezon, who observed that,

...The Japanese have developed these lands that were undeveloped before. They have taught us how to have modern plantations. If the Filipinos should take advantage of what we can learn from what the Japanese are doing here, the coming of Japanese to Davao, instead of being evil, would be a blessing...

Yet W. J. Anderson, in his book entitled **The Philippine Problem** pictured Davao as a part of the Philippine territory which the Japanese "... are running practically as an independent state."

Conclusion: The Changing Images of Davao

Davao grew from a primitive wild land of the pre-Spanish times to the object of land grants made by the Spaniards to interested settlers, to the beneficiaries of infrastructures developed by the Americans. All of these contributed to the sustained growth of Davao. Davao was a little city in the thirties but worth looking at as a model today in the nineties.

The city has been able to cope well with the process of growth. Bolton and other streets had deep canals serving as drainage for the almost nightly rain. Many "*dalag*" were found in the canals, which is the reason why Dabawenyos did not have a very great liking for them. The sanitary inspector made his round everyday, looking at the surroundings and calling the attention of residents to garbage in their yards.

The garbage trucks never missed their nightly rounds for collecting garbage. Policemen with clubs patrolled the streets day and night. Water trucks went around the dusty roads sprinkling water, on them. A vehicle equipped with a fumigating machine went around fumigating stagnant waters, which were the breeding places for mosquitos and other insects. Regular health nurses visited schools to vaccinate children and immunize them from diseases.

Outside the city, along the roads to nearby districts, were *camineros* dressed in red, cutting the grass and cleaning their designated areas of the road everyday. The *caminero* never left his post.

The parks beside the Sanguniang Panglunsod were immaculately clean. Their benches were painted white and they had well maintained swings and see-saws, well trimmed hedges, and flowers. They were well lighted.

There were no car watchers and no street vendors. Very seldom did we see out-of-school children.

The constabulary, the policemen, and the Sanitary Inspector were looked up to with respect. People were aware of the rule of law. Even bicycle riders traveled at night with lighted flashlights, as required, and did not allow back riders since they were prohibited.

The many gifts of nature like the little streams at Jacinto, Ateneo, Uyanguren and at the back of Claveria; at Sasa, Belisario, Talomo, and Agdao were left undisturbed, allowing them to empty their waters into the sea. Almost all these are now covered and converted to subdivision lots.

Today, however, the many mangroves by the shores of the city, where fish used to spawn are now industrial places where factories are disposing their wastes into the sea.

The once peaceful and clean beaches of the thirties are now full of socially uncaring people, living in unsanitary conditions. Beaches are now converted into deplorable slums.

The forests of the thirties that gave Davao its evening rain, that provided it with its cool breeze, and that sheltered many kinds of birds are now bald fields exposed to the sun. All the God-given gifts of nature existing then in the thirties were, in a wink of an eye, destroyed in the early fifties.

Davao in the thirties is now but a memory. The little town is now a big city. "Perhaps we should ask ourselves "what price was paid for its development" and "what are the choices of having another Davao-of-the-thirties in the future?"